

**IDEOLOGY IN THE FANTASTIC NARRATIVE
OF CHARLES NODIER**

by

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ABSTRACT OF

"Ideology in the Fantastic Narrative
of Charles Nodier"

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This study undertakes a socio-political reading of a selection of Charles Nodier's fantastic tales. Nodier was significantly influential in the literary circles of late 1820's and early 1830's France as host of the salon at the Arsenal library, to which he was named librarian in 1824. He also participated frequently in the intellectual and literary life of France by writing many essays on history, politics and literature, and by contributing regularly to several journals; and this, during a period of great social, political and ideological change. Nodier's career as journalist and essayist spanned a period from the last years of the Napoleonic Empire to the middle years of the July Monarchy.

The choice of fantastic short-stories as the principal corpus for a socio-political reading of Nodier may seem problematical, since the genre itself is not usually regarded as being particularly ideological. Nevertheless, Nodier's tales

themselves contain many references to 'real-world' social and political issues. Therefore, one of the principal goals of the present study is to describe precisely the role of ideology, as part of the socio-political commentary, in Nodier's tales. Starting with an overview of socio-political and ideological readings of the genre, and finding that none entirely do justice to Nodier's fantastic narrative, I attempt to devise an approach to ideology in fantastic literature that is tailored to Nodier's works, with close readings of three of Nodier's best known and thematically richest tales: *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argail* (1822), *La Fée aux Miettes* (1832) and *Inès de Las Sierras* (1837). In addition, Nodier's essay, *Du Fantastique en littérature* (1830), and two shorter tales, the *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* (1832) and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus* (1832), provide insight into his theory of the genre, and his division of it into three 'types'. There is in fact an ideological evolution in Nodier's tale-writing that corresponds to these three 'types'. With the aid of recent discussions on ideology, it becomes possible to speculate on the significance of this evolution.

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To my mother

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FOREWORD

The decision to undertake a socio-political reading of a selection of Charles Nodier's works should not cause any particular surprise. Nodier was significantly influential in the literary circles of late 1820's and early 1830's France as host of the salon at the Arsenal library, to which he was named librarian in 1824. He also participated frequently in the intellectual and literary life of France by writing many essays on history, politics and literature, and by contributing regularly to several journals; and this, during a period of great social, political and ideological change. Nodier's career as journalist and essayist spanned a period from the last years of the Napoleonic Empire to the middle years of the July Monarchy.

The choice of fantastic short-stories as the principal corpus for a socio-political reading of Nodier may, however, seem more problematical, since the genre itself is not usually regarded as being particularly ideological. Indeed, many conceive of the fantastic as an ideologically 'innocent' genre, as pure entertainment or literary escapism. Nevertheless, Nodier's tales themselves contain far too many references to 'real-world' social and political issues to be dismissed as escapist. Therefore, one of the principal goals of the present study is to describe precisely the role of ideology, as part of

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the socio-political commentary, in Nodier's tales. Starting with an overview of socio-political and ideological readings of the genre, and finding that none entirely do justice to Nodier's fantastic narrative, I will attempt to devise an approach to ideology in fantastic literature that is tailored to Nodier's works. It is indeed my aim to adopt a descriptive model that emerges from a reading of Nodier's tales, rather than from an *a priori* categorization imposed on the stories.

For this very reason, that the model correspond specifically to Nodier's fantastic, the choice was made to read closely three of Nodier's best known and thematically richest tales, spanning a significant period in his tale-writing career: *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argail* (1822), *La Fée aux Miettes* (1832) and *Inès de Las Sierras* (1837). Also read in detail, for the purpose of identifying fundamental themes in Nodier's notion of the fantastic, is his essay, *Du Fantastique en littérature* (1830). Added to these analyses, but much less detailed, are readings of the *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* (1832) and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus* (1832)¹, since they mark a point in the evolution of Nodier's fantastic narrative. This evolution can, in fact, be understood in the context of the introduction to the *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, where Nodier, himself, describes three

¹ In this study, all references to Nodier's tales are to the edition, Charles Nodier, *Contes* ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, Paris: Garnier, 1961. References to Nodier's essay on the fantastic are made to: Charles Nodier, "Du Fantastique en littérature," in *Oeuvres complètes* (tome 8) Genève: Slatkine, 1968.

'types' of tales. While he does not assign any specific chronology to these 'types', one does indeed emerge from a reading of his tales, each of which, seems to correspond to a 'type'.

The present study, then, undertakes a close analytical reading of tales that represent stages in the evolution of Nodier's fantastic. The analyses are organized chronologically, from *Trilby* to *Inès*, and are preceded by a reading of Nodier's essay on the fantastic. The essay presents themes and metaphors that essentially comprise Nodier's notion of the fantastic, and that frequently reappear in his tales. However, while there are recurring themes and metaphors throughout Nodier's *oeuvre*, each tale assumes or formulates an ideological stance in its own specific way. This study, then, will also discuss the significance of that apparent evolution in the ideology of Nodier's fantastic narrative.

CHAPTER I
INTERPRETATION OF THE FANTASTIC
AND HOW IT RELATES TO SOCIAL ORDER

As the title of this study, "Ideology in the Fantastic Narrative of Charles Nodier," might suggest, its goal is twofold: first, to determine precisely the relationship of ideology to the fantastic, as it is represented by the tales of Charles Nodier; and second, to describe not only how his tales structure this relationship, but also what their ideological stance may be, and what social commentary they appear to make¹. Such a study necessarily involves an investigation of the fantastic as a genre, and of the positioning of Nodier's texts, in relation to the general ideological climate of his times, 1820's and 1830's France.

Judging from previous scholarship, at least among those who examine the social context of the fantastic, there are roughly three possibilities for socio-political, or ideological, interpretation of the genre. First, one can highlight the escapist potential of the fantastic. Its main goal being to entertain, the fantastic seems to 'refer away' from any social

¹ Nodier himself claims that, *la littérature est l'expression d'une société*, and that, *le romantique pourrait bien n'être autre chose que (...), l'expression d'une société nouvelle* ("Du genre romantique," in *Tablettes Romantiques*: 1823, 6-7).

themes or concerns. It constitutes a type of literary and epistemological 'game' that may make for stimulating entertainment, but is not terribly pertinent to ideological or social questions. Second, the fantastic can be viewed as 'conservative', describing strange phenomena for which there seems no explanation, creating epistemological uncertainty, but resolving that uncertainty by presenting rational explanations in the end. A third option holds the fantastic to be 'subversive', managing to sustain epistemological uncertainty to the very end. The critics who take these last two approaches tend to link the stability of a culture to its ability to define and explain reality, and therefore feel that creating epistemological uncertainty constitutes a threat to the dominant culture, or the dominant ideology. However, when rational explanations for the strange phenomena are ultimately found, usually at the end of the stories, epistemological uncertainty is resolved, and cultural order restored. Ideologically, the story has served a 'conservative' purpose. If not, the story can be called 'subversive'.

In the first of the three options, regarding entertainment as the principal social purpose of the fantastic may lead to the conclusion that it is essentially escapist literature. It could

be said that Jacques Finné's remarks, *Le fantastique est donc une forme de l'art pour l'art, un jeu, une gratuité (...)*², point in that general direction. Finné continues by noting that, since its beginnings, when its role regarding society was as a type of replacement for religious faith, *le récit fantastique ne se veut plus un reflet de la réalité, ne cherche plus à accréditer certaines croyances, mais bien à divertir (...)*³. Beyond recognizing the capacity of the fantastic to answer to a public fascination for the uncanny, or *l'étrange*⁴, Finné does not associate the genre specifically with any social or ideological function. Such a model proves inadequate in explaining Nodier's works, not only because Nodier can indeed be situated at the beginnings of the fantastic in France, but also because his works continually address several social and ideological themes, such as science, money and law.

The second general option, that of viewing the fantastic as initially subversive, but having the potential to become

² Jacques Finné, *La littérature fantastique: Essai sur l'organisation surnaturel*. Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1980, 15.

³ Finné, 15. In fact, it at times appears that Nodier himself regards the fantastic as little more than escapist entertainment: *la seule compensation (...) des misères inséparables de [l]a vie; and les mensonges qui (...) amusent* (Charles Nodier, "Du Fantastique en Littérature," in *Oeuvres complètes*. (vol. 8) Genève: Slatkine, 1968-first published in 1830-, 102,112). Escapism and Nodier's notion of the fantastic will be discussed in the following chapter.

⁴ Finné, 25.

ultimately conservative, is derived from Tzvetan Todorov's structuralist description of the genre in his seminal work, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*⁵. According to Todorov, the fantastic results from the hesitation between "natural" and "supernatural" explanations for strange phenomena. The "natural" explanation rests on reason, which many critics argue is a cornerstone of socio-cultural order since the Enlightenment⁶. Therefore, those critics who suggest that the fantastic works, at least initially, to subvert socio-cultural order, claim it does so by challenging the rationalist assumptions upon which this order is based and which are used to sustain it. Studies by José Monleón⁷, Irène Bessièrè⁸, Rosemary Jackson⁹ and Charles Grivel¹⁰ are based upon variations of this premise: powerful groups in society discourage threats to their

⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*. Paris: Seuil, 1970. While Todorov does not himself designate texts as "subversive" or "conservative", it is upon his description of the genre that others base their socio-political conclusions.

⁶ Pierre-Georges Castex, Louis Vax and Roger Caillois also view the hesitation caused by the fantastic as a way to question the cultural status quo. See: Pierre-Georges Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France de Nodier à Maupassant*. Paris: Corti, 1951; Louis Vax, *La séduction de l'étrange*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965; and Roger Caillois, "Le Fantastique," in *Encyclopaedia Universalis* tome 6, 922.

⁷ Jose B. Monleón, *A Specter is Haunting Europe. A Sociohistorical Approach to the Fantastic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

⁸ Irène Bessièrè, *Le récit fantastique, la poésie de l'incertain*. Paris: Larousse, 1974.

⁹ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion*. London: Methuen, 1981.

¹⁰ Charles Grivel, "Le fantastique," in *MANA* 1 (1983).

power by simply dismissing them as unreasonable or absurd¹¹. The fantastic, as a genre in which reason is no more credible than unreason, creates an environment in which unreasonable notions can be articulated, free from instant dismissal by 'tyrants' of reason. However, each of these critics arrives at the conclusion that, one way or another, most or all fantastic texts ultimately undermine their own subversive potential.

Taking a socio-historical approach to the fantastic in art and literature, Monleón claims that the fantastic uses unreason to express, and then to contain, "otherness", especially in terms of social class. The fantastic allows society to use epistemological otherness (unreason) to articulate and then control the images of moral otherness (evil), historical otherness (medieval superstitions and beliefs and even socio-economic structure, ie. feudalism). According to Monleón, the genre also creates a literary space in which class strife can be controlled: the image of the working class with its emerging power and threat to the socio-economic status quo of bourgeois

¹¹ Or, as in Tobin Siebers' view, unreason in the fantastic reveals a Romantic identification with the "victim" in/of Rationalist society: anyone who believes in religion, the occult, magic, the supernatural. According to Siebers, this identification with the victim is a means to establish individualism, but by associating it with suffering, the Romantics tend to generate a form of "aesthetic or literary masochism", and "marginalize" their own world view (Tobin Siebers, *The Romantic Fantastic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984, 188-189). It could then be said that the fantastic, in causing a marginalization of the victim, essentially serves a socially conservative purpose.

society is raised, associated with unreason in scenes of mob violence, monsters, etc. and then, when these 'scenes' are explained as having been no more than the dreams or hallucinations of a madman, the threat is safely "contained". The "bad conscience" of the bourgeois class therefore finds expression and, at the same time, appeasement, in the fantastic. The Bourgeoisie is thus purged of its uncertainty, fear and guilt¹².

Based on a deconstructive approach to the genre, Bessière regards the fantastic as disruptive of established ideological discourse, on semantic and epistemological grounds. By creating uncertainty, the fantastic also causes disorder, because it shows the disfunction of a society's means for establishing a sense of *vraisemblance*¹³. However, in spite of her insistence that the fantastic is firmly grounded in the *réel*¹⁴, Bessière indicates that it is, at least in its early years, essentially a conservative genre¹⁵.

¹² Monleón, 139.

¹³ Bessière, 214-215.

¹⁴ In order to better challenge some of the presuppositions used by the dominant culture to define the *réel* (Bessière, 11).

¹⁵ Bessière writes: *De Cazotte à Lovecraft, le récit fantastique est celui de l'ordre, qui ne décrit point l'illégal pour récuser la norme, mais pour la confirmer.* She adds: *Il ne faut pas confondre sa modernité littéraire et sa fonction sociale; l'innovation esthétique n'est pas nécessairement porteuse de mutation idéologique* (Bessière, 28).

Taking psychoanalytical approaches to the fantastic, Rosemary Jackson and Charles Grivel see the psyche and the collective unconscious as the link between the fantastic text and its socio-cultural context. In Jackson's estimation, ideology works as a means of controlling entire societies by controlling the unconscious of individuals, while the fantastic¹⁶ subverts social rules of behaviour, by awakening the socially-prohibited desires that are usually buried in the unconscious¹⁷. Grivel argues that the fantastic text comprises a venue for the projection of images with which the reader will associate on the level of memory, imagination or desire¹⁸. When these three aspects of the unconscious are directed against what 'lucid' thought tells us to be true, which is actually formed and controlled by the dominant social group, the fantastic text then succeeds in shaking social order. The fantastic is seen here as creating hesitation between the unconscious and reason, thus

¹⁶ Or "fantasy", as Jackson calls it. It is certainly worth keeping in mind that there exists at least a difference of nuance between "fantasy" and the "fantastic", the former implying very much more specifically psychological, indeed sexual, impulses and imaginings as means for the subversion of the "norms" of social behaviour and even thought. This would explain Jackson's choice of de Sade as one of the truly subversive authors (Jackson, 81). In spite of the distinction, Jackson's ideas are of great interest, both because of the commonality that does exist between "fantasy" and the "fantastic", and because of the essentially socio-political approach of her study.

¹⁷ Jackson, 4.

¹⁸ Grivel, 46.

threatening the supremacy of the latter. However, even though Jackson identifies and studies some "purely subversive" works¹⁹, both she and Grivel find that **most** fantastic texts conclude by subverting their own subversiveness: using reason, the usual 'tool' of the dominant social power group, they resolve hesitation, thus restoring that group's power. Alternatively, fantastic texts can resolve hesitation by taking recourse to supernatural explanations, thus projecting unsettling desires into the realm of pure myth, where they can be played out without posing a real threat to the social order.

By contrast, in his study of Gautier²⁰, Jean Décottignies interprets the fantastic as counter-cultural, struggling against dominant ideology by struggling against various "cultural discourses", such as medical, psychological, even theological discourse. According to Décottignies, when a fantastic text causes its reader to doubt the validity of these discourses, it

¹⁹ Like those of de Sade, as mentioned above.

²⁰ Jean Décottignies, "A propos de *La morte amoureuse* de Théophile Gautier : Fiction et idéologie dans le récit fantastique," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 72,4 (1972): 616-625.

In his study on interpretation of the fantastic, Ulrich Döring cites Décottignies' essay as the best example of criticism that fully recognizes the counter-cultural potential of the fantastic (Ulrich Döring, "A la recherche de la raison perdue: la critique et la littérature fantastique," *Oeuvres et critiques* 9, 2 (1984): 167-186), 169-170. While my grouping of theory and criticism follows along the same general lines as Döring's study, I examine each approach specifically according to how helpful it is in a reading Nodier's works.

exposes the incoherence that exists in cultural presuppositions, and liberates the reader from the yoke of ideology.

Décottignies' belief that the fantastic stands in opposition to social discourses, raises the issue of ideology as false consciousness. My discussion of Nodier's fantastic does not entirely reject the notion of ideology as false consciousness, at least in so far as Reason and Science are used as ideological 'tools' with which to dismiss alternative perspective on experience: legend, intuition, superstition, religious faith. Nevertheless, the limitations of this model should be acknowledged. As a close reading of Nodier's tales will show, the ideological positioning of his fantastic can not be viewed as a pure dialectic between dominant and subversive cultural discourses²¹.

Selecting an approach to Nodier's tales, one encounters problems common to all three of the general options discussed: fantastic as escapist entertainment, fantastic as conservative, fantastic as subversive. First, many critics interpret the fantastic text according to its conclusion. As Ulrich Döring

²¹ For an insightful discussion of the issue of ideology as false consciousness, see Terry Eagleton, *Ideology. An Introduction*. London: Verso, 1991, especially pages 10-31.

It will be seen that Nodier's texts associate both some level of truth and some level of lie to the postulates of Reason as they are seemingly employed (even as cultural discourses) in early Nineteenth Century France.

notes, Todorov, like Finné, falls into this trap²². According to Todorov, any text is only a "fantastic" text for as long as it sustains hesitation between "natural" and "supernatural" explanations. Once hesitation is resolved, the text ceases to be fantastic, slipping into one of the neighbouring categories of *le merveilleux* or *l'étrange*²³. If one associates epistemological and social challenge to the uncertainty created by the fantastic²⁴, then the text would be ultimately designated as "subversive" or "conservative", according to its final resolution (or non-resolution). Döring is correct to query this approach to interpretation. Defining a text based solely on its conclusion confines that text to a strict linearity, and may lead one to overlook the significance of it in its entirety. Such a definition would assume that rational explanations cause the reader to forget the original challenge to reason, which may not always be the case. Döring rightly adds that many a reasonable explanation for the abnormal in the fantastic is inadequate and leaves the reader dissatisfied. Such is the case, as will be shown later, in Nodier's *Inès de Las Sierras*.

²² Döring, 169-171.

²³ Todorov, 29.

²⁴ Which Todorov does, as indicated by his discussion of the social function of the *suraturel* as part of the fantastic: *une transgression de la loi* (Todorov, 174 and 166-167).

Second, there can be problems with psychoanalyses of the fantastic²⁵. According to Döring, psychoanalysis can lead to misinterpretation, by forcing the fantastic texts to conform to the postulates of psychoanalysis which, itself a science, attempts to rationalize the irrational²⁶. However, Döring mentions an exception: Marcel Voisin, whose psychological analysis is linked to a consideration of the socio-cultural dimension of Gautier's fantastic²⁷. Nevertheless, in his reading of Gautier's *Arria Marcella*, Voisin interprets Octavien's dream as a type of nostalgia that leaves the text to revel in a "personal and cultural past."²⁸ While Voisin may only partly fall into it, there can be a trap associated with psychoanalytical methodology. Assuming a dialectic between society and the individual, as many psychoanalyses do, can lead one to the conclusion that fantastic stories, representing individual desires and social taboos, are no more than the expression of a counter-cultural 'voyage' inward. While this is conceivably true of many fantastic tales, it is not an accurate

²⁵ As noted above, both Jackson and Grivel make much use of psychoanalysis in their readings.

²⁶ Döring's criticism of most psychoanalyses of the fantastic (Döring, 174-175).

²⁷ Döring, 176.

²⁸ Döring, 176.

representation of all, and would only lead to a partial understanding of Nodier's tales.

In the study of the fantastic, and in literature in general, the link between psychoanalysis and cultural issues is usually established upon the premise that one's imagination and unconscious are socially determined. That is to say that, in compliance with social rules, we repress desires and bury memories as a matter of course. Therefore, any literature that somehow expresses or awakens these desires and memories tends to reveal the existence of these rules and challenge their legitimacy. Accordingly, critics and theoreticians who favour a psychoanalytical reading of texts, locate the fantastic's reference to society in its supposed opposition to dominant cultural order. Adopting an approach to literary texts that is both psychoanalytical and concerned with social referentiality comes with some caveats. First, it demands an historicization²⁹ of the text, which many psychoanalyses of literature hesitate to do. Second, as mentioned above, one must avoid limiting the referentiality of the fantastic solely to the inner self, to

²⁹ Not unlike the historicizations by Pierre-Georges Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France de Nodier à Maupassant*. Paris: Corti, 1951; and Louis Vax, *La séduction de l'étrange*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965.

However, the first study tends to rest solely on images and themes to historicize the "content" of the fantastic, and the second tends, like many others, to consider the fantastic in terms of a dialectic.

individual imagination or desire, and avoid interpreting the text as escapist, as referential **away** from culture and society rather than **toward** them.

There is a third basic problem: the notion of the genre as dialectical. It is perhaps the most important problem, because it is a source of the other problems mentioned, and because it is common to all three options. Essentially, the three general options rest on assumption of opposition between the real: a concept that is culturally determined and controlled; and the unreal: that set of occurrences, visions, characters and causality that can not be explained by reason. Jackson sees unreason as an inversion of cultural order, expressing the exact opposite of it, since cultural order proves and sustains its 'truths' using reason. Unreason, in this schema, expresses and stimulates desires that are socially taboo, thus showing forth the underside of culture, and effecting a subversion of social rules. In Grivel's model of the fantastic, unreason acquires more autonomy with regards to reason than in Jackson's model. According to Grivel, unreason is the negation of cultural order. The fantastic text serves as a screen, a type of *tabula rasa*, upon which the images of unreason, be they dreams, nightmares or desires, can be projected. Since the fantastic surpasses the

limits of reason, it is possible for unreason in the form of imagination, desire or the unconscious, to express itself using an "autonomous code". This autonomous code emanates from an "autonomous world", and negates that which is held as established truth, by negating the system used to establish that truth³⁰. However, as previously mentioned, both Jackson and Grivel feel the negation to be only temporary in most texts. Todorov's model of rival explanations (*le naturel* and *le surnaturel*), and Finné's metaphor of rational and supernatural "vectors" of explanation, also imply autonomy and opposition between reason and unreason. According to Monleón, the fantastic serves as an arm of bourgeois culture by symbolically containing, isolating or marginalizing those groups (the working class, the unemployed, etc.) that are in opposition to that culture. Although Bessière associates the fantastic with social order, and notes the close reliance of the fantastic text on *des mots, des pensées, des réalités qui sont de ce monde*, she nevertheless asserts that the text combines those real-world elements to create *un autre monde* that is set up as a type of negation of the real³¹. In his model of the fantastic,

³⁰ Grivel, 13.

³¹ Bessière, 11, 216-217.

Décottignies obviously envisions opposition between discourses.

As part of the present study, I will propose a fourth model for understanding ideology in the fantastic short-story, specifically in the short-stories of Charles Nodier. Unlike the three models discussed above, this fourth option allows for a 'moderate' fantastic, where reason and unreason are not necessarily viewed as mutually oppositional. Nodier's concept of the fantastic holds that reason and unreason are complementary, rather than oppositional; that together they create a holistic and balanced perspective on human experience. While it should be accepted that fantastic literature has the potential to challenge social and ideological assumptions, it would be restrictive in the case of Nodier's tales, to regard the fantastic simply as a negation of socio-cultural order.

The relationship between reason and unreason in the fantastic is often described as antinomical³². Antinomy is defined as the contradiction in a law, or between two laws;

³² Both Jackson and Monleón define the relationship between reason and unreason in the fantastic as an antinomy. Monleón employs the figure of paradox to describe the fantastic as having at its base the *tension of simultaneous representation of two incompatible systems in one single sign* (Monleón, 40). The antinomy between reason and unreason is often associated with the assumption that they are also mutually autonomous. Basing her reflections on Bessière's work, Jackson posits that the fantastic is polyphonic, containing autonomous and independent discourses that collide, inverting order and breaking down boundaries (Jackson, 16-17, 21). Grivel claims the fantastic "cross-refers" to the imaginary and creates an alternative reality that opposes the reality of society, creating a "fiction effect" that distances the fantastic "world" from the real world (Grivel, 71).

conflict of authority; paradox³³. However, it is possible to conceive of the fantastic as challenging cultural authority and accepted norms in thought and behaviour in two ways: by holding two contradictory elements together, and by positing that they should not necessarily be interpreted as contradictory in the first place. Casting the relationship as antinomical naturally produces the inclination to reach a conceptual resolution of the contradiction. Alternatively, one can accept contradiction and paradox as natural; hence, resolution ceases to be an issue. Rather than staging a battle between the two laws, the fantastic is interpreted as challenging philosophical norms by moving towards a reconciliation between, and yet not necessarily a synthesis of, the two laws; accordingly, it is possible to sustain the challenge 'undialectically'. What is challenged then, is the very interpretation of the relationship between reason and unreason as dialectical, and the subsequent view that any combination between them must be paradoxical. This interpretation, itself pre-conditioned by reason, inhibits acceptance of the credence of unreason (dream, vision, intuition). The paradox only exists because of a refusal to accept the equality between reason and unreason, which are

³³ Concise Oxford Dictionary.

simply two different ways of seeing. On this level, the fantastic comes into conflict with cultural norms.

Amaryll Chanady raises the issue of resolving antinomy in a discussion on the fantastic and magical realism³⁴. Resolving the antinomy between what Chanady calls the textual "codes" corresponding to natural and supernatural explanations, generates magical realism. The reader comes to accept an unconventional world-view, but this world-view remains solely within the context of the fictitious world of the text. However, if the antinomy is unresolved, that unconventional world-view actually disturbs the reader's "world"³⁵. In her model, Chanady implies, but does not explicitly state, that unresolved antinomy can be sustained when the two "codes" are seen as complementary, and are therefore in no need of resolution. In other words, the text accepts and 'naturalizes' antinomy³⁶.

Many critics interpret resolved antinomy as undermining the

³⁴ Amaryll Chanady, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved versus Unresolved Antinomy*. New York: Garland, 1985.

³⁵ Chanady, 163.

³⁶ Chanady claims resolved antinomy in magical realism widens our perspective of the real, and she suggests the same effect of unresolved antinomy in the fantastic, that challenges our very inclination to resolve antinomy, and therefore, in addition to effecting our perspective on reality, also broadens our definition of it. Chanady, 122.

text's threat to socio-cultural order. They argue that the fantastic, if it does pose any threat to cultural order, only does so on a temporary basis. It re-covers any desire it initially unleashed (Jackson), serves as a "cathartic filter" (Grivel) for the collective psyche, and displaces the threat of disorder to the imaginary realm of unreason, turning itself into myth through its apocalyptic endings (Monleón).

All of these critics are correct in one of their basic assumptions: the fantastic does challenge socio-cultural norms. It can question the legitimacy of a dominant group in society by questioning how it applies, and sometimes manipulates, the postulates of reason in order to prove its own arbitrary 'truths' and support its prescriptive and proscriptive rules of behaviour, expression and thought. I feel that the fault lies not in this basic assumption about the fantastic, but in a nuance regarding the nature of the challenge it poses. The fantastic does bring together reason and unreason in an uncomfortable, even disturbing, proximity. In so doing, it potentially causes a disruption of reason, but its challenge to social order extends beyond the level of epistemology. By bringing unreason and reason together into the same signifying system or text, with unreason challenging and yet not

necessarily negating reason, the fantastic text creates a space where issues and themes of a social nature can be re-interpreted. Seen in a new light, these issues can be re-considered, free from the prejudices and predispositions of the dominant ideology (in the case of the early-Nineteenth Century, ideology supported by Reason³⁷).

As noted earlier, Décottignies convincingly argues that the fantastic poses a challenge to dominant ideological discourses in society³⁸. When these discourses fail to explain the text's instances of the abnormal, two things happen: cultural order, on whose behalf they act, is shaken, called into question; and the reader is then left free of them to arrive at potentially different conclusions concerning other issues raised by the story. In this way, Döring is correct in identifying the social referentiality of the fantastic as an issue on two, albeit closely linked, levels: interpretation and "content"³⁹. The fantastic challenges the power of society's cultural or

³⁷ I purposely write 'Reason', rather than 'reason', since it is a matter of historical specificity.

³⁸ Décottignies on medical and psychological discourses, for example. Décottignies, 622.

³⁹ Döring, 172.

ideological discourses to determine interpretation⁴⁰. Having diminished the influence of these ideological discourses, it then plays out social issues to be re-considered, free from this influence. In fact, the fantastic can completely link the two levels. For example, a dream vision can provide the space in which freedom of thought and of desire is sustained. When it is threatened, it is threatened by the imposition of reason⁴¹, which not only dissipates the dream, but denies the freedom afforded by the dream⁴².

If the fantastic is viewed in these terms, not so much as a negation of, but as a challenge to social order, it is easier to interpret its challenge as sustainable. It need not prolong the hesitation between real and unreal beyond its own conclusion⁴³, in order to have constituted a challenge to reason-based cultural order. It can, as Döring reminds us, be one of three types of text: it can open the way for multiple interpretations, each of which as viable as the others; it can

⁴⁰ Hence the flaw of critical approaches based on theoretical positions that are themselves not free of these discourses.

⁴¹ Or by an ideological discourse based on, or that allegedly manipulates reason.

⁴² Such is the case in Nodier's *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argail* (1822), for example, where the heroine, Jeannie, has Trilby, the impish vision who appears in her dreams of adulterous love, "exorcized" by a monk.

⁴³ As Jackson says of de Sade (Jackson, 81).

propose one explanation that is not entirely convincing; or it can resort to supernatural explanations, and yet still shock the reader's usual conception of the world⁴⁴. The fantastic story may contain any one of these three types of resolution, and still constitute a challenge to social and cultural order.

It is important to speak here of **some**, and not all fantastic texts, since my purpose is not so much to refute the models put forth by the theoreticians and critics mentioned, as to indicate that these models are not universally adequate; in some fantastic tales, they are incapable of accommodating the full complexity of the issue of social referentiality. Such are the fantastic tales of Charles Nodier, which assume and describe a certain relationship between reason and unreason. It is a relationship that, in itself, challenges contemporary pre-suppositions regarding several issues, from interpretation and expression to laws and behaviour. It does so subtly, and flexibly, moving from the near negation of dominant ideological discourses, to the near acceptance of them. While it raises philosophical and social issues, and often pushes against the boundaries of accepted norms, it does not subvert, neither is it aimed at unmaking socio-cultural order. On the contrary, it is

⁴⁴ Döring, 170.

a **moderate** concept of the fantastic as a vehicle for the expression of reform, but not revolution. Reason and unreason never achieve synthetic union nor do they ever entirely divorce each other, but are held to be **complementary**. Nodier's tales and essay on the fantastic explore various ways of representing this complementarity. I do not hold Nodier as a prototype of fantastic writing; rather, I find in his oeuvre, the material that demonstrates that which the fantastic **can be**, but not necessarily **always is**. However, one thing the fantastic always is, is complex, and so a substantial analysis of representative works of the oeuvre is needed in order to appreciate this complexity.

It is most appropriate to speak, in the case of Nodier's fantastic, of a 'levelling' of discourses, rather than of a negation of one by the other. In other words, the fantastic text may discredit the ideological discourses that support cultural order, but only to the degree that they are lent more or less the same credence as imagination, unreason, desire, whatever one might call it. In a sense, this model harkens back to Todorov's conception of the structure of the fantastic, wherein rational and irrational explanations for supernatural events compete within the same text, thus producing a hesitation

on the part of the reader. In Nodier, this equality of discourses carries along with it considerations on a variety of issues, such as money, happiness, work and marital fidelity.

In my model of complementarity, I view the fantastic as a genre that queries the dominant social discourse, which is based on reason, to a point where it is placed on a level playing field with the discourse of unreason. Unreason is then posited as nothing more than a different **perspective** on the same world. It is not necessarily tenable as having an autonomous code or discourse, or as being part of an autonomous world⁴⁵. On the contrary, as Irène Bessi re points out, the fantastic comes from within cultural order, not from an alternative world⁴⁶.

What, then, does this model of Nodier's fantastic reveal about ideology? The various ways in which his fantastic tales present the relationship between reason and unreason, and the way they offer social commentary that is linked to this relationship, can also reveal Nodier's reading of society around him. Public receptivity to his works, which each of the tales I will look at anticipates differently, tells a great deal about the ideological climate around Nodier, or at least about **his**

⁴⁵ Here, I am at odds with Grivel, 13.

⁴⁶ Even though she claims it creates an alternative world (Bessi re, 11).

assessment of that climate. In addition, one might also think of ideology in the way Terry Eagleton presents it, as both a matter of speculative theoretical systems and lived relations¹⁷, asking how each might function in the fantastic tale. How is ideology present in the epistemological and philosophical points made by, or implied in, the tale? How is ideology present in the way the tale addresses issues of social and personal behaviour? And how might the two 'types' of ideology be connected?

Roughly in the middle of his tale-writing career, Nodier devised a classification scheme of fantastic stories¹⁸. Each 'type' of tale assumes a different reception of the text, and each 'type' corresponds to the tales that I choose as the material for my study. In general, *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argail* is an example of the *histoire fantastique fausse*, *La Fée aux Miettes* is an *histoire fantastique vague*, while *Jean-François les Bas-bleus* and *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* belong to the category of *l'histoire fantastique vraie*. The last tale I will

¹⁷ Based on Althusser's definition of ideology as "lived relations," or, as Eagleton puts it, the way I 'live' my relations to society as a whole, Eagleton proposes that ideology be considered as both lived relations and speculative theoretical systems (Eagleton, 18, 30).

¹⁸ A scheme that he articulates at the beginning of his tale, *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, written in 1832 (in ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, *Nodier, Contes*. Paris: Garnier, 1961, 330-331).

look at, *Inès de Las Sierras*, corresponds to a completely different type, *le surnaturel expliqué*⁴⁹, and, in so doing, bespeaks a significant development in the author's justification of his tale to its intended readership. Purely psychoanalytical studies would look to Nodier's personality in order to locate the source of this change. Perhaps it lies elsewhere. From a close analysis of the tales themselves, arranged chronologically, and of Nodier's theory of the fantastic as articulated in his essay on the subject⁵⁰, there emerges an undeniable ideological stance to Nodier's fantastic that reveals much about his own position and about the ideological environment around him. How, then, might each 'type' of tale deal specifically with the two facets of ideology described by Eagleton, how are these two facets related and interwoven in each 'type' of tale, and how might one read an evolution in Nodier's works in light of this dichotomous view of ideology? These are the questions to which I hope Nodier's texts will themselves provide a response. To that end, I am careful throughout to adhere to an important conviction: it is the text

⁴⁹ Not Nodier's, but Caillois' term (Caillois, "Le fantastique" in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*. (Tome 6), 924.

⁵⁰ Charles Nodier, "Du Fantastique en Littérature."

that tells us about society and not vice-versa.

CHAPTER II

DU FANTASTIQUE EN LITTÉRATURE

In Nodier's concept of the fantastic, as articulated in his essay, the genre is depicted as accommodating both reason and unreason, in a relationship that could be called unresolved antinomy. The essayist assigns a socio-historical significance to the genre, claiming that such philosophical and epistemological experimentation arises in specific historical periods, and for particular social reasons and purposes. Many of the themes and metaphors employed by Nodier in his essay appear in various forms in his tales, and it is therefore useful to introduce them here. The essay also provides some insight into Nodier's notion of the relationship between reason used as an epistemological foundation and the consolidation of socio-political power.

Nodier traces the history of literature to its very sources, and assigns it a social function, that of explaining the world through "contemplative sciences" and religions. In this way, the writer, or "poet", holds the supreme position as "magistrate and pontiff" of society, creating for himself a "sacred sanctuary" above society from which he can contemplate the secrets of the universe. There does exist, however, a

"purely human literature" that deals exclusively with the ordinary things of the *vie positive*, even though it is not devoid of the divinity of the first type of literature. As this "purely human" literature still contains an impulse towards the divine, it finds itself inclined towards mystery, or what Nodier calls the *mensonge*. The *mensonge* is in fact the literary path to the fantastic: mystery inserted into rationalist epistemology. Significantly, Nodier sees this state, which he calls the *monde intermédiaire*, as a harmonious one. It is what links knowledge of the spiritual and knowledge of the material. It is the realm of the "ideal" and the poet.

According to Nodier, there are two impulses within the fantastic: one towards the religious, wherein serious philosophical consideration must be undertaken, and the other towards the poetic, where the imagination, a *prisme prestigieux*, is given licence to dissect the material world. The *prisme* then shows forth the wonders hidden in that material world (miracles, fairies, genies). As Nodier writes, the role of the *prisme* is to *divinise* everyday life. He gives examples ranging from Oriental and Indian myth to Ancient Greek legends. They all show humankind in connection with both the material world, Nodier's *monde positif*, and the world of imagination. The

fantastic, then, is a mediative form.

Since there is no room in the fantastic for scepticism, it is most prevalent in either the very earliest stages of civilization, before reason has become strong enough to destroy credulity, or at the end of civilization, when reason becomes tired and unsatisfying. Nodier thus accounts for the popularity of the fantastic in his era, which he sees as an age of transition between a worn-out civilization and something new. The fantastic has regenerative properties. In an age of decadence, it provides the only voice of humanity's "moral and intellectual instinct". Nodier feels that his present age is witness to a renaissance in tales of mystery and magic, which harken back to medieval times, before social institutions such as the Christian religion, chivalry and heroism lost the power to provide moral consensus.

In Nodier's estimation, literary progression, albeit cyclical, is rooted in an equally cyclical social progression: the works of Lucius announce the end of paganism; those of Cervantes, the end of chivalry; Erasmus and Rabelais give literary expression to the Reformation; and Voltaire anticipates the political revolution that would accompany the "great cataclysm of Christianity". It is at times like these that the

fantastic appears to announce, and sometimes mockingly, the end of a social order. Nodier assigns Dante the role of writing the first fantastic work of the Renaissance, itself a period of transition between dying and emerging social orders.

Others who take up and master the fantastic are Shakespeare, Perrault, Goethe, Chateaubriand, Scott and Byron. In his assessment of these writers, Nodier suggests that the fantastic is as much a matter of style and form as of content. It is as much a particular way of seeing things as it is the things that are seen. Writing and telling in the fantastic demands a certain "language", without any built-in *a priori* exclusions of the supernatural or of mystery. It is on this point that Nodier articulates the contrast between Germany, a "poetic" society open to freedom of the imagination, and France, which is under the yoke of strict official control of thought and expression (ie. the "literary dogma" of the height of French Classicism); and so much so, that it is prevented from developing literary innovation. Nodier further develops this contrast, transposing it to a dichotomy within France, where there is a discordance between "official" language and the language of the people. The first is ossified into such rigidity that it stifles imaginative expression, leaving the

second as the only possible way to communicate folklore and fantasy.

What then is the purpose of the fantastic (or *merveilleux*, a term Nodier uses interchangeably with 'fantastic')? In his essay, Nodier responds: *peût-être est-il la seule compensation vraiment providentielle des misères inséparables de (la) vie sociale* (102). Even though Nodier's comment may seem to highlight the escapist nature of the fantastic, at other points in the essay, he focusses on the genre's capacity to address the issues of social life. He indicates that the fantastic view of the world is one that extends beyond the purely rational. It tells the *histoire psychique de l'homme* (104). At issue here is the possibility to arrive at truth. The notion that literature can resuscitate spirituality and thus lead to understanding that penetrates deeper than rational inquiry, is what others have identified as a fundamental characteristic of the Romantic fantastic, even of Romanticism in general¹. According to Nodier,

¹ Albert Béguin writes that the open-ended nature of Romantic literature suggests, *l'inachèvement inhérent à tout acte de connaissance humaine*, and goes on to explain the belief of Romantics that, *cette ouverture sur l'inconnu était la condition même de la connaissance, la fenêtre par où l'on aperçoit l'infini, une nécessité imposée à tout écrivain tendant à saisir quelque fragment du mystère qui nous environne...* (Albert Béguin, *L'âme romantique et le rêve*. Paris: Corti, 1939, XIII).

Pierre-Georges Castex explains that, as early as 1770, when the *Philosophes* had clearly succeeded in firmly establishing Reason as supreme (*l'esprit scientifique et positif a gagné une grande partie du public éclairé*), there was a rising interest in the occult. He writes: *le mouvement illuministe est une protestation contre l'implacable philosophie, qui détruit les mythes consolants*. The fact that this interest was in great part due to

the only truth attainable is the truth of which we gain a glimpse, paradoxically, through the delicious *mensonge* of the fantastic.

Nodier politicizes his discussion of the fantastic when he sets the genre in opposition to the "scientist's" unshakeable faith in material progress and perfectibility. The essayist also chastises those who impose the dictates of the intellectual "world", beyond the domain of scientific knowledge, to the realm of poetic thought and philosophical introspection. These two, poetry and philosophy, are areas that Nodier feels should be free of the constraints and limitations of science, or of the *monde positif*.

Is the fantastic, as Nodier sees it, escapist? While the essayist appears at times to answer in the affirmative, he also assigns a social and historical specificity to the fantastic, and defines the genre as the taking of a different perspective

the void left by the weakened official religion, and that this weakening was mainly the work of the *Philosophes*, themselves, is an irony that Castex does not miss pointing out (Pierre-Georges Castex, *Le conte...*, Paris: Corti, 1951, 15).

Paul Bénichou observes that, in France, the Romantic penchant for spiritualism coalesces around the figure of Lord Byron: *Byron a enseigné ou encouragé en France ce qu'on pourrait appeler une spiritualité sans la foi*. In Bénichou's view, Romanticism in general constitutes *un alliage de plus en plus franc du sacré avec le moderne*, and in fact excludes both traditional religion and faith in Philosophy, only to reconcile the two in itself. Bénichou situates Nodier squarely within this Romantic tendency toward syncretism and spiritualism: *il voit (...) dans le romantisme la réponse de l'homme moderne à l'effondrement de tout le passé: ne croyant plus à rien, ni en particulier à son âme immortelle, l'homme d'aujourd'hui compense cette perte en spiritualisant la matière par le merveilleux ou l'horrible* (Bénichou, *Le sacré...*, 334, 340, 345, 346).

on life. It constitutes viewing the world through the *prisme prestigieux* of the imagination, in order to understand the world better, or differently. The fantastic, therefore, refers back to the social world from which it stems, perhaps offering an imaginative escape from rationalism, but not necessarily from reality.

In his essay, Nodier does not always sustain an image of the fantastic as purely 'innocent', or escapist. At times, he even intimates the subversive, or at least disruptive nature of the fantastic. In his words, *le fantastique fit irruption* (into literature and thought) *malgré Aristote, Quintilien, Boileau, La Harpe (...)*². I will consider the issue of the particular social 'position' (*parti pris*) of Nodier's fantastic in my analysis of his tales.

In fact, Nodier's tales embody a fantastic wherein unreason is not the negation of reason, but still a challenge to it³. Unreason shows the inadequacy of reason to explain the world completely, a concept that is illustrated by the intentional ambiguity around the issue of *vérité* and *mensonge* in Nodier's

² Nodier, "Du Fantastique...", 105, my emphasis.

³ It will be shown how reason and unreason, natural and supernatural explanations, are held in equilibrium in some of Nodier's tales, particularly in the first part of *Inès de Las Sierras*. The tale's conclusion essentially discusses this notion of equilibrium as one of the very subjects of the tale.

essay. *Mensonge*, or the unreason that emerges through the fantastic, is as valid as what is usually taken to be *vérité*. As Grivel proposes, *la vérité n'est consécutive qu'à un acte de foi, c'est-à-dire à un récit qui la produit, cette foi*⁴. Furthermore, Hans Peter Lund explains that Nodier believes in the principle of *la multiplicité de vérités* and in the *non-existence de la Vérité*⁵. If the fantastic does not seriously propose its story as possible, at the very least, it weakens the existing epistemological monopoly of the prevailing cultural consensus. It demonstrates, by comparison, how this consensus rests on the same shaky process of justification as reason in the fantastic, to support its pre-conceptions⁶.

In Nodier's essay, there are three ways of defining the fantastic, each revealing a great deal about the writer's notion of the genre. The three ways are: the metaphor of the fantastic as a "prism", the fantastic as the "psychic history of Man" and the notion that the fantastic is simply the "poeticization of a

⁴ Grivel, *Le fantastique*, 15.

⁵ Hans Peter Lund, *La critique du siècle chez Nodier*. Copenhagen: Revue Romane, 1978, 119. Along the same lines, Lund writes that the hidden order of reality resides in *la vérité de fiction* and that, this *vérité* being individual and subjective, *traverse toutes les valeurs débattues pour se constituer dans l'imaginaire* (Lund, 123).

⁶ Charles Grivel tells us that in this way, the fantastic denies the claims to truth of the accepted norm in thought (Grivel, *Le fantastique*, 7).

(hi)story". The fantastic text's relationship to society resides in its ability to open up possibilities for re-viewing the world (the prism); for re-viewing history (the psychic history of Man); for re-telling History (the poeticization of a [hi]story). I shall first describe each of the three before proposing what they might mean for Nodier's fantastic in general.

Nodier views the fantastic as a process rather than a product⁷. He describes it using the metaphor of a prism (74), which implies a specific type of representation and perception. The fantastic is not the dissected light that the prism produces, but rather the prism itself, the medium through which the image is dissected. The final product is the same as the original, in essence, only it is **seen** differently⁸. As a metaphor for the fantastic, the *prisme prestigieux* (74) defines the it as the taking of a new perspective on reality, the

⁷ As do others after him. *S'il existe un fantastique permanent et universel, il est issu, plutôt que du sujet, de la manière de le traiter* (Roger Caillois, "Le Fantastique" *Encyclopaedia Universalis* 1968 tome 6, p. 922).

The fantastic is less about what one writes than about how one writes it.

⁸ Charles Grivel gives a similar account of the fantastic, using the notion of a film-projection screen as a metaphor for the text : *C'est le texte qui produit le fantastique, le récit est cela qui le génère : il 'fantastique' tout ce qu'il touche. Le fantastique est simplement une façon de présenter, de raconter les choses. Le texte est un écran, le fantastique vient se marquer sur cet écran. (...) La page contient ce que je rêve (elle est l'imaginaire de tout lecteur). Dans un texte, on a donné à voir ce que l'imaginaire du lecteur produit sous sa raison, malgré elle* (Grivel, *Le fantastique*, 46, my emphasis).

dissection of the normal image reality presents of itself. In so doing, the prism metaphor underscores the notion of the fantastic as a new way of seeing and showing, which at times implies a critique of society's old ways of seeing and showing.

According to Lund, the prism allows one to represent, even if only in a dissected form, the totality of experience, both internal (or imaginary) and external (read: social). Lund claims that the prism offers an aesthetic solution to the problem of fractured truth, which Nodier feels is emblematic of his times. The prism offers a view that surpasses reason, therefore constituting a challenge to it. However, Lund describes Nodier's subjectivism as a repudiation of political involvement, after having grown disillusioned with society. Henceforth, Nodier's criticism of socio-political issues will be expressed through writing tales and, in particular, through the injection of subjectivity into history. Lund identifies this as, *l'optique propre à l'artiste*⁹. Following Nodier's own metaphor, then, what I essentially look at in the tales, is the **prisme**: the fantastic tale and how its structure allows it to

⁹ This all constitutes Lund's interpretation of the figure of the *prisme prestigieux* (Lund, 96-98). It supports the concept of the fantastic as referential to the social in so much as it offers an alternative view of it, and especially, in so much as it offers an alternative way of seeing and telling it.

dissect pre-conceptions like social rules and authority, science, the dismissal of superstitious belief; as well as the **dissected 'light'**: in other words, the images of society that we are left with, such as a re-defined notion of morality and the power of money, of justice, of imperialism. Of course, none of these themes are developed as pure abstractions. Nodier's tales revolve, as one might suspect, around human experience, especially topics of imagination, dream, and sanity. Therefore, while I do not engage in a psychoanalytical reading of the tales, it is clear that the experiential, or "lived-relations"¹⁰ aspect of ideology in the fantastic is not to be overlooked.

What of Nodier's model of the fantastic, the "psychic history of Man", the retelling of History by casting it in psychic terms, by "fantasticizing" it¹¹? The fantastic is, as in the case of Goethe's *Faust*, the "poeticization" of a (hi)story through the eyes of the psyche (104), a mirror (of imagination) held up to history that reveals those elements of (hi)story previously unperceived by reason. Of course, the term

¹⁰ As Eagleton would have us recognize.

¹¹ Hans Peter Lund claims that Nodier's fantastic attempts to integrate imagination (subjectivity) into History (Lund, 122-123).

According to Raymond Setbon, Nodier admires Walter Scott for effecting an integration not unlike this (Raymond Setbon, *Libertés d'une écriture critique, Charles Nodier*. Geneva: Slatkine, 1979).

l'histoire psychique de l'Homme is, in itself, ambiguous. Rather than 'the history of Man, told psychically', it could mean 'the history of Man's Psyche', or both. In either case, it is clear that Nodier insists upon the reflective nature of the text. The role of imagination, or the psyche, is implicated in the referential process whereby the images evoked only acquire meaning within a fantastic 'frame of mind'. Clearly, the fantastic is a way to tell or reflect history, or to produce a new History, a process that at least partly transforms one's impression of history. As Nodier himself claims, it is the fantastic which had *inventé ou embelli l'histoire des âges équivoques de nos jeunes nations* (81). Here, Nodier places his trust the intuition or imagination of folklore and legend, to give an account of history that is at least as accurate as the one given by History.

The re-viewing and re-telling of history in the fantastic are made possible when unreason gains credibility, and demonstrates that reason can be arbitrary, not universally and eternally "true"¹². I suggest it then becomes viable and

¹² In the words of Roger Bozzetto, *le fantastique pour Nodier est presque une catégorie a priori de la sensibilité qui impose son propre rapport au monde, et permet à celui-ci d'être perçu dans sa fraîcheur comme dans son horreur natives* (Roger Bozzetto, "Nodier et la théorie du fantastique," in *Charles Nodier*. special no. of *Europe* 614-615 (1980): 70-78, 76).

interesting to speculate on what issues of social significance emerge from this re-telling of history. If, according to Nodier, the fantastic of the past presents a different telling of history, then the fantastic of his day assumedly presents a different telling of his contemporary social reality. Before proceeding to identify the social issues that are re-viewed and re-told in Nodier's tales, the essential purpose of this study, I shall expand further on some elements of Nodier's essay, since I feel they provide a useful broad view of the writer's sensitivity to themes that recur in tales.

Certain aspects of Nodier's essay on the fantastic suggest how texts of the genre, as he conceives of it, might refer to their social context. These aspects also reveal how Nodier sees the genre as one that questions not only the postulates on which reason, as the dominant epistemology, is based, but also some of the laws governing thought, behaviour and expression. Indeed, it can be argued that these 'laws' are set, and reason used to legitimize them, in order to support a certain socio-cultural order. One of the aspects of which I speak, then, is language. Language emerges as a central theme in Nodier's essay, implying a link between the content of fantastic literature and its

interpretation¹³. I do not wish to imply that Nodier provides, in his essay, a workable model for the interpretation of his tales. However, some of the themes of his essay foreshadow themes and techniques in the tales. Themes that point to Nodier's sensitivity to the role of language as a potential tool for the forces of both social order and social disorder, provide such a foreshadowing.

In his essay on the fantastic, Nodier recognizes the social significance of language in literature¹⁴, implying that a politicization of language in society at large leaves its trace on the language of literary texts. He posits the existence of a popular lexicon (*locutions inaccoutumées*), that is, "unfamiliar" to, and thus ignored by the keepers of the official lexicon (*les compileurs de nos rhétoriques*, 97). Using this unofficial lexicon, and the images, themes and legends upon which it is based, the fantastic text encodes an unofficial discourse much to the disapproval of the *Encyclopaedistes*, the guardians of official language. As Décottignies might explain it, these are also the guardians of official "ideological

¹³ This link is exactly what Döring attempts to establish in his short essay on the fantastic. Döring, "À la recherche...".

¹⁴ In more scientific works, such as his study on onomatopoeia (1802), Nodier demonstrates an acute interest in the socio-historical significance of language.

discourses" by which interpretation is manipulated to the benefit of the dominant social group¹⁵. In keeping with his criticism of official control over language and literature, especially by Rationalists, Nodier identifies the *dogme littéraire* (of the) *dynastie aristotélique*, (in which) *l'Institut ne manque pas de bonnes raisons pour nous engager à croire* (99), alluding to an official attempt to suppress invention, such as the fantastic, in France.

Apparent in Nodier's discussion on writing as imitation or invention, is the same politicization of language in literature. The defenders of the status quo hold up "models" to be imitated in order to maintain control and safeguard their authority. Nodier, historicizing the issue, claims that as time passes, any socio-cultural order will eventually break down, as in the era of revolution and social decay that he feels marks his own lifetime. Then, a new style of writing that employs language differently, communicates new themes and introduces new subjects in an age of literary invention. In so doing, this new writing expresses the changing social reality. Nodier feels the

¹⁵ Décottignies, 619.

In *Inès de Las Sierras*, there will be a crisis of faith in Enlightenment principles as assumedly espoused by Voltaire. In the general scheme of the tale, those who promote Reason do so to prove the nonsense of such anachronisms as superstition, religion and rule by divine right.

fantastic belongs to that current of literary invention and therefore corresponds to an age of radical social change.

The politicization and historicization of language that is implied by Nodier in his essay, at some points focuses on the equally implied issue of semantics. At one of these points, there is Nodier's notion of liberty, a word unutterable in 1830 France without some political and historical resonance. Nodier's discussion of the concept of liberty suggests an assumed link between political and cultural order. He associates academism and Reason with Republicanism, and most especially, with the Reign of Terror. For writers, he urges a *liberté sans frein* (88). The barriers to this liberty, it is implied, are at once cultural and political. One need only examine Nodier's choice of vocabulary in discussing the restrictions placed on writing to clearly identify a conceptual connection between culture and politics : *pédants, oligarchie, despotisme, contrôlés, centralisation* are opposed to *naturel, indépendant, idéalisme, originale, individuel, locale* and *se livrer* (103-104).

Who are the "despotic oligarchy"? In 1830, they are those of position and influence who probably no longer represent the convictions of royalist Romanticism. It appears here that,

recognizing the feebleness of the Restoration Monarchy, Nodier is anticipating a return to the Republic, with all he detests in it: the images of pedantic rationalists, despotic leaders, the Reign of Terror, etc. If Nodier argues against a socio-political order, it is certainly not that of the Restoration, but of the Directory, the Empire and the threat, as he perceives it, that these might return. It should then come as no surprise that *Trilby*, written during the Restoration, makes far less direct social commentary¹⁶ than do *La Fée aux Miettes* and *Inès de Las Sierras*, both written during the Bourgeois Monarchy. In a sense, as the socio-political order changes, Nodier's tales seem to become more directly concerned with challenging that order.

In his 1830 essay, then, Nodier accuses the defenders of Classical and Rationalist cultural order of creating an hierarchy of thought, and tending to *se retrancher dans un ordre d'idées exclusif* (109). Basking in this elitism, those in control, or perhaps seen as emerging to a position of power, "muzzle" (*garrotter*) the thought and expression of poets (111). Exercising this elitism, the masters of the *vie positive* deny the existence of any thought that is not grounded in scientific observation of the material world. In a considerably sarcastic

¹⁶ And does not accord reason an active voice.

tone, and again pre-supposing a link between cultural and political order, Nodier chastises the Rationalists when he says of the imagination that it is *pas moins placée que celle des tentatives de (leur) perfectionnement social sous la protection des libertés que (ils) invoque(nt)* (111). With this assertion, Nodier implies that the Rationalists' notion of progress is illusory, given that, in the past, it only produced social upheaval in the Revolution of 1789 and the Reign of Terror. In the passage cited above, the essayist also implies that the Rationalists, both those of 1789 and their descendants in 1830, misuse the term 'liberty'. They are selective about deciding to whom genuine freedom shall be afforded, while duping the rest through a false application of the word: all are free to think, as long as their thinking is **correct**.

One essential element of 'correct' thinking in early Bourgeois society is certainly a commitment to the concept of Progress, so important where the new power group is attempting to legitimize a new social order by showing that it is superior to the feudal social order it replaced¹⁷, and to the Restoration,

¹⁷ Monleón historicizes this polemic, claiming that bourgeois thought of the Nineteenth Century hesitates between the two images of its "double vision" : progress and apocalypse. This hesitation expresses the crisis which determines the fantastic of the Nineteenth Century (Monleón, 51). He interprets apocalyptic endings in fantastic tales as indicative of those areas where bourgeois thought fails to convince that its social order actually represents an improvement on the past and a progression towards an even better future.

the contemporary shadow of the *Ancien Régime*. Science and Reason are the catalysts of Progress, and therefore of this specific process of legitimization. If they are proved inadequate to the task of explaining the world, especially the world as seen through the imagination or intuition, then the legitimacy of this new group may be brought into question.

Of course, part of the legitimacy of a cultural order depends on its capacity to establish truths. Nodier's assertion that *vérités* can be *réelles ou convenues* (78), reveals his notion of the arbitrariness some truths, which can be manipulated by cultural authorities attempting to establish a monopoly over meaning. This monopoly is not without its political undertones. Writing of the violence done to dissenters during the Reign of Terror, Nodier implicates by allusion those who defend what he considers to be the false *vérités* of *liberté, égalité, fraternité: vous croyez-vous assez sûr des vérités que vous faites payer si cher aux nations* (110)¹⁸. The victims of this tyranny, the "hermits" and "dreamers", those whose thought occupies the realm of the

¹⁸ As Lund sees it, this impulse in Nodier's idea of the fantastic, as well as in some of his tales, constitutes an antinomy between History and Truth. Writing the fantastic is an attempt to insert Truth into History. This Truth appears as *mensonge* because it challenges what has arbitrarily been imposed upon the public as Truth, pure and simple (Lund, 153).

"ideal", are actually the purveyors of *mensonge*. However, this *mensonge*, as opposed to the false *vérités* of their persecutors, does not designate 'lie'; rather it is unreason, speaking a type of 'truth' of its own. Paradoxically, *mensonge* becomes another *vérité*, established by the fantastic. In this case, the organic coherence of a fantastic vision, which accepts everything no matter how discordant, is enough to challenge reason, which itself cannot tolerate discordance¹⁹.

Even though he sees the fantastic as belonging to a separate "world", Nodier's concept of the genre is in fact less hermetic than it would initially seem. This fantastic "world" is actually one where attempts are made to bridge the gap between the "ideal" (or the religious) and the "material" in Man's thought. Where the "religious fantastic" makes some concession to reason (the type of *intelligence* involved in Nodier's *vie positive*²⁰), because it attempts to act upon or "reason with" a Rationalist epistemological system, the "poetic fantastic" seeks only to present the material world in

¹⁹ Setbon feels that, according to Nodier, our imagination possesses its own *vraisemblance*, and that, *la vérité même ne se présenterait pas plus distinctement à l'esprit*. Setbon compares this notion of the imagination to that of Vigny, for whom it provides, *une vérité plus vraie que le vivant* (Setbon, 202).

²⁰ The experience of Nodier's *homme purement rationnel*, who is at the third of three degrees of *science* or knowing. The first level is the science of God or the ideal, and the intermediate, is the fantastic, where Nodier places the poet (Nodier, "Du fantastique..." 72-73).

hyperbolic form, in order that it show forth some of its non-material essences (*toutes les séductions du monde positif*, 74). Nodier's notion of separate and yet inter-connected "worlds" is critical to my interpretation of his theory of the fantastic and of his tales²¹. The fantastic as a world is an "intermediary" between the other two (72), and is presented as part of an unbroken evolutionary process of human epistemology. The appearance of one type of thought is often ushered in by the waning of a past one. Therefore, imagination is not alien from Rationalism. In fact, it is fundamentally grounded in Rationalism, even if only to challenge the limits it places on freedom of thought and expression.

In his essay, there appears to be little in Nodier's assumptions on the fantastic, as articulated in the metaphor of the *monde intermédiaire*, for example, that would correspond to the negation or inversion models of the critics looked at earlier. Their models of social referentiality do not therefore fully appreciate the moderation of Nodier's view. As noted earlier, many theoreticians and critics, based on Freud's

²¹ According to Jackson, Jean-Paul Sartre historicizes this distinction by claiming that, in an age when religion prevailed, fantasy told of leaps into heavenly realms, while, in an age dominated by capitalist materialism, it merely inverts the natural world into something strange, something "other". She also cites Maurice Lévy, who states that the fantastic compensates, on the level of imagination, for that which man has lost on the level of faith (Jackson, 17-18).

description of the dream world, posit that the social challenge posed by the fantastic amounts to the projection of real social problems to the realm of the unreal of pure imagination. This projection purges society of the threat to order initially posed by these problems. At times, Nodier himself suggests that the fantastic essentially amounts to a simple distraction from social ills, thus implying that the genre is socially conservative. As noted, and at several other places in his essay, Nodier either explicitly or implicitly refers to the fantastic as a relatively innocent form of entertainment, a genre composed of escapist illusions, having as its social purpose or effect, the consolation or compensation of those in misery. The fantastic in *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, for example, offers the reader a *compensation passagère à l'amer ennui de sa réalité* (75). Innate in Man is an inclination toward the *merveilleux*, which, in fantastic literature, as an expression of the *vie imaginative*, becomes *la seule compensation vraiment providentielle des misères inséparables de sa vie sociale* (102). It is important to remember that in French, *misère* can be defined as **economic** hardship²². If the fantastic indeed serves

²² Or more precisely, as, *privation des choses nécessaires à la vie* (*Dictionnaire de L'Académie française* V^e Edition (tome II) Paris: J. J. Smits, 1798, 111).

only to distract the reader from real social problems, especially those of an economic nature, by projecting these problems onto an imaginary world, then the genre acts as a type of socio-economic 'pressure-release valve', and preserves bourgeois social order²³.

The fantastic then is not so much referential to society as away from it. Nodier's image of the writer as a vessel sailing at varying distances, according to style and genre, away from the "port" (civilization) (107), reinforces the image of the fantastic as an escapist literature. Fantastic *rêverie* provides compensation to the soul that is "overwhelmed by life's experiences", especially the anguish and dashed hopes brought about by revolutions; it allows one to *se rendre(mir) sur un songe heureux* (110). It is innocent, like faith, and protects one from "tumultuous" popular movements (111) by providing access to a shelter that exists only in the mind, a shelter

²³ Again, one is reminded of Monleón's suggestion that the fantastic amounts to a attempt, or need, by Bourgeois culture to contain the threat they feel emanates from the working class and the poor. If, in doing this, the genre also serves to distract those who might fight against social injustices, then the genre truly is conservative.

In terms of Nodier's claim, I feel it is necessary to qualify it, since those in misery of whom he speaks are not, in his age, a literate class of readers of the types of fantastic tales that he writes. Instead, the proposition that the fantastic is conservative, is more convincingly argued according to Monleón's notion: that the fantastic represents a projection by the Bourgeoisie itself of its own fear and bad conscience.

It would be erroneous to conclude from this that Nodier was a conservative defender of Bourgeois society, even if he does, on occasion, seem to suffer from a similar 'bad conscience'. It is also true that Nodier himself was in financial difficulty at the time of the essay's appearance (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 142), and therefore, one might suggest was suffering more from self-pity than a bad conscience!

hidden away from reality, since it is in the realm of the "ideal". Illusion, then, as a tool of compensation, is preferred to doubt, the speciality of Reason. It will be shown that Nodier's tales are built around these two interpretative options, belief and doubt, in the face of abnormal phenomena.

However, in concluding his essay, Nodier implies a stronger cultural significance to the fantastic than pure escapism. The point is subtle, but will be important in understanding Nodier's tales. The emphasis at the end of the essay may well seem to be on the entertainment value of the genre. Nevertheless, Nodier also hints at a comparison between the fantastic and notions of history, as well as beliefs about the future. He writes: *ce qu'on déracine le plus difficilement chez un peuple, ce ne sont pas les fictions qui le conservent; ce sont les mensonges qui l'amusement* (112). Fantastic stories are dearer to the people than are the broad beliefs that create social cohesion. We are to conclude from this statement that people prefer escapist fancy to thoughts of history and speculations on progress. At first glance, there is nothing particularly challenging about the type of fantastic described here. However, it is not whether the people prefer the fantastic to history that is most crucial, but the fact that the choice is between these two items

in particular. There is no opposition between fantastic *mensonge* and historical truth. Rather, the essayist alludes to a likeness between fantastic *mensonge* and historical *fiction*. Implied is the notion that the fantastic is somehow on equal footing with history. It is fair to conclude from this notion of parity, that fantastic *mensonge* may paradoxically, in some indirect way, tell as much 'truth' as history does. Through the tales, we will see how accepted cultural discourses (ideological, scientific, political, moral) are held in no greater esteem than the visions, dreams, or imagination of characters and narrators who encounter the abnormal, and find no completely satisfying reasonable explanation for it. In this way, the fantastic is not as innocent as Nodier claims, since it may call one to question social and cultural rules that are justified by the precepts of Reason. In the fantastic, after all, the veracity of Reason is no less fictional than that of the imagination.

There is, then, a certain discordance in Nodier's social and historical contextualization of the fantastic, and his claim that is purely innocent, escapist entertainment. Is the author unaware of the social implications of his theory of the genre? More likely is the possibility that Nodier employs a wise

strategy: namely, that of cloaking serious social commentary in the guise of innocent entertainment in order to escape counter-argument. While Nodier may claim in his essay that the fantastic is purely benign, it does not necessarily follow that his tales correspond to this conception. There is a question whether images such as the horrifying visions of the guillotine in *Smarra*²⁴, obviously evoking the Reign of Terror, for example, could be in any way interpreted as comforting or supportive of the bourgeois social order that Nodier links to the Revolution²⁵.

In fact, underlying Nodier's essay is the belief that the fantastic can indeed challenge contemporary social norms by evoking the order of a distant, if not primitive, past. The link to this past order is established as an ancestral link of cultural patrimony. Nodier claims that fantastic characters are "natural" parts of a national character. They are as much a part of a people's experience as the "Sun", as "customs" or as "monuments" (100), and especially harken back to a national past, a time when the natural (as symbolized by the Sun), the

²⁴ *Smarra, ou les démons de la Nuit*, published in 1821.

²⁵ I have already discussed how Nodier conceptualizes a connection between the social and cultural authority of his day and the Reign of Terror as the political event inaugurating this authority. Essentially, he interprets the Revolution as the result of, and perpetuation of, the dogmatic application of Reason to all elements of human experience, and argues against the very same dogmatism in his own (Bourgeois) age. His unease with the contemporary primacy of Reason becomes evident in a critique of Science by the narrator of *La Fée aux Miettes*, published only two years after the essay.

social (customs) and the political (monuments), formed an organic whole in the people's consciousness. At this time in the nation's past, the fantastic (which, in this primeval time, is actually myth or religion) typified the collectivity's means of understanding and expression²⁶.

Nodier's conception of the fantastic is based on the belief that it reawakens an intuition of the organic unity of a primitive past, which is also told of in folklore. Hence the appeal for Nodier of Perrault's tales (98-99). Nodier judges folklore and legends to be "perfect" and Perrault's tales, *puisé(s)* in these legends, impart to their reader something of that perfection. Rather than viewing human history as a linear progression, Nodier holds it to be cyclical, and is indeed, critical of the notion of Progress²⁷. Furthermore, by reviving

²⁶ This past is characterized by the "tribe", huddled at the edge of civilization, an image that fits with Monleón's notion of the exclusion or marginalization of disorder that is realized in Gothic art. According to Monleón, with the advent of the fantastic, this disorder moves in and attacks order from within its own boundaries. Bourgeois culture perceives of the threat from within (prisons, hospitals and mad-houses) (Monleón, 32-33). A slight alteration of this schema suits the pattern of Nodier's fantastic, where what is marginalized is actually the idealized tribal unity of a primitive time (or place, like Nodier's image of Scotland, in *Tribby*, for example). This ideal is 'inserted' into the civilized world, with the dreamer's or the madman's recitation of a dream or a vision, as its point of entry.

Pierre Albouy notes the reaction to these recitations, which in the Romantic Age was characterized by a dilemma : the *désir de croire* versus the *besoin de nier* (Pierre Albouy, *Mythes et Mythologies dans la littérature française* Paris : Colin, 1969, 72-73). This dilemma arises due to the hesitation between the "ideal" (or, one might say, unreason, intuition or imagination) and Reason.

²⁷ At least in progress effected through science. Nodier does hold a belief in the historical movement of mankind, through what has been called palingenesis, toward God, whom, albeit one reaches only after death. Movement toward human perfectibility is a concept

the intuition of a primeval state of harmony, the fantastic, according to Nodier, presents an ideal of unity; in turn, that ideal acts as an indictment of the equivocation characterizing the contemporary age²⁸.

By placing the genre in an intermediate world, to which one gains access through an intermediate type of knowledge (imagination or intuition), Nodier identifies the fantastic as a mediative process between a remote, unattainable "ideal" of complete harmony, and experience of the "material" world, the *vie positive* (72-73)²⁹. As a form of mediation, then, the fantastic provides a completely different glimpse of reality, and shows us things we might not otherwise see. Hence the "prismatic" vision, one that re-views the conventional

Nodier finds ridiculous. In addition, he views history as quite cyclical and is therefore distrustful of any notion that would interpret Man's history as a linear progression toward perfection, at least in earthly life.

²⁸ According to Anne-Marie Roux, Nodier's nostalgia and counter-revolutionary reaction lead him to look to a mythical Golden Age, opposing it to the Age of Civilization. According to Roux, this mythical event is not a fact but a *parole*, and Nodier's belief that one can somehow revive this Golden Age is actually based upon his conception of time as cyclical rather than linear. I feel, however, that Nodier does not believe in the possibility of restoring this state of harmony. It can at best be intimated and thus used to challenge and, it is hoped, improve contemporary society. The *parole* of which Roux speaks is the fantastic text, which can be interpreted as the attempt to reconcile (through imagination) these two conceptions of time. (Anne-Marie Roux, "L'âge d'or dans l'oeuvre de Nodier. Une recherche du temps perdu à l'époque romantique," *Romantisme* 16 (1977), 23,26).

Setbon states it in similar terms : *La révolution romantique pour Nodier fut la conversion du concept du temps linéaire à celui du temps cyclique, où la régénération soit le but* (Setbon, 181).

²⁹ In this way, Nodier's thought is neither purely Utopian nor purely regressive Utopian (Marcuse's concept, cited by Döring, 177), although much more the latter than the former.

representations of reality and in so doing, invites us to re-interpret that reality, or at the very least, to recognize the precariousness of our conception of it as a unified, meaningful world.

However, one must not misread Nodier's fantastic, either the description of it in his essay or the development of it in his tales, as a separate world, in isolation from what is held to be the norm, or 'reality'. In fact, reason is in evidence in Nodier's tales. Even basing stories on legend, imagination and superstition does not cause them to exclude reason. Indeed, in *Trilby ou le lutin d'Argail*, reason plays an implied interpretative role, and in *La Fée aux Miettes*, it acquires a voice in the character of a contemporary Scientist. In *Inès de Las Sierras*, reason even 'wins the day' as such, since ultimately, a rational explanation is found for the once puzzling apparition of the ghost. The degree to which these respective roles of reason in the tales represent an evolution in Nodier's works will form part of the general thrust of my analysis, but at this point, it is important to note the author's conviction that both unreason and reason are necessary components of the fantastic, since an actual return to the Golden Age is impossible, even through the vehicle of

literature.

Given that Nodier views the fantastic as an inclusive, holistic genre, it becomes difficult to imagine how he might see much about it that is socially subversive. Indeed, it would be more appropriate in the case of Nodier to conceive of a type of socially challenging fantastic text that aims at conciliation or integration of proscribed discourses into the mainstream. When this meets with the limits that Reason places on possibility, the result can be the polysemic, and even polyphonic, text. However, the final goal of Nodier's fantastic is to enhance and expand mainstream thought, not to annihilate it. It 'subverts' only to embellish or amend. In Nodier's view, this is all part of the cyclical process of human history.

We have seen that semantic ambiguity (or what Bessièrè prefers to call "polysemy"³⁰) can provide a foundation for the fantastic. This ambiguity might cause a reader to re-think pre-conceptions and then question the constraints that control meaning, in so far as they determine what is socially acceptable

³⁰ Jackson summarizes Irène Bessièrè on this issue :

The fantastic, as Bessièrè understands it, cannot be closed off. It lies inside closed systems, infiltrating, opening spaces where unity had been assumed. Its impossibilities propose latent 'other' meanings or realities behind the possible or the known. Breaking single, reductive 'truths', the fantastic traces a space within a society's cognitive frame. It introduces multiple, contradictory 'truths' : it becomes polysemic (Jackson, 23).

and unacceptable with regards to interpretation. For example, interpreting the appearance of ghosts literally may leave oneself open to ridicule, just like thinking it is not necessarily better to be rich than poor (in Nodier's *La Fée aux Miettes*, for example), but when delved into further, in the context of the fantastic tale, these 'ridiculous' attitudes may make as much sense as conventional approaches to the same issues.

Can it therefore not be permitted to posit some connection between the epistemological ramifications of interpreting the fantastic text, and broader social conditions?³¹ Nodier certainly implies a belief in such a connection, writing in terms of *croyances, doctrines, lois and morale* when comparing the literary traditions of Germany and France (103). He lends a political tone to the comparison, using such metaphors as: *indépendante, naturel, individualité, popularité, circonscriptions locales, usages, peuples* as well as *conventions routinières, despotisme, oligarchie, contrôlés, douane impérieuse, impressionnable, habitudes, l'aristocratie, centralisation* (103-104).

³¹ Hans Peter Lund claims that the fantastic is a way writing can "transpose" social reality to the level of fiction, and then make implicit commentary on it (Lund, 133).

According to Nodier, the fantastic demonstrates that the days of order and consensus are over. Philosophical, social and political opinion has become multi-voiced. Perhaps the only unity still possible is the awkward unity of paradox. Socio-cultural uniformity is threatened: *l'immense unité du monde social se rompt de toutes parts* (106). Given this aspect of Nodier's vision, one might feel inclined to search out instances of polyphony in his fantastic tales. Although the tales do at times articulate a dichotomy of perspectives and voices or even discourses, the partners in the discursive dichotomy are not necessarily mutually antagonistic nor, more fundamentally, are they fully autonomous of each other. According to Mikhail Bakhtin's study of polyphony in the works of Dostoïevsky³², each discursive perspective is articulated by a character, autonomous of other characters. Although Nodier's tales do contain diversity, their various perspectives do not always correspond entirely to autonomous enunciating subjects³³. However, they are presented as the various perspectives from which the characters

³² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problèmes de l'oeuvre de Dostoïevsky*. Paris: Seuil, 1963.

It also should not come as a surprise to find some measure of polyphony in Nodier, as in Romanticism generally. As Bénichou reminds us, *l'unité du romantisme était en puissance dans sa division* (Paul Bénichou, *Le sacre de l'écrivain*. Paris: Corti, 1985, 330).

³³ I will, for example, look at Nodier's *Inès de Las Sierras*, where characters adopt specific interpretative positions *vis-à-vis* the sighting of a ghost, and his *La Fée aux Miettes*, where characters' positions on many counts are much more fluid.

(and narrator) have to choose. This being the case, it becomes appropriate to speak in terms of a certain degree, or occurrence, of polyphony in Nodier's tales. It is consequently possible thus to contextualize Nodier's writing within a period of transition from mainly monologous to polyphonic texts. Bakhtin associates the emergence of the polyphonic text with the rise of Capitalist society³⁴.

Nodier's essay on the fantastic reveals a conception of it as a genre in which the co-existence of multiple perspectives on social reality can offer a more comprehensive view on that reality. Furthermore, Nodier does not assume that these perspectives need necessarily be oppositional³⁵ (82-83). He presents the fantastic as *l'univers entier personnifié* (84)³⁶.

Grivel also identifies the tendency, in the fantastic, toward reconciliation between different perspectives (resolution of polyphony), but casts it as socially conservative :

Le texte parvient à la fixation, localisation des

³⁴ Bakhtin, 27.

³⁵ According to Jean Larat, Nodier's valorization of sensitivity as a valid type of epistemology does not exclude or replace his respect for natural or language sciences (Jean Larat, *La Tradition et l'Exotisme dans l'oeuvre de Charles Nodier*. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1923, 313).

³⁶ Hans Peter Lund identifies what he calls an *idéologie de cohérence et du continu*, in Nodier's works (Lund, 90). This is the unifying tendency I have identified and that I feel leads Nodier to embrace paradox.

*lieux de rupture ; il en propose l'expérimentation. Il en réussit, ou du moins tente d'en réussir le désamorçage. Il conforte par là l'ordre social ambiant, moyen, tremblé, en son sein même*³⁷.

However, I feel Grivel's view over-estimates the importance of conclusions as defining the entire genre and its social referentiality. The fact is that even tales that end in resolution by reason, like *Inès de Las Sierras*, do not necessarily confirm the social order completely; they do raise social issues and question basic pre-suppositions³⁸.

We will see in Nodier's tales and we see in his essay, a tendency to challenge socially held pre-suppositions by questioning the accepted definitions of certain concepts, therefore making the issue a semantic one. Eternal truths such as liberty, as they are represented by social authorities, are questioned. They are localized and given conditionally, as when Nodier mentions the freedom *dont on nous parle* as a *déception de jongleurs* (109)³⁹.

³⁷ Grivel, *Le fantastique*, 24.

³⁸ As discussed earlier, Döring claims that many tales of the "uncanny explained", are not completely convincing or do not totally eradicate uncertainty and consequently they do not entirely reinforce social order. (Döring, "À la recherche...", 170).

³⁹ Monleón historicizes this process, when he writes that, by "dreaming" and creating "monsters" through the vehicle of fantastic literature, reason, in the bourgeois age (Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries) was questioning its most decisive attribute : the establishment of truth (Monleón, 41).

Nodier attempts to expose the hypocrisy of a bourgeois culture and ideology that expresses desire for total freedom (to compete without the yoke of feudal social constrictions, for example), and yet which does not permit genuine freedom of thought. Bourgeois culture so strictly constrains meaning that it ossifies language, robbing it of its ability to express, explain, interpret, establish and communicate meaning. It presents certain precepts, based on Reason, that must be embraced if one wishes to avoid expulsion from the mainstream. In his essay, Nodier also implies that this hegemony over thought is connected to socio-economic power, employing themes and metaphors that involve money or commerce. Nodier refers to imitative art as an "industry" (90), at the very least implying its status as artisanship, and at the most, showing some disdain for the principle of mass-production. Nodier then proceeds to criticize the *Institut* (the cultural Establishment) as a *douane impérieuse de la pensée humaine* (103), which "muzzles (*garotter*: lit. "ties up") poetic expression" (111). These commercial and penal metaphors imply an intense criticism of the dominant socio-economic group, one linked to the issue of how the fantastic questions the accepted interpretation of reality.

Nodier similarly implicates money in the issue of social

degeneration. He gives this degeneration the ironic name of *perfectionnement*, a concept to which his counterparts (Sainte-Beuve, for example) are fervently committed. He writes :

Voyez ce que l'égöisme économique et la statistique praticienne des modernes ont fait de la magnifique politique des anciens! --- Voyez ce qu'ont gagné la morale et l'intelligence de l'espèce à ce monstrueux perfectionnement représentatif, qui a tarifé la valeur individuelle du citoyen par sous et deniers⁴⁰.

Once again, the monetary metaphor is central to this bitter criticism⁴¹ which strikes at the heart of a socio-cultural order established on the foundation of commerce. Nodier laments the extension of the principles of commerce to the political and philosophical realms, where, he feels, these principles have no legitimate application. These themes, being of obvious concern to Nodier, are woven throughout his tales.

Hans Peter Lund finds that chronologically, Nodier's tales

⁴⁰ Lund, citing Nodier, 123.

⁴¹ José Monleón establishes the connection. He states that unreason in the fantastic represents the voice of medieval and feudal epistemology pitted against the bourgeois world, which often used wealth as a means of class distinction (a process of exclusion which amounted to a displacement of the previous distinctions between 'self' and 'other'). Therefore, according to Monleón, although money had long been around, its role as a tool of confinement and proscription in bourgeois society makes it an open target for those who oppose the power holders in this system.

Tobin Siebers posits that the Romantic fantastic casts the hero as marginalized or exiled martyr, this time a victim of the violence prevalent in society. In this way, real societal violence, rather than being properly addressed, becomes deferred to the imaginary universe of the fantastic text (Tobin Siebers, *The Romantic Fantastic* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

There certainly is a frequent recurrence of the theme of violence, especially with regards to the Revolution of 1789, in Nodier's tales.

become *de plus en plus idéologique*, that Nodier's tone *s'aigrit avec les années*⁴², and *sera de plus en plus sévère à l'égard du monde moderne*. Lund continues :

*A partir du moment où Nodier refuse ce dernier (the monde moderne), son engagement se transforme en dégageant critique. Abandonnant ses réflexions sur la Vérité, Nodier s'occupe de plus en plus de vérités fragmentaires, en élaborant ses souvenirs, sa propre histoire, et des fictions, celles des contes comme celles de l'Histoire tout court*⁴³.

Lund suggests here that Nodier's fantastic serves as a way for the writer to escape from social issues, and that, in so doing, Nodier makes of his fantastic an escapist form. However, I disagree with Lund, finding in Nodier's tales another form of social criticism; one that, through the subtlety of its form, cuts deeper than expository writing. Rather than arguing a social point using a form prescribed by reason, it uses the fantastic tale to implicitly raise issues as well as to challenge the hegemony of reason itself.

By historicizing the relationship of reason to unreason in my reading of some of Nodier's tales, I intend to shed more light on their social referentiality, the issues they raise, and

⁴² Lund, 141, 121.

⁴³ Lund, 125.

the place of ideology in them⁴⁴. Jean Décottignies uses a similar notion in his reading of Gautier. Concerning the fantastic tale-teller, he writes:

Pour avoir formé un projet particulièrement ambitieux, le conteur fantastique a, plus que tout autre, affaire à l'idéologie; c'est-à-dire à ce corps de préjugés impératifs et de valeurs instituées qui gouvernent, dans toute société, les prises de position et les attitudes des individus; qui veille aussi à ce que ne soit pas, à l'occasion de pratiques littéraires interromptrices ou contestataires, mise en cause la validité ou entamée la cohérence du discours culturel⁴⁵.

Returning to my initial topic, the relationship of reason to unreason and how this effects the interpretation of the social referentiality of the fantastic, I can now identify certain themes and tendencies in Nodier's tales that will help to explain their ideological co-ordinates. It will be discovered that, in Nodier's tales, reason and unreason are not

⁴⁴ Rosemary Jackson defines ideology as :

the imaginary ways in which men experience the real world, those ways in which men's relation to the world is lived through various systems of meaning such as religion, family, law, moral codes, education, culture, etc. It is: not something simply handed down from one conscious mind to another, but is profoundly unconscious (Jackson, 61).

As noted earlier, Terry Eagleton writes that a ruling ideology does not so much combat alternative ideas as thrust them beyond the very bounds of the thinkable and bases his definition of ideology on Althusser's conviction that it is as much a matter of lived relations than of speculative theoretical systems (Eagleton, *Ideology*, 58, 30, 47). I tend to look at both lived relations and theoretical systems as instances of ideology that leave some mark on literary texts, and in particular on the fantastic, even with its problematic referentiality, which strives to be re-instated within the bounds of the thinkable.

⁴⁵ Décottignies, 616.

oppositional, not dialectical; and yet they combine to produce texts wherein many aspects of reason-based cultural order are challenged. Moreover, they attempt to naturalize the paradox between reason and unreason, in order to allow for a wide-open investigation of social issues. It then remains to decide whether these texts are conservative and ultimately co-opted by socio-cultural order, or to what degree they in fact pose and sustain a challenge to that order.

I will look at five of Nodier's tales in chronological order, seeing to what degree they correspond to the three categories of fantastic stories that Nodier himself explained in *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, and a fourth, that I add to these. In addition, I explore the tales' development of the concept and the metaphors of the fantastic that Nodier expressed in his essay. The tales considered are his most important, and reveal a definite evolution in Nodier's understanding of the relationship between the genre and society in general, which is also indicative of a certain ideological stance. *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argail*, written in 1822, develops the notion of the *histoire fantastique fausse*, where there is an assumption of belief, or at least suspension of disbelief, by both the tale-teller and the audience. That assumption rests on legend as an

intertext, and, in fact, uses that intertext as a vehicle to communicate several social, indeed moral, points. In fact, the key to understanding the tales' generic and ideological bearings rests in the organization of each tale around a specific concept, for example: *charité*, *folie*, *clairvoyance*, and *theatre*. In *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argail*, the issue of truth centres on defining the concept of *charité*.

CHAPTER III

NODIER'S *TRILBY*:

SOCIAL AUTHORITY AND LEGEND IN THE FANTASTIC

I. *TRILBY* AS FANTASTIC TALE

In Chapter One, I discussed the fantastic as literature that is to some degree defined by its capacity to present antinomy between unreason and reason. In the fantastic, this antinomy comes into play during the interpretation of the unnatural decor, events, characters and causality of the story. I discussed how Döring and Décottignies associate ideology and cultural discourses with the laws of reason, the former entering the text in support of the latter. For example, when someone 'in' the text, the narrator or a character, or even an implied reader, dismisses an unnatural event as the product of dreams or insanity, cultural assumptions about reason are maintained and succeed in explaining and hence dismissing the unnatural. However, according to these two critics, most fantastic texts possess a built-in ambiguity concerning their own interpretation, allowing them to resist being easily rationalized and dismissed. Later, it will be seen how well this model corresponds to Nodier's *La Fée aux Miettes* and *Inès de Las Sierras*, where the text does to some degree take up the

issue of its own interpretation. Both *La Fée aux Miettes* and *Inès de Las Sierras* lend some textual space to rationalizing cultural discourses. However, the tales present issues that, in the antinomical structure of their referential systems, can neither be wholly denied or dismissed by the rationalizing discourses that attempt to do so. For example, in *La Fée aux Miettes*, the distinction between 'reality' and the imagined world of a madman becomes so blurred that it is impossible for the psychologist in the tale to conclusively relegate Michel's story to the realm of pure fancy, and thus contain or marginalize it¹.

However, in Nodier's *Trilby*, rationalism is not given a voice. From the very beginning of the tale, neither the narrator nor any character express doubt concerning the possibility of the events described in *Trilby*². Resting on an *a priori* assumption of suspension of disbelief, the narration begins: *Il n'y a personne parmi vous, mes chers amis, qui n'ait entendu parler des drows de Thulé et des elfs ou lutins familiers de l'Ecosse, et qui ne sache qu'il y a peu de maisons*

¹ Cf. Monleón's claims that the fantastic represents bourgeois culture's attempts to marginalize what it interprets as threats to order.

² In his reading of *Trilby*, Pierre Albouy suggests that the absence of narrative judgement of Jeannie's dreams is precisely what makes the tale fantastic (Pierre Albouy, *Mythes et mythologies dans la littérature française*. Paris: Colin, 1968, 74).

rustiques dans ces contrées qui ne comptent un follet parmi leurs hôtes (102). The story of *Trilby* is inserted into a corpus of legend, which, populated with real historical figures like Saint Columban, transforms the tale into a type of pseudo-history that is neither purely factual nor purely fanciful. To use Nodier's metaphor, the fantastic tale is a prism that allows its reader to glimpse those elements of history not represented in History³. Therefore, *Trilby* lies between the first two categories of the fantastic described by Nodier in his *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*: the *histoire fantastique fausse* and the *histoire fantastique vague*, since, while there is nothing in the

³ Marie-Claude Amblard suggests as much when she claims that:

Ce n'est pas seulement à cause de l'insistance sur le monologue intérieur de Jeannie et ses impressions, ni par suite de l'incertitude sur l'existence de Trilby, que le conte est fantastique. Sous une apparence légendaire, une sorte de drame comique se joue ...

Without fully establishing the link between folklore and the fantastic, Amblard implies the crucial link in the tale when she states that there is:

ambivalence du lutin quant à sa nature morale, mais aussi physique: Nodier ne le présente-t-il pas comme le frère de Colombain MacFarlane ...

and that:

Nodier semble avoir un certain goût pour des sujets "vrais", c'est-à-dire appartenant déjà au folklore, à l'histoire anecdotique ou religieuse ...

Marie-Claude Amblard, "Sources et structures du fantastique dans les contes de Nodier. Etude thématique et comparée," Diss. (Doctorat d'Etat) Montpellier III, 1983, 138, 144.

It is precisely *Trilby*'s association with a real historical (read: folkloric) personage that allows the reader to suspend disbelief, and entertain the possibility of the existence of imps, in some form. Then, there is some degree of hesitation between the rational explanation of the story as the dreams of a frustrated young wife and the more imaginative explanation of the tale as a possible string of events in a time long past.

Jacques Finné also addresses the connection between folklore and the fantastic, arguing: *il n'est pas interdit de croire qu'un conte fantastique issu d'un thème folklorique serait accepté, par certains lecteurs, comme un récit réaliste* (Finné, 26). I feel this would be the case with *Trilby*.

tale itself that challenges the veracity of the supernatural, reason does have a role; a role that is implied by the pseudo-history of the tale's intertext, the legend of Saint Columban. In other words, the tale solicits an interpretative stance that lies somewhere between complete credulity and complete doubt, as linking Jeannie's story to a real historical personage, in essence gives it an historical context. Even legend, it may be argued, tells a type of history.

Trilby tells the story of one character's search for truth and how this search is impeded by social authority, power and monetary interests, which are inter-connected. The heroine's search for truth essentially takes the form of a process of definition. The concept to be defined is *charité*, and the process used in the tale to define it, involves looking to the ancestral past of Jeannie's community, beyond the constraints placed on understanding by the above-mentioned impediments. Jeannie faces opposition from Ronald, the figure of social authority in her community when, through her encounter with *Trilby*, she discovers the historical truth about the foundations of that authority. Analogically, the tale demonstrates how the fantastic, as pseudo-history, looks back to discover truth in

what would normally be dismissed as unreason⁴.

As explained in my first two chapters, Nodier sees the fantastic as a mediative process between the past, glimpsed through dreams or intuition, and the present; and this process is manifested by fantastic elements in Jeannie's world, like the portrait of Trilby and the legend of Saint Columban. The past, even if legendary or pseudo-historical, naturalizes and gives meaning to the paradox that exists between reason and unreason on the level of the interpretation of the story. On the level of Jeannie's quest for understanding, within the context of the story, the past mediates between socially defined concepts of *amour* and *charité*, on the one hand, and Jeannie's dreams of

⁴ There is not necessarily an analogy between the characters in *Trilby* and real historical figures of Nodier's time. The connection is between processes, not personages. There is the added social dimension of dream as clear vision, a theme common to Nodier's tales and to other Romantic literature (Nerval, Gautier), in which dream allows a character to see beyond the barriers to understanding erected by social authorities seeking to control the thought and hence behaviour of individuals.

Concerning the reader's recognition of real world situations that are similar to those enacted by the tale, Charles Grivel speaks of the text as a screen upon which images are projected. These images are evoked by the text on the level of the reader's memory, which is itself socially conditioned, even if through restrictions, bespeaks a collective unconscious.

In a similar model of the psyche as a connection between the tale and reality, Marie-Sophie Lambert interprets *Trilby* as the textual enactment of an essentially internal tension between desire and *Surmoi*, between images of good father and bad father, etc. (Marie-Sophie Lambert, "Trilby," in *Charles Nodier. Colloque du deuxième centenaire. Besançon-mai 1980*. Paris: Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, 1981: 97-112). It is possible to move from Lambert's study, which is limited to the level of the individual to an understanding of the social components of the tension in the tale; a step that Grivel takes in his work.

However, these models imply that dream is the sole 'voice' of the fantastic which dissipates once the dream is over. I would suggest that the social impediments to understanding remain in evidence after the *dénouement*, and are even emphasized by Jeannie's martyrdom at the end.

amour and her own definition of *charité*, on the other.

II. JEANNIE AND RONALD: A MATTER OF DEFINITION

*Ce sont tous les segments d'énoncé qui désignent et commentent l'oeuvre: la première page de couverture, qui porte le titre, le nom de l'auteur et de l'éditeur (...). Toutes ces suites de signes forment un énoncé sur le roman qu'ils dénomment, et un discours sur le monde. Elles programment un comportement de lecture, elles tendent au lecteur un filet sémantique où il viendra se prendre.*⁵

*Amour et charité*⁶

If there is one theme or element in Nodier's tale *Trilby ou le lutin d'Argail* (1822) that holds out to the reader a *filet sémantique*, one which acts to programme a specific type of reading, it is the theme of *amour et charité*. As the tale unfolds, the meaning of these two words, and how they are

⁵ Henri Mitterand, *Le discours du roman*, Paris : PUF, 1980, 15 (my emphasis). According to Mitterand, essential keys to the interpretation of literature are often found around the text, in book covers, title pages, prefaces, etc. Although here Mitterand is speaking specifically about the realist novel, texts of any genre can provide similar points of entry into their stories through introductory elements like title pages, prefaces, etc.

⁶ These words are printed on the title page of the original edition by Ladvoat, publisher of Nodier's *Trilby, ou le lutin d'Argail* in 1822. A copy of this title page can be found at the beginning of *Trilby*, p.103, in the collection of Nodier's tales to which all of my references are made: Charles Nodier, *Contes* ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, Paris: Garnier, 1961.

related, or not related, to each other, becomes a central issue in character and plot development, as well as character tension both internal and external. Conducted in terms of defining these concepts, *Trilby* is essentially a search for truth. This search is embarked upon accidentally by Jeannie, who falls in love with Trilby the imp and then seeks to understand the conditions governing his proscription from her home and then from her community. The imp is banished by Ronald, an old monk to whose authority the community defers. What is discovered over the course of the story is that Ronald has his own reasons for eradicating the imp from the lives of these people and, although cloaked in the discourse of theology and moral philosophy, his motives are more than purely religious. In order to justify his actions, Ronald employs theological discourse, including a very rigid definition of *amour* and *charité*, a strategy that works well to win the support of the community, with the exception of Jeannie. In this manner, Ronald exercises complete control over his flock: he directs their behaviour by controlling how they think about specific concepts. Since *charité* would be the only argument raised against banishing Trilby, Ronald redefines *charité*, leading the people to expel the imp in a unified effort, save for the

protestations of Jeannie, who questions Ronald's notion of *charité* to the very end.

Before describing the tale's structure of social power, it is useful here to provide a summary of the tale:

Trilby is set in a medieval Scotland of clans and monasteries. Jeannie, the innocent young wife of Dougal the fisherman, is visited in her dreams and day-dreams by the mischievous but not malevolent imp, Trilby. Motivated perhaps by feelings of guilt over the attraction she feels for the imp, Jeannie reveals his existence to her husband, who calls in the ancient monk, Ronald, to exorcize the imp from their home. The monk's involvement serves only to heighten the tension, for Trilby is now transformed in Jeannie's visions into a beautiful adolescent, whom she finds increasingly difficult to resist.

Along with Dougal, Jeannie then undertakes a pilgrimage to Ronald's monastery at Balva. Their motives differ: Jeannie, feeling sorry for having caused a malediction to be placed on Trilby, seeks to invoke the mercy of Saint Columban, the patron of Balva, while Dougal intends to pray for a plentiful catch. During an address in which Ronald condemns the imp, Jeannie refuses to join in the public responses that serve as the people's approbation of this condemnation. While at Balva,

Jeannie accidentally discovers Trilby's true identity. In a portrait hidden behind a curtain, deep in the recesses of the monastery, Jeannie recognizes the imp's face. He is John Trilby MacFarlane, a clan chief of long ago. She also discovers later that Trilby is Saint Columban's brother and that Ronald's ire in fact stems from the MacFarlanes' failure long ago to pay the usual monetary tribute to the monastery.

Trilby continues to lure Jeannie. She resists for as long as she can, but finally succumbs and follows him to a cemetery where Ronald and Dougal are about to imprison him in a tomb for one thousand years, next to the "Saint's Tree". Repeating Trilby's very words on the subject of love's endurance of even one thousand years' waiting, Jeannie plunges into an open grave next to Trilby's prison, and dies. Her conviction to the concept of *charité*, especially as it is linked to *amour*, makes a martyr of her.

There are some points of connection and overlap between the concepts of *amour* and *charité* in Nodier's time, as can be seen in the *Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française* (Fifth Edition, 1799). Moreover, the two concepts combined produce a synthesis of the divine and the profane in human relations. *Amour* is defined as a *sentiment par lequel le coeur se porte vers ce qui*

lui paroît aimable, et en désire la possession. Among examples given are: *amour honnête*, *amour légitime*, *amour divin*, *amour céleste*, *amour terrestre*, *amour sensuel* and *amour conjugal*. Evident here are moral and even legal co-ordinates which define concepts such as *amour honnête*, *amour légitime* and *amour conjugal*. It will become evident that, although Jeannie is aware of these co-ordinates, she can not resist a larger definition that breaks down the boundaries between these types of love and *l'amour sensuel*. She also blurs the distinction between *amour divin*, *amour céleste* and *amour terrestre*. The heroine's further actions demonstrate two other examples from the *Dictionnaire*: *être transporté(e) d'amour* and *mourir d'amour*.

The means Jeannie finds to break down these semantic categories, which, as I noted above, are to some degree rooted in the broader social categories of moral and social law, is the connection she establishes between *amour* and *charité*. Further entries in the 1799 edition of the *Dictionnaire* under the heading of *amour* indicate a similar semantic connection between the two concepts: *amour de charité* and *amour qui procède d'un sentiment de bienveillance, de charité, etc.* Although libidinous desire is only implied in *Trilby*, the *Dictionnaire* also defines *amour* as: *la passion d'un sexe pour l'autre*, as

well as the *divinité fabuleuse*, à qui les anciens Païens attribuoient le pouvoir de faire aimer. Ronald's role in opposing Jeannie's more broadly inclusive definitions of *amour-charité* is not surprising, since *charité* is defined as a theological concept: *L'une des trois Vertus Théologiques; Amour par lequel nous aimons Dieu comme notre souverain bien; L'amour qu'on a pour le prochain en vue de Dieu.* Further examples provided in the *Dictionnaire* confirm the theological and moral attributes assigned to the concept of *charité*, but do not necessarily substantiate Ronald's definition of *charité* as having the potential to be *un grand péché* (Trilby, 119): *La charité couvre la multitude des péchés; Si je n'ai point la charité, je ne suis rien; la charité est la perfection de la Loi.* The *Dictionnaire* also provides examples of *charité* as a motivating force: *mouvement, motif de charité; il fait telle chose par charité, par pure charité.*

Jeannie's blending of *amour* and *charité* constitutes a new perspective on the concepts as they were defined at the turn of the Nineteenth Century. It is a new perspective, rather than a simple re-definition of the two concepts or the replacement of existing definitions; a perspective which juxtaposes them in ways that shed new light on their meaning. Within the context

of the tale, Jeannie encounters opposition from the social authority, Ronald, whose attempts to maintain his own position of power lead him to manipulate the concept of *charité*; consequently, he incorrectly, even blasphemously, defines it as potentially sinful. His manichean view of *amour* and *charité* causes offense to the Law (*la Loi divine*) in order to support the social and moral laws that serve to maintain his power. What is worse, we later see that this power is essentially temporal, in so far as it is based on commercial interest. Using the term *charité* to express a misrepresentation of fact, in a proverbial expression based on counter-meaning, is interestingly (even if perhaps only coincidental here) not foreign to French, as this quotation from the *Dictionnaire* makes clear:

on dit figurément et proverbialement, par contre-vérité, "Prêter une charité, des charités à quelqu'un," pour dire, Vouloir faire croire contre la vérité, qu'il a dit ou fait quelque chose qu'il n'a dit ni fait; and that, on dit dans ce sens, et proverbialement, "Une charité de Cour", pour une perfidie de courtisan.

While Ronald's character should not be read as a direct representation of social and moral authority in early Nineteenth Century France, there is in fact one way to see a connection

between the tale and Nodier's France; namely, *Trilby's* representation of the struggle over semantics. The struggle concerns behaviour and the effect of language on social power and moral laws, and thus becomes an issue of social power within the paradigms of the tale's story. My study will develop the theme of semantic struggle in the tale, and show its connection to the *hors-texte*. A story told through the medium of the realist novel is more convincingly connected to its *hors-texte* by a system of direct referentiality. However, telling a story in the form of a fantastic tale complicates but also enriches the process of reference.

The connection between story and *hors-texte* is indirect in *Trilby*. The tale revives the image of a world that readers in 1822 might regard as paradoxical, in which the dream is as 'real' as reality. Imps and real historical figures co-exist in an unapologetic text, and yet the fantastic tale does not present this primitive, magical world as a perfect one, or as one that should **replace** the contemporary world. In other words, the magical world is not a model held in opposition to the real world. It is, however, meant to be an imaginary world wherein concepts and themes can be re-viewed through the *prisme prestigieux*. As suggested above, because of the sustained

paradox, or unresolved antinomy, this world can neither be wholly dismissed as fabulous, nor completely accepted as somehow extant. Just as the antinomy between Jeannie's dreams and what is historically true becomes the only condition under which truth can be understood, the antinomy between reason and unreason is the only way the writer of the fantastic can describe an unconventional process of truth-seeking.

Trilby is essentially about the definition of *charité*, not just as an abstract concept, but also as a principle guiding behaviour and as a motivation for certain positions and actions taken. First, Jeannie defines her feelings toward *Trilby* as a matter of *charité*. However, there is an undeniably sensuous side to them. She deplores *Trilby*'s exile and yet cannot allow herself to wish for his return. Her dilemma creates a tension between the social rules that direct her conscience, and her own intuition, which tells her what it is that she really desires. She hesitates between compliance with, and rebellion against, Ronald, the voice of social and religious authority in the tale⁷. The tension is a result of Ronald's attempts to control Jeannie, whose 'revolt' is tenuous and finds its only expression in silence, in her refusal to act in complicity with the monk in

⁷ The two are one and the same in *Trilby*.

his condemnation of Trilby.

Jeannie's desires only achieve expression in her dreams, and sometimes in the voice of Trilby himself. It is dream that links Jeannie to the ancestors, of whom Trilby is indeed one ("John Trilby MacFarlane", 124). This connection to the past is interpreted by Dougal and by Ronald, for different reasons, as a threat to the stability of the status quo. Dougal sees Trilby's seductive sway over Jeannie as a threat to her marital fidelity. Ronald, we discover, is more politically motivated, seeking to minimize Trilby's influence over the locals; for, as mentioned above, the MacFarlanes are old economic enemies of the monks. After the pilgrimage to Balva, Jeannie day-dreams, projecting her love for Trilby into the local legend of Arthur the Giant. The legend, as it is told in the tale, explains the foundation of the monastery, as well as the MacFarlanes' negligence in paying the tribute. Jeannie's dreams link her, *par (une) liaison secrète* (129), to the history, or at least the history as legend would have it, of her people. Still speaking in terms of the imaginary world presented in the tale, I assert that dream provides a socio-historical contextualization of Jeannie's attachment to Trilby. During the pilgrimage to Balva, we discover that Jeannie's love for Trilby has ramifications

beyond the realm of personal desire. Unwittingly, Jeannie becomes involved in a larger, political struggle. It is essential to recognize both of these levels of the story, the personal and the political, and how they are connected.

During his address to the pilgrims at Balva, Ronald depicts the life of a monk as one of austere self-denial (119-120). Revealing some measure of the psychology of repression (or of martyrdom), Ronald describes the life of the monks in terms of imprisonment, denial, rigour and lovelessness (120). These 'martyrs' are tormented, the same as Jeannie, by the *démons du coeur* (120) who play on one's human desires. Clearly, as a psychoanalysis of the tale would show, the imps represent the libido, the instinctive side of *amour*. In the threat they pose to the institutions of marriage and holy orders, they challenge the social order⁸. Marie-Sophie Lambert matches the (semantic) religious dispute over the concept of *charité* to the human dispute between the Surmoi (Ronald) and the ideal (held by

⁸ In a fully psychoanalytical reading of *Trilby*, Marie-Sophie Lambert interprets the tale's principle struggle between paganism and rigorous Christianity as a displaced struggle of wish against the Surmoi (Lambert, "Trilby," 100). At slight variance with this, I would argue that it is less a matter of displacement than a part of the very dynamic of social repression, and that the interest in paganism (without totally embracing it, of course) is as a challenge to the discursive rule of the dominant character. In other words, the personal struggle is part of (symptomatic of) a larger struggle for social power. The individual threatens the holder of social power when she follows her desires.

Jeannie) of the Moi. According to Lambert, Ronald's portrait of the monks' life is a bitter one, devoid of Christian hope. In it, he reveals his envy of the love that Trilby inspires in Jeannie. This envy leads to the sadism evident in the disproportion between the 'sin' and the punishment'. While envy might be part of Ronald's motivation to banish the imp, what really troubles him about Trilby's sway over Jeannie and over the rich wives of the community, is that it represents a threat to his own power over these people. The monk views the imps as enemies and religion as his weapon against them: *comment résisterions-nous à l'ennemi acharné à notre perte si nous n'usions pas contre lui de toutes les ressources que la religion nous a réservées, de tout le pouvoir qu'elle a mis entre nos mains?* (119).

Trilby, it seems, views religion differently, seeking redemption through Jeannie's love. Initially, he does not propose that she escape with him to some other place, but that she express her love for him by allowing him to become the *esprit vagabond du foyer* (133). He seeks to remain in some way part of the social system. Ronald, of course, can not tolerate

' Lambert, "Trilby," 100. Clearly, Ronald is also jealousy guarding the position of social power he enjoys.

what he views as an infiltration by the enemy into the very home of one of his subjects. Through Jeannie's love, Trilby's proposal represents a type of reconciliation between himself and Ronald, or, in psychoanalytical terms, between Jeannie's desires and her duty to conform to social rules¹⁰. However, Trilby's struggle for acceptability demands a reformulation of social laws, which naturally, Ronald resists. The tension builds as the pilgrims make their way to Balva.

Essentially, the journey to Balva is ironic. As a pilgrimage, it should involve moving toward a holy place for the purpose of prayer, healing, enlightenment and supplication. The result of the visit for Dougal and Jeannie is that their marriage is irreparably shaken: as Jeannie is enlightened about the true identity of Trilby and moved to plead for clemency in his case, she ultimately finds her desire for the imp irresistible. None of these would be in keeping with what any

¹⁰ Lambert recognizes a symbolic integration in Jeannie's relationships to Ronald and to Saint Columban. Jeannie launches an appeal to the *bon père* (Columban) to help her to accept her desire (Trilby), which constitutes a revolt against her *Surmoi* (the *mauvais père*, Ronald, who is also the social authority) which is controlling her directly through another strict father (Dougal), who never expresses tenderness towards her. Trilby has to be a 'lover' for her in order to symbolize her desire, but this love must also be platonic, so that he can also seemingly paradoxically play the role of a primitive *Surmoi* (an alternative to Ronald). Lambert sees Jeannie's acceptance of Trilby's death, and her own death, as signs of masochism. This well may be, but not without the fame associated with martyrdom.

Another point made by Lambert that, looked at under a different light, is pertinent to the present study, is that the battleground is really the home. The imp, as in Teutonic and Scandinavian legend, is a household imp who comforts the heroine in her day to day routine. When he becomes seductive, he strikes at the very heart of social stability: home and marriage (Lambert, "Trilby," 99-100, 107).

of the characters would wish: Dougal surely would desire to strengthen his wife's devotion to him; Jeannie herself initially prays for self-discipline, hoping to resist the imp's charms¹¹; Ronald seeks to reduce the influence and power of the imps, who infringe on his territory by impressing his subjects with their power, beneficent or otherwise. When Trilby is as effective as Ronald at securing a plentiful catch for Dougal, then it is of paramount importance to the monk that Trilby's influence on any one of the locals be eliminated.

The irony of the pilgrimage begins with the very journey toward the monastery. Rather than moving toward light, which is what one would expect to symbolize the trip, the pilgrims move into darkness, both literally and figuratively. Also of importance is the imagery of space and direction in the tale: for example, as the couple journeys 'upwards' toward the monastery, they sink ever more deeply in the desperation of their marital problem. As Jeannie enters the holy place, she becomes increasingly immersed in her profane love for Trilby. Moreover, it is, of course, in the monastery that she learns the true identity of the imp. The contrast is between the pastoral setting of the Dougal's humble abode and the crumbling, yet

¹¹ *Qu'allait-elle, d'ailleurs, demander à Dieu, sinon d'oublier Trilby?* (114).

rigid monastery (wherein they find Ronald, the "inflexible" monk, 113). Clearly, the monastery symbolizes a monolithic, austere seat of cultural (and, as we learn, economic) authority, that is penetrated by the innocent and unsuspecting curiosity of the individual. Ironically, it is within the walls of that stronghold that she finds the historic truth behind the figure of her desire, Trilby.

However, in Jeannie's approach to the monastery, there are strong indications of her ambiguity. She fears Ronald and feels he is cruel, but can not entirely condemn his actions. After all, he seeks only to help her "keep her vows" (114). Has she not been indiscreet, and perhaps even guilty in her feelings for Trilby? We are forewarned of a discrepancy between Jeannie's wish to comply with Ronald's dictates on marital fidelity and her own desires for Trilby. In a short paragraph containing only one thought, Jeannie says hopefully to herself that Ronald, being of such an advanced age, *plus de cent ans à la dernière chute des feuilles*, may very well be dead by the time of the pilgrimage (114). We read that, although she goes to the monastery with the *besoin d'oublier Trilby, et de ne plus y rêver*, this is a prayer that *son coeur ne pouvait cependant avouer tout entière* (116-117).

The voyage is rich in symbolism, taking the characters through the forest where the natural and instinctual run uninhibited, *dans ces jours de décadence de l'automne* (114), blending indistinguishably with human voices. The signs of cultural authority (civilization) are reduced to remnants and ruins: *on a vu des loups errer sans défiance à travers des colonnes d'une chapelle abandonnée* (115). However, these ruins retain an audible reminder of their past power: *le chant grêle d'une jeune vierge cloîtrée que répond aux mugissement majestueux de l'orgue* (115). The scene is described as very menacing, a *mélange* of voices that seem to call to an instinctive ear, causing to awaken many buried desires and fears. Human sounds blend almost indistinguishably with the sounds of nature: *le cri des branches sèches*, and, *la plainte confuse des bêtes de proie* (115). In this very setting, the monastery, itself austere, was built as Scotland's bastion against evil (116). It is a space of time-transfer where the past is inserted into the present, where the Dougals are inserted into the legendary past of their country. It is a magical space, and yet a space of truth, where the real desires of Jeannie and the real identity of Trilby are bared and played out.

The pilgrims arrive at the monastery to voice their respective petitions on the great feast of Saint Columban. Ronald is not only present, but also directs and to some degree controls the pilgrimage once it arrives at the monastery. Before discussing the ceremony at the monastery, it is useful to look back at one other occasion when Ronald exercised his powers to intervene in the lives of the Dougals, the initial exorcism of Trilby early in the tale.

Reinforcing my reluctance to read *Trilby* in terms of a strict dialectic between reason and unreason is the fact that the social authority, Ronald, is as much a part of the magical 'world' as are the other characters¹². His brand of religion is not a Classical, Cartesian Catholicism, but one that blends indigenous myth with Christianity. Ronald's ritual of exorcism incorporates the local with the universal, although there is a line of demarcation in the terms of imagery: during the daytime, there are Ronald's prayers, meditations and conformity to his books of the Ritual and of the Clavicule (106), while at night, he scatters holly and prepares to encounter Trilby. Even the

¹² *Trilby*, then, represents a first strategy for complementarity between reason and unreason: quite simply, antinomy between the two is not directly addressed by the tale.

Indeed, what might actually remind one of Bourgeois society, as Nodier views it, are the motivations for Ronald's actions rather than his similarity to any real personage in 1820's France.

old monk is not exempt from the appeal of the primeval and the indigenous¹³. Ronald mixes litanies to the Blessed Virgin with tricks from Solomon's 'secret book'. The tripartite structure of the expulsion ritual certainly evokes Christian symbolism, as does the participation of the spectators, which suggests Dougal and Jeannie's complicity in the victimization of Trilby. However, the very fact that Ronald calls Trilby by name indicates the monk's close familiarity with local folklore.

It is significant that, in the ceremony of exorcism, the Christian God is peripheral and authority is exercised through methods of mediation (tools, books, spells, sacraments, talismans). The power resides more in codes and communication than in any abstract source, and it will be seen later how these codes and communication can be manipulated and even perverted. This scene tells more about Ronald's authority than God's. Ronald's power over the moral life of the fisherman and his wife is concretized in the para-liturgical ritual of expulsion. Through their responses they vocalize complicity with, or subjugation to, his authority. Of course, the fact that Jeannie

¹³ In fact, Marie-Sophie Lambert identifies Ronald's rituals as being more magical than religious (Lambert, "Trilby," 108).

is less enthusiastic in her responses than Dougal in his¹⁴, is not surprising and foreshadows a conflict both internal to Jeannie and between her and Dougal¹⁵. The conflict is most clear on the level of communication. To borrow a linguistic metaphor, the 'code' used by Jeannie is not one of linguistic articulateness; rather her feelings are communicated by default of the dominant 'code' of the text: the ritual-based dialect of Ronald and the very materially-based language of Dougal. Jeannie says more by saying nothing. Her silence indicates her refusal to fully accept the moral dictates of the other 'code'. Although not on the level of narration or interpretation of the text, as will be the case in *La Fée aux Miettes* and *Inès de Las Sierras*, there is in *Trilby* a type of internal polyphony, wherein one character is linguistically estranged from the others¹⁶.

¹⁴ She internalizes her uneasiness and regret about the whole affair of the expulsion and can only express despair, albeit in a voice that is almost inaudible (107).

¹⁵ According to psychoanalysis, this could be seen as tension within both the realms of 'self' and 'other'. It is not just desire that Jeannie struggles with (the other), but also with defining the boundaries between her own psyche and the physical world around her (the self), the latter explaining the tale's preponderance of lapsus in description: everything 'seen' is uncertain, as interpretation is suspect.

¹⁶ Later, it will be seen how *Inès de Las Sierras*, at least in its first part, is more properly polyphonic, where reason and unreason acquire separate enunciating subjects in the form of characters.

I noted in Chapter II that Hans Peter Lund recognizes a process of evolution in the fiction of Nodier, which, Lund claims, becomes more and more ideological. The move toward greater polyphony might have something to do with this, but I will nevertheless show how attempts are made in *Inès* to resolve polyphony.

There is a great deal of symbolic reinforcement of this linguistic antagonism. Jeannie covers her eyes so as to completely abolish communication (from both directions, both out-going and in-coming) and in so doing, proscribes herself from the realm of social acceptability. She refuses to partake in communication within the dominant discursive framework. When she falls (108), which is again misinterpreted, although ironically, by Dougal and Ronald (they think she is overwhelmed by the imposing nature of the ceremony, which, of course, she is, but for reasons other than they suspect), she withdraws completely from even a physical participation in the ritual.

If one doubted the social implications of this scene, these doubts are soon dismissed by Ronald's ultimate intention: he aims to use Trilby's punishment as a deterrent to anyone else, especially imps, who might be tempted to engage in such socially subversive activities as disturbing the marital stability of the local folk. The tale then seems to embody a struggle between stability, maintained through social control, and instability, especially the instability caused by personal desire. Jeannie's estrangement carries an accompanying imagery of troubled vision: nighttime, fading light, misinterpretation of vocal utterances, a long cry that expires into the distance, etc., all images that

populate the textual universe of Nodier's tales. Then, what one might call the 'codes' in the tale, that of Jeannie having been internalized, converge in the text to produce a type of polyphony that underscores the troubled nature of their inter-communication (a filter exists between the acts of enunciation and interpretation). Nevertheless, Jeannie will later embark on an attempt to reconcile these 'codes', just as the theme of love can be interpreted as attempting, with varying degrees of success, to integrate desire into the realm of social acceptability¹⁷.

However, for the time being, Ronald steps up the heat and

¹⁷ As Todorov notes, integration organized around the theme of the 'other' quite naturally takes on the aspect of a love theme, Todorov, ch. 8. It is not surprising then, to encounter this theme as central to *Trilby*. There is an attempted integration of desire on a thematic level (love), that is in keeping with the overall structural reality of the fantastic which accepts the paradox that integrates unreason into reason. Again, in *Trilby*, there is only an indirect connection between these two levels of integration, interpretative and thematic, or on the levels of interpretation and contents, as Döring would have it (Döring, "À la recherche...", 172).

Championing the cause of the 'other', especially when it represents the individual as pitted against social authority, has been seen by many as a fundamental aspect of Romanticism:

Tobin Siebers sees the Romantic fantastic as identifying heroism with the victim of societal proscription, therefore constituting aesthetic masochism (Siebers, 189). As previously noted, Siebers is not far from the position of those theorists who view the fantastic as ultimately conservative, defeating or marginalizing its own initial threats to order (See my discussion of the issue in Chapter I).

Paul Bénichou speaks of the consecration of the poet as the new guru with spiritual insight, replacing, in Romanticism, the minister of religion (Bénichou, *Le sacre*, 1985).

Rosemary Jackson indicates that it is during the Romantic period that fantastic literature first undertakes its efforts to subvert social and even political values (Jackson, ch. IV).

Jacques Finné situates Nodier at the source of the fantastic in France (Finné, 14-15).

Louisa Jones sees the Romantic fantastic displayed in, *the revolutionary aesthetic of the grotesque elaborated by Hugo in his preface to 'Cromwell'*, for example as having two basic goals: *liberty (for those who want an escape from social order or from positivism) and absurdity (for those who, like Maupassant, regard disorder with fear)*. (Louisa Jones, "Le conte fantastique as Poetic Fiction", *Orbis Litterarum*, XXVII (1972), 247).

banishes Trilby for ever, while Jeannie's only response to the monk's incantations and ritual formulas is *Hélas* (108). She no longer joins in her husband's responses to the incantations. Her reticence indicates two things: the silencing (internalization) of her desire, and her refusal to maintain complicity with Ronald and Dougal; in other words, her silent rebellion against their power. Although uneasy about Trilby, she will later be unavoidably drawn to him.

Therefore, there emerges from this episode, an opposition between social authority, expressed through incantations and ritual formula (a very historically set and determined discourse¹⁸), and the personal, which declines from communicating within the linguistic paradigms of the other (dominant) system and finds its only recourse for adequate expression in sobs, whispers and internal monologue (107-108). Ronald completely misinterprets Jeannie's cries as expressing joy and admiration (108). The monk's authority is mocked by the narrator who, referring to Ronald's failure to understand Jeannie and Trilby's love, says: *Le livre de Solomon ne lui avait pas appris ces mystères* (108). In keeping with the theme of proscription, Jeannie faces the aftermath of the expulsion as a solitary,

¹⁸ This aspect of *Trilby* will be discussed further in a section on Saint Columban.

isolated creature whose singing goes unheard, except by the walls (108). The exorcism marginalizes Jeannie. Ronald's tripartite formula is contrasted to: *Dieu! que les temps sont changés! que les soirées étaient longues, et que le coeur de Jeannie était triste!* (109). Jeannie's new reality is dark and loveless. However, the pilgrimage to Balva brings Jeannie back into contact with Trilby, reveals his true identity and serves to raise her doubts concerning Ronald's strict definition of moral law.

When we meet Ronald again, this time at the monastery of Balva, he appears much more fierce and authoritarian. The *sévère Ronald* possesses a *blancheur éblouissante du front* and a *taille majestueuse*, and the narrator speaks of *la gravité de son attitude immobile et presque menaçante* (117). Upon seeing the old monk again, Jeannie's response is *mêlée de respect et de terreur* (117). He is the *redoutable ennemi des lutins* (122) and of anyone who would show them sympathy. His first address to Jeannie is like a public accusation of her sin: he speaks to her, *avec une intention si pénétrante, que l'infortunée n'aurait pas éprouvé plus de trouble en s'entendant publiquement accuser d'un péché* (117). Ronald uses his religious authority to lead the people against the imps. The implied metaphors in his

speech cast the struggle against the imps as a war in which religion is a weapon; the monks must "arm themselves" *de maledictions et de vengeances contre l'esprit du péché* (119). He explains that there must be a *malédiction éternelle* of the imps, for their *déloyauté*, *crime* and *indignité* (118). His social authority becomes ideological through its insidiousness¹⁹: in his attempts to control Jeannie, he combines the public and the private, equating *trahison* and *assassinat* with *péché secret* and *adultère d'action ou de pensée* (121). He casts the monks as the people's allies, telling his listeners of *le zèle qui nous attache à vos intérêts* (120). However, narrative judgement is not on Ronald's side in this *cruelle cérémonie* (122), where we witness the *devoir cruel qu'il imposait à leur* (the people's) *piété* (123). Nevertheless, the people, themselves, are not exempt from some criticism for their blind complicity in the matter. They are, *peu sensibles au souvenir des services passés* (of the imps), and *n'hésitent pas à proscrire cet ennemi inconnu qui ne s'était manifesté que par des bienfaits* (123). The term *proscrire* underscores the world of law and justice, while *inconnu* introduces the injustice of the malediction

¹⁹ Which brings me back to Eagleton's point that ideology is not only a matter of speculative theoretical systems but also a question of the social determination of behaviour, or "lived relations".

(proscription). Reinforcing the political nature of the struggle, the narrator indicates that Ronald is up against *croyance populaire*, when he tries to motivate the people to condemn the imps to eternal damnation (122). It is not widely felt that the imps deserve such severe punishment. In fact, some of the people have been known to give shelter to exiled imps (122). Nevertheless, through persuasive oration, Ronald achieves success in motivating the people to act in complicity with him, even though his logic is faulty.

Ronald's explanations suffer from internal contradiction. He claims God's malediction on the clan MacFarlane is *éternelle*; then contends that even God's vengeance, *a ses bornes et ses conditions* (118), a contradiction between absoluteness and finiteness. Ronald then asks the rhetorical question of his flock: *Savez-vous que la charité peut être un grand péché?* (119). Remembering the various definitions of *charité*, we certainly find nothing like Ronald's among them. Indeed, if Jeannie seems to confuse *amour* and *charité*, that confusion is more natural-seeming than Ronald's blasphemous definition of *charité* (it is difficult to imagine how one of the three Virtues could be a sin). *Charité* is seen as a sin from the same manichean perspective that views *amour* as a *démon du coeur*

(120). From this perspective, *charité* is *une piété indiscreète, une intercession involontairement criminelle, un péché d'intention* (122); a *grand péché* (119)²⁰.

However, Ronald wields a great deal of linguistic power. He casts a spell over his audience, moulding them with a wave of his hand (119-120). Clearly, Ronald enjoys the position of ultimate social and ideological power. The image is that of a guru or a feudal lord holding court.

Nevertheless, Jeannie resists his persuasiveness. She is the only one present who offers an argument to counter his. When Ronald explains the seeming contradiction of having the portrait of a damned soul, MacFarlane, in a holy place by claiming that, *il faut que ce jeune homme ait eu des amis parmi les saints*, Jeannie counters with: *les damnés n'ont point d'amis dans le ciel* (118-119), and then rushes toward the portrait, seeking to look on it. Preoccupied with the portrait, she gradually absents herself from the ceremony, remaining *tranquille et inattentive* (122). Jeannie's curiosity leads her away from complicity in the malediction of Trilby. She looks on the portrait and identifies the figure as Trilby, and then

²⁰ In Lambert's words, the religious dispute is between *la pureté austère impitoyable et la charité*, which is equal to the human dispute between the Surmoi and the ideal of the Moi (Lambert, "Trilby," 100).

rushes to the altar of Saint Columban, repeating *AMOUR ET CHARITÉ* as she embraces the altar (124-125). She feels smiled upon by the saint and repeats her vows of charity, as a sort of counter-litany to Ronald's incantations and formulae of malediction. Once again, the old monk misinterprets Jeannie's emotion as complicity with his orders, and sends her off with her husband. However, the die has been cast, and Jeannie finds herself marginalized from the others. Her attempts to understand the truth about Trilby and about the concepts of *amour* and *charité* leave her isolated.

Jeannie is now completely absorbed in her poignant memories of the occasion, being moved by a profound *charité* -- or is it *amour*? toward Trilby; the confusion of the two is intentional. Jeannie's love of (or feelings of charity for) Trilby, be it only in her dreams or imagination, creates an analepse to the legendary past. In so doing, Jeannie is inserted into an old conflict between the monks of Balva and the MacFarlane clan. Ronald himself unwittingly predicts Jeannie's transformation into a figure of legend, when he accusingly and threateningly tells her of the virgin of Lothian who died of sorrow, having been separated from her lover (122). The story is meant to act as a deterrent. Instead, it proves to be prophetic.

Jeannie's love for Trilby leads her to the discovery of an historic, or legendary, truth about the dispute between the monks and the imps; it is essentially monetary. Along the way, we discover the important role played by material interest in the entire social structure of Ronald's authority.

III. MONEY, THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

Upon their arrival at Balva, the pilgrims fall on their knees in adoration of the holy place, and remind themselves of the miracles they seek as part of the pilgrimage. Juxtaposed against the materialistic, even greedy and vain, wishes of most of the pilgrims, is the sincere and selfless hope of Jeannie that she be able to forget her attraction to Trilby and be faithful to her marriage vows (116-117). Dougal prays for a miraculous net and the good luck to catch a treasure contained in a precious box (116). We later see how his prayers are answered and how, perhaps with ironic justice, the box for which he prayed actually contains Trilby and the ceremony to open it leads to his wife's death. The daughters of Coll Cameron seek only to receive beautiful wigs with which to upstage the simple beauty of Jeannie, whom they cast as their rival for the

attentions of Trilby.

After the expulsion (malediction) of Trilby, perhaps Jeannie's lowest point, wealth becomes an issue. She feels the rich *chateleines* to be rivals for Trilby's affections. Money is power, and these women have both. They do not fear their husbands, and therefore, possess the freedom to lure Trilby into their luxurious homes. Jeannie feels humiliated by the comparison between their opulence and her simplicity. In fact, they surpass her in many ways: material possessions, perfumes, coiffures, voice, grace and poise (109-110), all this serving to create a contrast between the worldly and the spiritual. On the one hand, there are the courtly and hypocritical *chateleines*, who only want to banish Trilby because they cannot have him themselves, and on the other, the simple hard-working boatwoman. However, the way Jeannie's rivals are described (indirectly) makes an important point: these women are not necessarily described as they **are**, but as Jeannie **imagines** them: *elles se représentait ses nobles rivales...*(109). In this way, the text underscores the importance of appearances. The power of such figures (Ronald, the *chateleines*) is often maintained only so long as they are **perceived** as powerful by their subjects (those subjected to their influence), and not because they necessarily

have a legitimate claim to, or have earned, that power. In the end, Trilby expresses preference for Jeannie over all the worldly wealth of the *chateleines* (135).

Nodier's text uses juxtaposition to underscore the inappropriateness of appearances to reality: the assumed motivation of the monks in their battle with the imps of Argyle, that of eradicating an evil influence, and the real point of contention: the old MacFarlane's refusal to pay a customary monetary tribute to the monks. Admittedly, the monetary tribute could be interpreted as a sign of submission to the religious authority of the monks, but the fact that its omission causes such animosity, suggests it is really a matter of social and economic authority. In fact, the issue of Saint Columban, Trilby's brother, completes the reversal effect, for it is the exiled imp who possesses the true notion of love, while the socially-proclaimed religious authority is more bound to worldly matters of money and temporal power. The revelation that the historical antagonism between the monks and the clan stems from a monetary tribute, leads the reader to expect that all is not what it at first appears with regards to the power structure in the tale. The theme of money corresponds to the theme of language's ability to be manipulated and to misrepresent

reality. In this way, the concept of *charité*, when it interferes with the worldly interests of the social authority, is distorted to such a degree as to designate its opposite, sin.

However, there are divided interests within the community itself. The Camerons are rivals of the Dougal's: they envy Dougal's new-found good fortune and Jeannie's beauty. This envy expands on the theme of economic rivalry, a major ideological theme in *Trilby* as well as in some of Nodier's other works. I call it an ideological theme because it most certainly determines and directs social (as well as political) values and practices in the tale²¹. In *Trilby*, economic rivalry (the Camerons' envy of the Dougals, for Jeannie's beauty and for her husband's large catches) is the cause of injustice meted out on a relatively innocent third party (Trilby). Ronald manipulates the weaknesses (jealousy, greed, economic need, guilt) of his subjects to such a point that they become automata echoing his words: *Malédiction*, repeated several times (123). Jeannie expresses the opposite by speaking the name of the banished imp,

²¹ Once again, my assertion rests on the view of ideology as lived relations rather than only abstract concepts (ie. Althusser and Williams, as cited in Eagleton, 30, 47-48). Especially pertinent to *Trilby* is Williams' notion of "structure of feeling": *not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity* (Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977, 125).

Trilby.

The narrative is coloured by an ironic tone that is strongly critical of Dougal's greed: he "richly" imagines the wealth that this pilgrimage will have earned him. The irony is once again organized around meaning and misunderstanding. Dougal interprets everything according to economic gain and loss, while it is, in fact, his wife that his collusion with Ronald will ultimately 'cost' him. There is a clear implication of greed in the process of meaning-distortion that has been instituted and used by the dominant social figure (Ronald)²².

Although the tale itself does not provide a direct link between the themes of money and language, and 1820's France, viewing *Trilby* within the context of Nodier's general thoughts on the fantastic, does. In Chapter One, we saw how Nodier conceives of the fantastic as a *monde intermédiaire* wherein humankind's knowledge of the material is challenged to extend its epistemological paradigms. It is expanded to include speculation that is based as much on intuition as on 'scientific' analysis. We also noted Nodier's use of monetary

²² In Chapter II, I noted Jose Monleón's association of the Nineteenth Century fantastic with the guilty conscience of the Bourgeoisie (Monleón, 26, where he cites Foucault on the economic configuration of unreason's threat to social order, as the bourgeoisie sees it).

and commercial metaphors to describe the powerful influence of scientific thought, and the primacy of the *monde matériel*²³. Nodier conceives of the fantastic as literature that provides an intuitive 'look back' to a Golden Age of truth. However, this looking back is inhibited by what he metaphorically describes as the Rationalists' commercialization of thought. Given this aspect of Nodier's notion of the fantastic, it can be posited that *Trilby*, as a fantastic tale, takes on a hue of criticism toward Bourgeois commercialism²⁴. Within the story, there is a similar process of looking back to find truth, by Jeannie, the only member of the community who rises above the economic interest and vanity that Ronald manipulates in others in order to consolidate his power. The magical portrait, which also serves as a metaphor for the magical 'truth-telling' capacity of

²³ In *La Fée aux Miettes*, the ability of Science to define the human psyche will be questioned, as the conventional view of *folie* is reconsidered.

²⁴ Amblard points out a general anti-materialism in Nodier's tales (Amblard, "Sources...", 868-869), that I feel could be indicative of a reaction against the role of Capital in early Nineteenth Century France, where Capital is coming to replace birth as the determinant of social position in post-*Ancien Régime* society. Although Nodier himself was not particularly high-born, he was arguably a committed Royalist. Materialism is of course timeless, and the fact that I would relate it to bourgeois capitalism would only stem from Nodier's own historical position, and is not based on a direct or allegorical referentiality of the tale to society. For example, in my estimation, Ronald does not represent any particular figure in 1820's France.

I have argued that, in his essay on the fantastic, Nodier himself sees the existence of the fantastic as historically recurrent at times when society has come to rely on material progress and rationalism to answer all of its philosophical questions, even those that transcend the purely material. Nodier claims that his times indeed constitutes one of these periods, and in his tales, the possibility is created for the taking of a perspective on reality that is supposedly free from, and questions, prevailing social conventions.

the fantastic text, tells an historic truth that effects the way things are seen through the rest of the tale.

IV. THE PORTRAIT

The portrait of John Trilby MacFarlane, unveiled by Jeannie in the monastery (124), reveals the true identity of Trilby as a chief of the clan that challenged Ronald's authority and provoked his ire by refusing to pay the tribute. We thus discover the secular motivations of Ronald's fervour in expelling the imps. Through the discovery of the portrait, a political truth is revealed that had been cloaked in theological terms by Ronald. The portrait is an example of Nodier's *prisme prestigieux*²⁵, since it provides a completely different perspective on reality, allowing Jeannie to see that truth.

Ironically, it is in the monastery, the seat of Ronald's power, that Jeannie learns the true identity of Trilby. The portrait of John Trilby MacFarlane 'explains' Jeannie's dreams, grounding them in the legendary past: *elle (...) reconnut d'un*

²⁵ Jean-Luc Steinmetz employs Nodier's own metaphor to explain that the portrait introduces a *saisie du réel* to the fantastic since it (the portrait) *brouille les limites de l'imaginaire* (Jean-Luc Steinmetz, "Aventures du Regard (Système de la représentation dans quelques contes)," *Europe* 614-615 (juin-juillet, 1980), 15).

regard tous les traits qu'elle avait rêvés (124). Legend, or pseudo-history, becomes a type of reality that casts new light on Jeannie's present situation. It has political and economic dimensions of which she never would have dreamed. Paradoxically, the portrait becomes more real than the 'reality' around it: the supernatural is naturalized and the natural becomes estranged. This is reinforced symbolically by the dilapidation of the portrait's frames, which define the usual limits between the work of art and its context in the real world. Within the paradigms of the narrative, there is an important creation of mythical identity through connection to the ancestral and spiritual past (of the clan) which surpasses the authority of the monks, itself, ironically revealed to be a worldly authority. The portrait, as art, demonstrates an alternative way of seeing, of piercing through ideological discourse like Ronald's manipulation of religion and theology, to access a deeper truth. As a metaphor for the fantastic text itself, the portrait implies that art can act as a mediator between what **is**, and what we **think** is; in a sense, removing any ideological or other conceptual filter from the process of our

interpretation of the 'real'²⁶. However, through all of this, the basic antinomy of the tale is sustained: at no time does the text fully propose or completely deny that the story is just a dream. Ambiguity concerning the portrait is sustained: it could somehow truly be magical, just as it could also be the projection of Jeannie's dreams or hallucinations. Whichever of the two it is, it becomes an agent that, in the ambiguity between possible interpretations, reveals truth.

The portrait becomes an actor²⁷. It takes on life and, in so doing, becomes capable of telling a profound truth that seems

²⁶ According to Steinmetz, *Nodier indique qu'un portrait peut toujours sortir de son cadre, ce qui (...) signifie que la littérature, elle aussi réflexive, permet également d'efficaces résurrections* (Steinmetz, 15).

Nodier's attitude to art (and literature), as expressed in and around (prefaces, essays, etc.) his texts, betrays very Romantic tendencies, as identified by Paul Bénichou: *C'est dans l'exaltation de la poésie, mise au niveau de la plus haute valeur, devenue vérité, religion, lumière sur notre destinée, qu'il faut voir sans doute le trait distinctif le plus sûr du romantisme(...). Le littérateur inspiré a remplacé, comme successeur du prêtre, le Philosophe de l'âge précédent. Les lettres romantiques ont proposé un nouveau substitut de la foi religieuse, plus proche d'elle: un substitut incertain, privé de sanction doctrinale officielle. (...) Pour le romantisme, le Poète, chercheur, interprète et guide, est au centre du monde de l'esprit, dont le prêtre ne détient plus qu'une des versions possibles* (Bénichou, *Le sacre*, 275-276).

With very little license, it is possible to at least partially include the prose writer in this definition of the poet, especially as Nodier himself expresses an admiration for the power of poetry (Trilby, p. 144: *si j'avais été poète ...*).

Clearly, it is possible, within the context of Bénichou's historicization of the Romantic writer, to recognize in Nodier's text an attempt to re-define (or regenerate the definition of) some concepts that to date had been predominantly the property of the religious authority, such as *charité*, for example.

²⁷ Which is underscored by the use of the verb *être*, which establishes the relationship of identity not only between the old clan-chief and the imp, but equally as important, between the portrait and the imp. As in most of Nodier's tales, the fantastic effect is often achieved through a talisman or portrait that carries out this ontological bridging of usual character, temporal and spatial boundaries.

to escape the ken of other characters. The spiritual qualities of the *portrait miraculeux* (118) allow it, most importantly of all, to bridge the gap between past and present (and future), between imaginary and 'real'. In the portrait, artistic verisimilitude "resurrects" (118) the subject of the painting. Herein lies the magic of the portrait: even as it comes to life and becomes an actor in the tale, it does not cease to be art. Paradoxically, it is at once creation and creative.

After seeing the portrait, Jeannie is able to express herself. Instead of joining in the chorus of *Malédiction*, she blurts out the name of Trilby, her 'beloved' in unconstrained defiance of Ronald's authority. As her desires control her, she enters into an unwilling conflict with the social authority, and isolates herself from the group, putting a name (Trilby) to her desire. Looking on the portrait may serve to isolate Jeannie from her community, but it also mediates between her and the historic truth at the source of her desire.

The portrait's mediative function implies a similar function of the fantastic text itself. The fantastic is an effect as much as it is a concept. In other words, it is not only a function of strange things, but of seeing things strangely, or differently. It is this insistence on perception

and language as mediation in Nodier's fantastic narrative that leads me to identify it as having an ideological component, understanding ideology as that which can control and condition interpretation²⁸. Jeannie now sees the old local legends in a new light (*sous un aspect nouveau*, 128), and truth about the past is revealed to her.

Likewise, through the reader's suspension of disbelief, the folkloric legends serve to conjure up the marvellous (*fées, nymphes, grottes enchantées où on marche sur des tapis de fleurs marines*, 128), thus introducing a mythical past into the text²⁹. The fantastic revives a type of poetic vision possessed by peoples of the past³⁰. Its goal is to rejuvenate old (even original) values, and artistic, or what Nodier might call

²⁸ Here I once again touch on, without entering into, the Marxist debate around ideology as false consciousness, distorting reality. Eagleton (esp. ch. I) discusses much of the thought around this issue.

Ideology need not always mislead, but it certainly does always involve itself in the way we interpret and understand our world. Whether this involvement is helpful or not depends perhaps on the specific ideological form in question.

In *La Fée aux Miettes*, the fantastic is a type of tool that effects a re-investigation of *folie*, which is transformed from a mental disorder to a wise perspective on experience. In *Inès de Las Sierras*, the theatre as a metaphor for the fantastic analogically explains how one can entertain unreason, and even learn from it, while not necessarily abandoning one's grounding in reason. Ideology in *Inès*, I will argue, is not so much concerned with what is seen through the perspective of unreason (some sort of new angle on "lived relations"), as with creating an acceptance of old epistemologies that have been discarded by reason as blind superstition. Therefore, following Eagleton's schemata, one might distinguish the three tales from each other by positing that *Trilby* mainly addresses the ideology of "lived relations", while *Inès* essentially broaches the subject of ideology as "speculative theoretical systems", and *La Fée aux Miettes* does both.

²⁹ Just as the pretend theatrical performance at Ghismondo will do in *Inès*.

³⁰ Cf. Chapter II, on *Du Fantastique en littérature*.

poetic, vision: the capacity to see clearly (as in *la nuit visible du poète*³¹) through the grid of Reason, which has its own ideological bias.

If it is the portrait that transports Jeannie's consciousness into the past, then it is the figure of Saint Columban that subtly provides a link for the reader to a folkloric past, into pseudo-history, in order to look beyond contemporary prejudices and allow imagination a glimpse at historic truth.

V. SAINT COLUMBAN

Saint Columban is a figure of mediation on two levels in *Trilby*. First, he is presented in the tale as the saint to whom troubled lovers have special recourse, since he himself knew both love of woman and love of God: *victime d'un amour secret et malheureux, il était sans doute plus propice qu'aucun des autres habitants du séjour céleste aux peines cachées du coeur...On en rapportait des miracles de charité et de tendresse* (113). He

³¹ *Inès de Las Sierras*, P. 679.

mediates between profane and sacred love. Second, on the level of interpretation, the Saint Columban story helps to create a suspension of disbelief, by placing *Trilby* in the repertoire of legend or folklore, with some grounding in historical fact. Given that Columban was a real historical figure, and that his story corresponds very closely to the story of the tale, it is understandable how the initiated reader might imagine there to be some historical basis for the tale. As an intertext, the story of Columban makes it possible to view the tale as more than fancy or the recitation of a young woman's dreams and hallucinations. This broadened possibility of interpretation is what most designates *Trilby* as a fantastic tale³². Nevertheless, it is important to remember that folklore, or pseudo-history, as intertext in *Trilby*, is an **indirect** way to establish this ambiguity in interpretation, since it so remotely displaces the story in time. It is in Nodier's later tales, like *La Fée aux Miettes* and *Inès*, that contemporary social or ideological discourses are more directly challenged by unreason. However,

³² As previously noted, the fantastic is defined by its capacity to present several possible interpretations, rational as well as irrational, of the unnatural, without fully favouring one interpretation over others. However, it is also true that *Trilby* at least partly belongs to Nodier's first category of the fantastic, and is therefore not explicitly subject to reasonable interpretation of the events. Due to suspension of disbelief, the question of doubt or acceptance of the story quite simply is not addressed directly by the tale.

it remains true that Saint Columban acts as a mediative figure both on the level of interpretation and within the story itself.

As we have seen, the central tension in the tale revolves around Jeannie and Ronald's respective interpretations of the concepts of *amour* and *charité*, with Jeannie's notion being the more inclusive: she holds, perhaps intuitively, that love of God through love of man need not necessarily exclude the type of desire she feels for Trilby. Saint Columban embodies such an inclusive notion of love. Jeannie runs to the place where she thinks she will meet her love: the tree dedicated to the memory of Saint Columban, where, it is believed, *Saint Columbain, jeune encore, et avant qu'il fût entièrement revenu des illusions du monde, y avait passé toute une nuit dans les larmes, en luttant contre le souvenir de ses profanes amours* (143). Similarly, Jeannie runs to the altar of Saint Columban to plead for God's understanding and forgiveness, and, embracing the tomb under the altar, cries: *Charité (...) AMOUR ET CHARITÉ* (124). The emphasis Nodier places on these words amounts to an explicit declaration of their status as the central issue of the tale. Remembering Saint Columban, serves to confirm Jeannie in her conviction to *charité*: *si Jeannie avait manqué du courage de la charité, l'image du Saint Columbain aurait suffit pour le*

ranimer dans son coeur (124). Columban is already the cultural icon that Jeannie will become at the end of the tale. They provide a focus for folklore that tells of love, and in her case, of martyrdom to forbidden love, and of the struggle against powerful social authority. Their stories tell of how unreason (love, dream, intuition), are capable of revealing truths obscured by the ideological discourse of the powerful; notably, here, the powerful who manipulate reason, in the guise of 'sciences' like theology, to sustain their power, by dictating not only what people think, but also how they act. Jeannie would never have reached a cognition of the truth about Ronald's motivation for expelling Trilby had she not ventured to follow her desires for the imp, and act against social rules.

Within the legend of Saint Columban, there is an attempt to reconcile the opposition between *amour* and *charité*. These two have been posited as oppositional in the tale by the de-meaning effected on language by the official discourse, which employs language as a tool for consolidating and maintaining power. The theme of the animated portrait (not only of John Trilby MacFarlane, but also of Saint Columban) becomes a textual

metaphor for attempted reconciliation³³.

On the level of interpretation, Nodier's choice of the legend of Saint Columban as an intertext serves to relate the tale not only to Celtic history, but also to French history; a fact that, albeit subtly, further promotes a reading of the tale as having some historical significance. In so doing, the case for dismissing the tale as pure fancy, is weakened. A brief summary of the story of Saint Columban bears out its thematic similarity to *Trilby*.

Saint Columban lived from about 540 to 615. He was born in Ireland and was reputedly a very handsome young man who was charming and not lacking in attention from women, frequently "tempted by the flesh". Upon visiting a hermitess, he decided to turn away from worldly ways and pursue a prayerful life. After five years of earnest study of Latin, scripture and Church History, living under very strict rule at Saint Comgall's monastery in Ireland, he voyaged to Britain, and then France, about 570, with twelve followers, including Saint Gall and a

³³ Although the general notion of reconciliation and integration is the same in the tales I look at, they are developed through different themes. From an overview, there emerges a general trend whereby the tales go chronologically from the personal to the philosophical. In *Trilby*, Jeannie's desires isolate her, while in *La Fée aux Miettes*, Michel's *folie* becomes the subject of pseudo-scientific inquiry. As this trend develops, the social realm is more fully implicated and thus the themes become more directly political (in *La Fée aux Miettes* and *Inès de Las Sierras*, for example).

loyal young monk named Domoal. Upon his arrival in France, Columban found the area torn by the civil conflicts that were raging among the descendants of Clovis. Columban moved eastward through France, preaching and converting. In 574, he established a monastery at Annegray in the Vosges on the ruins of an old Roman fort. Neighbours provided the monks with gifts of food while they were constructing the monastery. Later, Columban built monasteries at Luxeuil and Fontaines, which flourished under his rule of austerity and strict discipline. He is said to have had a strong following.

Among the miracles attributed to Columban are instances where he is reputed to have restored health, and conquered death by bringing the dead back to life. He became involved in local political battles and his power was spent in combat with kings. The courts and local bishops felt threatened by his power and finally one king, Theodoric, pillaged the monastery at Luxeuil. Theodoric capitalized on an ecclesiastical controversy over the timing of the celebration of Easter, in order to discredit Columban, whose monasteries celebrated Easter according to the old Roman calendar, following the phase of the moon, with no regard for the day of the week. However, on the continent, things had changed, and Easter was always celebrated on a

Sunday. As a result of the controversy, Columban was accused of being schismatic. A synod was called to settle the matter, and in a letter to the Holy See, Columban appealed to the synod to deliberate in the spirit of charity, permitting both customs to co-exist. In a famous letter to Pope Gregory the Great, Columban urged a reform of the clergy, urging an abandonment of the simony that had placed many of them in office.

Theodoric took the opportunity to deport Columban, who was sent with his original companions to Besançon³⁴, where, in the prison, he converted criminals and dissolved their chains, fleeing with them and Domoal to the Cathedral of Besançon. He and the prisoners were held up in the Cathedral for some time. Columban then returned to Luxeuil, where he was arrested, and subsequently sent with his original disciples from the Vosges to the Loire, to be deported. He is said to have cast out many devils along the way. Columban escaped the authorities and

³⁴ Nodier was born and raised in Besançon. One assumes the writer would have been well aware of this aspect of local history.

Amblard assumes the opposite, citing a letter by Nodier to Amédée Pichot, in which he asks the exact dates of Columban's birth and death (Amblard, "Sources..." 265). Since Nodier's request is only to know a detail about Columban, I feel Amblard's assumption is faulty. There is no way to determine how well Nodier was acquainted with the story of Columban, but given the writer's proclivity to revel in folklore, and especially that of his native region, and that he requested no more than the dates of Columban's birth and death, it is more reasonable to assume that Nodier was aware of many of the details regarding the legend of Columban. If Amblard's assumption is accurate, then the coincidental similarity between Columban's story and *Trilby* is indeed striking, almost fantastic in its own right! Moreover, authorial awareness is of less importance than the fact that *Trilby* belongs to a larger body of legend or pseudo-history, a point that Amblard herself makes.

stole back inland, but was always chased away by local bishops and kings. He and his followers often escaped due solely to the "fearless" preaching of Saint Gall. However, when Columban fled to Italy, Gall refused to follow, a disloyalty for which Columban reproached him, forbidding him ever to celebrate Mass.

During his time in Italy, at Bobbio, Columban wrote letters to Pope Boniface IV regarding Arianism and Nestorianism, urging the Pope to dispel schismatic sympathies in Rome. Upon Columban's death at his monastery in Bobbio, established on the ruins of an old Basilica, it is believed that Gall received a vision of his master's passing and offered a Mass for Columban. The deceased abbot's staff was passed on to Gall³⁵.

While it is not possible to establish exact identities between Gall and Ronald, or to assert that *Trilby* exactly retells the story of Saint Columban, there clearly exist parallels between the tale and its folkloric, and to some degree, historical intertext. Jeannie's questioning of theological assumptions is not unlike Columban's. The sway Ronald's preaching holds over the locals is not unlike that of Gall, and he clearly lives under a very strict rule of austerity, like the followers of Columban, being called to deny

³⁵ From Robert T. Reilly, *Irish Saints*. New York: Avenel, 1964, 55-69.

the pleasures of this world. Ronald's entanglement in the commercial concerns of the people is an example of the type of secular and ecclesiastical political involvement that plagued Saint Columban in France. The symbolism of new order being established on crumbling ruins is common to both stories. Expulsion, demons and conquering death are also themes present in both, as is the seduction of profane love. Columban's call for charity in the resolution of theological and moral issues surely resonates in the tale. All of these instances of intertextuality serve to ground the tale in an historical context that, extending beyond folklore's suspension of disbelief, lend a social referentiality to the tale. Reference to a distant past does not necessarily mean marginalization of the text's themes. As Anne-Marie Roux correctly points out, part of Nodier's personal ideology concerning a Golden Age, was that the fantastic was a means to its resuscitation. Through imagination, the fantastic presents the possibility of time's circularity, and representations of the past may just as well provide insights into the present³⁶.

³⁶ Anne-Marie Roux, "L'âge d'or dans l'oeuvre de Nodier. Une recherche du temps perdu à l'époque romantique," *Romantisme* 16 (1977), 26.

The connection between French and Scottish history is something that Pierre-Georges Castex reminds us struck Nodier quite poignantly. He cites Nodier in *Promenade de Dieppe aux montagnes de l'Ecosse: Ai-je besoin de faire observer en passant que beaucoup de ces noms galliques ne sont pas étrangers à l'ancienne langue de nos Celtes? Je suis né entre*

Finally, Columban's importance to the politics of the tale is even further established when we discover that Trilby is actually Columban's brother (137). In this way, Trilby and not Ronald, becomes the true link to the ethnic past of the people, being both a clan chief and related to the Saint to whom they address their supplications. Jeannie is appalled to discover whom it is that Ronald is attempting to expel, and we come to view Ronald as a usurper in the authority he holds over the people. The tale's figure of social authority is revealed to be illegitimate.

VI. THE DÉNOUEMENT

Jeannie verbalizes her love of Trilby, and she verbalizes it to him, as spurred on by his supplications: *ose le dire à moi, le dire pour moi car ta résolution décidera de ma perte ou*

deux montagnes dont l'une s'appelle le Jura et l'autre le Lomond (Nodier. *Contes*, 135n).

Amblard explains how Trilby is grounded in folklore and legend beyond the Columban intertext. Trilby, himself, is, *un personnage qui s'inscrit dans tout un contexte légendaire et littéraire...* (Amblard, "Sources...", 399). She reminds us of intertexts such as Scott's *Heart of Mid-Lothian* and *Monastery*, and Shakespeare's *Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. According to Amblard, Trilby is not only linked to a cultural context through folklore: *il n'est pas (...) le simple développement d'un thème folklorique. Continuité, des diverses sources du conte à ce dernier, mais aussi commencement absolu avec lui* (Amblard, "Sources...", 719). Nodier's tales in general, comprise, *un conte des temps modernes où l'époque moderne intègre le meilleur du passé (les mythes) et tient compte de la nouvelle mentalité* (Amblard, "Sources...", 1006). I would argue that, at times in Nodier's tales, the past clearly challenges the present.

de mon bonheur! (133). His fate depends upon the **verbalization** of her feelings.

Trilby asks for any scrap of love, enumerating all possible types of relationship: friend, lover, slave, guest, etc. (133), and in so doing, broadens the definition of love. He asks for a secret shelter in her home. Love symbolizes the individual's resistance to the official socio-cultural authority.

Trilby proleptically speaks of love as redemptive but possible only within the context of the after-life (137). Life is but a sad and dangerous voyage leading to final redemption. Even though long, the voyage is not eternal, although love is (*Mille ans ne sont qu'un moment sur la terre pour ceux qui ne doivent se quitter jamais*, 137). Love is the mediation between situation and meaning: it is the only thing that can give Trilby's suffering a purpose, ultimate redemption (*mon enfer dépend de toi*, 138).

It is appropriate that at this point of Jeannie's crisis and choice, Dougal should arrive, enthusiastically bragging about his abundant catch, which includes a jewelled ivory box. He is, in true materialist manner, 'enamoured' of this stroke of

luck, imagining all sorts of riches inside³⁷. Ironic juxtaposition abounds, as we discover the box' contents: Trilby. Dougal's greed causes misunderstanding and misinterpretation, and leads to the loss of his wife. His greed clouds his view: *Il lui semblait qu'un nuage flottait devant ses yeux et obscurcissait sa pensée* (139)³⁸.

Money-based values are again criticized by Jeannie who, in an ironic double-entendre curses Dougal's find as a *Fortune déplorable* (139). They are *vaines richesses*, that, if sent from Balva as an intended compensation for her loss of Trilby, are literally inappropriate. Jeannie places herself completely outside of such a value-system that reifies even people. She indeed revels in Dougal's frustration, vengefully thinking with a "malicious joy" that her husband can not even open the box.

We soon learn, however, that the true key to the 'riches' in the box is a declaration of love on the part of Jeannie for

³⁷ There is also a measure of humour in Dougal's avowed humility to never forget his humble station even though Saint Columban has sent him "profits and fortune" (139).

³⁸ It is this aspect of Nodier's writing on/of dream that causes some to see him as pre-figuring psychoanalysis.

Also, for a contextualization of this within Romanticism, cf. Meyer Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*. New York: Norton, 1953, 47-70. Even though he sees Romantic writing as referential through analogy, which does not correspond exactly to my approach, he does explain the Romantic notion of special artistic insight.

the imp imprisoned inside³⁹. However, Jeannie is still bound by socially-defined duty, *je ne peux pas, je ne dois pas* (140), fearing the consequences: despair, even death. Jeannie sees the whole situation as an issue of marital loyalty, and chooses adherence to her marriage vows, vows that have the advantage of social approbation. She does not trust her own feelings, and here the nature of the conflict is made explicit. As she says: *rien ne triomphera de ma résolution et de mes promesses! rien! pas même mon coeur [...] qu'il se brise plutôt que d'oublier le devoir que Dieu lui a imposé* (141). Jeannie's marriage is a social obligation binding her to a set of social values that are symbolically represented by the box as a *riche prison*⁴⁰. The censorship and repression of individual expression that can accompany such social obligation, is represented by Dougal, who, *ne sait pas exprimer les sentiments qu'il éprouve* (141). As we have seen in Ronald's sermon, the monk uses his social authority and rhetorical talent to actually confound understanding, but, in so doing, consolidates his position. However, at this point, Jeannie still hesitates between the voice of social authority

³⁹ Can we here allow ourselves to interpret the box symbolically as a representation of the materialistically-based social authority that imprisons desire and confounds understanding?

⁴⁰ A metaphor which echoes the economic and penal metaphors of Nodier's essay.

and the voice of the social outcast (*le discours artificieux du lutin*, 141). In keeping with the structure of hesitation in the fantastic, Jeannie does not know whether or not to trust in her 'illusions'. Nevertheless, in the end, she cannot escape her fate: *personne ne trompe sa destinée* (144), and she follows her desire to the grave. The fatalism of the ending indicates that the social authority can be very persistent in its victimization of the individual. Even to the very end, that authority maintains its control over information and understanding: *elle* (Jeannie) *ne doutait point les paroles de Ronald* (142). She tries to interpret his words in Trilby's favour, that, *le dernier des méchants esprits a été condamné aux vigiles de Saint Columbain*. Since she has seen Trilby after the vigil, she hopefully concludes about the last *méchant esprit*, that, *ce ne peut pas être Trilby* (142). Underscoring how communication is represented as problematic by the text (and adding to the text's polyphonic nature), we are left, like Jeannie, to guess about the meaning of Ronald's words, as, soon after, Trilby is found in the grave.

Dougal's interpretation of the box as a gift from the monastery rewarding his loyalty is ironic since he imagines its contents to be the most "real" and "durable" of "treasures"

(141). His materialism shall, of course, be bitterly disappointed: opening the box unleashes his rival and leads to the death of his wife.

Jeannie feels she has successfully weathered the storm and somehow managed to achieve a resolution of the problem: she mistakenly thinks Trilby has been spared, as has her marriage: *un devoir accompli, mais dont l'accomplissement n'a rien coûté à personne* (142). She even convinces herself that she will be together with Trilby, her true love, one day (142). At this point, the hope of love is still alive, a certain middle-ground has been reached. However, Jeannie soon finds herself embroiled in conflict and must choose sides.

Jeannie declares herself for Trilby, following her true desire, when she repeats his words⁴¹: *mille ans ne sont qu'un moment sur la terre pour ceux qui ne doivent se quitter jamais!* (142). This is no longer the timid, inexpressive Jeannie of the pilgrimage. Because she believes herself to be alone, her voice is lifted up and heard all around her. However, Jeannie's declaration is surrounded by images of marginality: it is in a cemetery, and made at a time when only the dispossessed (orphans

⁴¹ We know the importance of the verbal echo within this tale. Up to this point, it is only Ronald's words (incantations) that have been repeated by his disciples. In this case, Jeannie dramatically, and linguistically, declares herself a disciple of Trilby.

mourning their fathers) frequent the place. All around, birds, northern lights, seem to announce the end of time (143). We are of course in a space of transition between worlds. This apocalyptic scene is full of oxymoron (for example, *cette aurore inaccoutumée qu'aucun astre ne suit et qui n'annonce pas le matin*, 143). Symbolically, the *Arbre du Saint* integrates the supposed opposites of profane love and saintliness, but also leads to death, just like the Biblical tree of knowledge leads to man's 'death', or expulsion from paradise. The *Arbre du Saint* is the point of re-entry into Paradise. It is also an object of veneration by the people. Like the tree of knowledge, the Biblical symbol of revolt, the *Arbre du Saint* constitutes a symbol of the revolt of desire against authority. Imprisoned in the box, Trilby emits only a stifled voice, which is symbolic of the suppression or censorship of desire decreed by the social authority.

The dominant and rigid social and moral code, as espoused by Ronald, seems hardly to be effected by the drama. Interrupted for only a moment, the old monk takes up his prayer where he left off (144). The dominant discourse continues its domination. If one were to read the tale in terms of a strict dialectic, analogically identifying reason with Ronald and

unreason with Trilby, one would conclude, as might Jackson, that the subversion of the dominant discourse (reason) by the voice of 'otherness' (unreason), is attempted and fails⁴². However, in the case of *Trilby*, this would be inaccurate for two reasons. First, while Ronald most assuredly is the voice of social authority in the tale, he is not the voice of reason. His character is as much a part of the magical decor of the tale as is Trilby's character. Ronald's actions very well may serve to repress desire, but not unreason. Second, Trilby and Jeannie may die, but they are perhaps not defeated. They survive in legend, even if as martyrs. Many centuries later, the only remnants of scene are the stone marking Jeannie's grave, with the epitaph: *Mille ans ne sont qu'un moment sur la terre pour ceux qui ne doivent se quitter jamais*; and Trilby's sighs heard in the wind (144-5).

Although *Trilby* seems to end with a victory by the social and moral authority over the lovers, one may question the ultimate sting of that victory. Since Jeannie and Trilby's love story is 'mythologized', becoming part of folk legend, it is sustained in a paradoxical state of suspension and resolution in

⁴² Most fantasies eventually re-cover desire, neutralizing their own impulses toward transgression (Jackson, 9).

the after-life. Here it escapes Ronald's power and yet remains in the social imagination of the people as a reminder of a fatal but poignant challenge to moral authority. Since, in *Trilby*, the story is not strictly organized according to a dialectic between reason and unreason that begs resolution, Nodier can cast the tale as quaint, picturesque folklore from a tribe at the edges of civilization (*Préface de la Première Édition de Trilby*, 97). One may think the story marginalized (to use Monleón's term) from the reality of Nodier's contemporary society. However, within the context of an ideology of the Golden Age, the story stands as a resuscitation of the past that implicates contemporary moral order⁴³. It becomes part of the *histoire psychique de l'homme*, telling the story of social power relations from the perspective of the individual subject. The tale is as important for its portrayal of **how** social power is sustained, or challenged, as it is for the story of non-conformity that it tells.

⁴³ In his introduction to the tales (in the 1961 Edition of *Contes*), Pierre-Georges Castex writes: *L'amour, sans doute, a le dernier mot et la cruelle histoire s'achève en un acte d'espérance* (93). He adds that, like Abélard and Héloïse, Tristan and Isolde, Jeannie and Trilby ... *se dépouillent à nos yeux de leurs attributs pittoresques pour devenir (...) des symboles tragiques* (93). In his Preface to the first edition, Nodier calls the tale part of *les traditions populaires*, with the added *détails de mœurs et de localité* (95). Linking this tale to a larger body of folklore, Nodier, in his Preface to the second edition, writes that his tale seeks to articulate *le complément de la vieille fable gaulle, effacée depuis longtemps de la mémoire des guides, des chasseurs et des battelières* (100). With a tale such as *Trilby*, Nodier seeks to restore this old Gallic fable to the collective memory of the people.

The tale tells the story of *amour* and *charité* that are repressed by the social authority figure whose power is based on financial interest and sustained by his manipulation of language to distort meaning. The story takes place in a fantastic 'world', wherein the heroine is able to seek insight into truth through a legendary figure. She herself finally becomes a legendary figure, and in so doing, transforms her story into something that, due to the irresolution of the antinomy between reason and unreason of the fantastic 'world' of the text, is supposed to be neither totally dismissed nor totally accepted by the reader in 1822. The social themes presented in *Trilby* therefore designate on a level that is neither directly referential to early Nineteenth Century society, nor to a purely mythical universe, but paradoxically, to an imaginative universe somewhere between the two, a combination of both that conforms to the laws of neither one, entirely. Thus, while *Trilby* belongs to Nodier's first type of fantastic story, *l'histoire fantastique fausse*, it goes beyond the rubrics of Nodier's categorization, since it implies a challenge to epistemological convention through its assumption of complementarity between reason and unreason. In *Trilby*, complementarity is established with the aid of the pseudo-historical intertext (legend), and

sustained by requiring from the reader a suspension of disbelief.

The very act of creating an antinomical universe in the fantastic text is in itself intended to test the usual conceptual boundaries between real and unreal. Amblard refers to this act as, *le réalisme élargi à l'infini, non pas dans un souci de nomenclature et d'inventaire, mais avec la préoccupation de faire appréhender par l'esprit tout ce qui constitue l'ailleurs et le différent, ce qui appartient au passé et au futur, ou au monde généralement invisible*⁴⁴. The general theme developed by the tale, seeking truth beyond conventional acceptability, not only mirrors the epistemological challenge, but indirectly designates similar themes or problems in the society in which the text is produced. Trilby's invitation to Jeannie, *réalise le bonheur de nos rêves* (105), expresses the paradox not only of love that can turn dream into reality, but also, metaphorically, of the fantastic, that expands the conceptual limits of reality to include the dream vision of the tale.

Trilby is displaced in space and time so as to be able to stage a social challenge, without having to grapple with the

⁴⁴ Amblard, "Sources...", 1003-1004.

antinomy between reason and unreason. As already noted in Chapter II, Nodier himself appears to explain why the tale must be inserted into the public consciousness through the medium of folklore and can not be received by the society of 1820's France: *Nous sommes trop perfectionnés pour jouir (des) mensonges délicieux* (Préface, 97). In other words, such a tale could not be situated in the context of a France dominated by Rationalism, since it would be immediately dismissed as ridiculous. Placing it in the lineage of folklore somewhat marginalizes, but also saves it from instant dismissal, as does the author's supplications to the reader that it be taken merely as innocent entertainment.

However, I have argued throughout that a connection exists between the tale and 1820's France, but have cautioned that this connection is indirect, and that it is impossible to identify Ronald with any particular contemporary figure. The tale instead teaches broad moral lessons: truth, or a glimpse of it, can be reached by looking through the fantastic, legend and folklore, to a primordial past; and, opposition to truth-finding often comes in the form of social authorities, who may indeed themselves be usurpers, with false claims of legitimacy, their motivation solely economic. Therefore, is Nodier teaching his

contemporaries to distrust the King? Indeed not. Rather, the tale's social message is broader. Just as the tale does not directly address the antinomy between reason and unreason, neither does it directly designate anyone in 1820's France. Nodier's *Trilby* cautions against illegitimate social authority that is founded on and motivated by money interest alone, and therefore may be read as anti-Bourgeois, anticipating the steady rise of the already emerging Bourgeois class. As that class evolves from emerging to establishment, most dramatically in the events of 1830, it becomes much more specifically designated in Nodier's tales. Nodier associates Reason with the rise of the Bourgeoisie that started in 1789, and as his tales become more concerned with the relationship of reason to unreason, they also become more politically and ideologically specific, yet revolve around the same basic themes introduced in *Trilby*. Legend is what links *Trilby* to society, and allows it to sustain antinomy between natural and supernatural explanation without feeling the necessity for resolution, but it creates an indirect referentiality to contemporary society. We will have to wait for *La Fée aux Miettes*, *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, *Jean-François les Bas-bleus* and *Inès de Las Sierras*, tales representing Nodier's other categories, for a more direct discussion of

contemporary social and ideological issues. In these later tales, antinomy ceases to go unaddressed, and reason's reciprocal relationship to unreason becomes an issue to be faced by narrator and character alike. Associated social and ideological issues then take on a more timely hue.

CHAPTER IV

FOLIE, MORALITY AND THE FANTASTIC IN

LA FÉE AUX MIETTES

La Fée aux Miettes is essentially an investigation of the mental state referred to as *folie*. The tale's narrator visits Scotland and encounters a fellow Frenchman, Michel, an inmate in the Glasgow asylum for lunatics. The narrator then turns the tale over to Michel, who in turn, relates the story of how he became a *fou*. Michel's narrative tells of his gradual initiation into a fantastic world of fairies, mythical characters, altered concepts of time, space and causality. His story clearly surpasses the limits of contemporary notions of reality and therefore embodies a reassessment of the generally assumed relationship between reason and unreason. *La Fée aux Miettes*, then, corresponds quite closely to Nodier's second category of the fantastic, *l'histoire fantastique vague*, since the very interpretation of the abnormal becomes a subject of the tale, as the narrator probes into the lunatic's story and *folie* in general.

Critical perspectives on Nodier's fantastic tales, and on *La Fée aux Miettes* in particular, range from those who hold that Nodier's fantastic expresses a complete caesura between reason

and unreason¹, others who find that imagination in the fantastic replaces reason², to those who feel that in *La Fée aux Miettes*, Michel's *folie* is actually a mental state allowing him to enhance or expand reason in order to accommodate imagination³.

¹ This view corresponds to Décottignies, whose general model of the fantastic envisions an irresolvable dialectic between unreason and ideological discourses that supposedly represent Reason. He feels that Nodier and Gautier, for example, transfer their escapist tendencies to their literary works, where the rational world is still present, but as a block to imagination (Décottignies, 624-625).

² This is the view principally held by Hans Peter Lund and Jean-Luc Steinmetz. Lund, for example, ascribes the presence of irony in Nodier's fantastic tales to the author's reluctant acceptance that, *la division entre le monde positif et l'imagination*, is impossible to resolve, in spite of his tales' tendencies towards integration of imagination into reason (Lund, 126). Lund admits that Nodier's tales are socially referential, claiming that they are more grounded in actuality than in Utopia, (Lund, 37), and that the tales reveal what Lund calls, *l'idéologie de cohérence et du continu chez Nodier* (Lund, 90). *Folie*, then, instead of providing an opportunity to establish unity and continuity, Nodier's holistic view of human experience, in Lund's view, punctuates the rupture between reason and imagination (Lund, 143).

Steinmetz feels that fantastic *ressemblance*, as embodied by the magical portrait in *La Fée aux Miettes*, serves to provide an alternative system of representation that actually makes more sense than the conventional one to which Michel, the narrator and indeed the reader are accustomed. He writes: *la ressemblance est du côté du fantastique (...). La dissimulation est du côté du vrai*. He adds that this causes a *dégradation de réel qui (...), amène la folie* (Steinmetz, 24). In other words, both Lund and Steinmetz view *folie* as the product of a literary operation that cannot possibly achieve the integration it desires between reason and imagination, or that shocks when it replaces reason with imagination as the more effective system of reference and of creating meaning.

³ Such is the case with Marie-Claude Amblard, who views *folie* as initiation into a world where meaning is created by associations and events that we would normally consider absurd (Amblard, "Sources...", 589). She claims that Nodier's fantastic attempts to show the failure of Knowledge to explain the world and replace it, not with an oppositional epistemology, but with one that incorporates Reason and expands upon it. She writes: *le fantastique est une forme de réalisme et un moyen d'expression philosophique* (Amblard, "Sources...", 1002), and adds that, *le fantastique est le réalisme élargi à l'infini, (...) avec la préoccupation de faire appréhender par l'esprit tout ce qui constitue l'ailleurs et le différent, ce qui appartient au passé et au futur, ou au monde généralement invisible* (Amblard, "Sources...", 1003-1004).

In a mainly psychoanalytical study of the tale, Grant Crichfield suggests that numbers in the tale metaphorically represent Michel's progression toward a state of perfect unity of the person, of wisdom. Numbers replace words and *folie* replaces reason, as the systems that create meaning in the tale. Crichfield writes that, *Nodier's numbers become (...) loci for the reintegration of two faces of experience, or for the suspension of distinction between the "principe imaginatif" and the "principe matériel de la vie humaine" which he evokes in his "De Quelques Phénomènes du sommeil"* (Grant Crichfield, "Nodier's Numbers: Multiplicity, Acceleration, Unity in 'La Fée aux Miettes'," *Nineteenth Century French Studies* 17, 1-2 (1988-1989), 161).

Brian Rogers suggests that Michel's *folie* leads him to accept a world where reality and illusion are compatible, and that, due to his new mental state, the protagonist stops seeking to explain the mystery of that world's dichotomy⁴. Rogers' point is compatible with my notion of complementarity between reason and unreason in Nodier's tales. Understandably, the critic mainly explains *folie*'s integration of unreason into reason in terms of either Michel's or Nodier's own psychological composition. However, I feel that, beyond any personal implications that *folie* in *La Fée aux Miettes* may have for its author, it is a theme embodying much broader social and historical implications⁵.

Essentially at issue in *La Fée aux Miettes* is the meaning of the term *folie*⁶. Contemporary attitudes in general, and

⁴ Brian Rogers, *Charles Nodier et la tentation de la folie*. Genève-Paris: Slatkine, 1985, 69.

⁵ I agree with Céline Mathon-Baduel, who suggests that by using the fantastic with all it has to offer by way of innovative processes of reference, Nodier in fact engages in a type of literary dialogue with his times. She writes: *La littérature est vieille et usée. Nodier choisit de relancer l'aventure. Ses recherches le conduisent à établir un circuit d'échanges dans le temps et l'espace pour rendre son dynamisme à la culture. C'est un dialogue qui s'instaure avec lui-même, les gens de son époque, les penseurs européens* (Céline Mathon-Baduel, "Nodier et les traditions populaires," in *Charles Nodier. Colloque du deuxième centenaire. Besançon-mai 1980*. Besançon: Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, 1981, 263).

⁶ Nodier is far from alone among Romantics in exploring the theme of *folie*. In her study on Stendhal, Shoshana Felman devises semantic categories of *folie*, many of which could apply to *folie* in Nodier's work. To name a few: primitivism, imagination, art, happiness, interdependence of *folie* and reason, the *embourgeoisement de la raison* (*raison d'argent*), dialectic of *Juger vs. Aimer*, semantics, *folie* as a-social, collective judgement of the *fou*, exclusion, exile, prison, execution, difficulty of defining *folie*. (Shoshana

scientific opinion in particular, dismiss *folie* as a mental state of unreason. Anything said by a *fou* is to be discounted as incoherent and meaningless. However, as Joël Malrieu argues, in the age of Romanticism, the term *folie* changes **semantically**, especially in the context of the fantastic text⁷. As previously noted, semantics play a considerable role in Nodier's fantastic tales. In *Trilby*, the semantic discussion around the concept of *charité* provides the key, through the vehicle of folklore, to a past age, an age of saints and miracles, when the supernatural was accepted as part of the dominant world view, even reinforcing that world view. In *La Fée aux Miettes*, the central

Felman, *La folie dans l'oeuvre romanesque de Stendhal*. Paris: Corti, 1971). Nodier makes *folie* a specifically 'fantastic' theme.

⁷ Joël Malrieu reminds us of Michel Foucault's studies, *L'Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* and *L'Histoire de la sexualité*, in which a change in the concept of *folie* is identifiable through the first decades of the Nineteenth Century. During this period, the classical opposition between reasonable man and lunatic begins to break down with the advent of clinical psychiatry. *Folie* comes to be understood as a mental state that can affect anyone. It no longer designates a person who is ontologically different from his reasonable counterpart (Joël Malrieu, *Le fantastique* Paris: Éditions Hachette, 1992, 24).

In a very real way, Nodier falls between these two tendencies. While his texts seem to posit that the *fou* is a being quite separate from others, by virtue of his special insight into things of this world and other worlds, Nodier also seems to plead against the practice of dismissing these characters as babbling idiots, and against assigning them any moral blame. Therefore, I would place Nodier in Foucault's category of the Nineteenth Century approach to *folie* (*folie* as a vehicle to truth: *la lumière dans la nuit*), but would point out Nodier's resistance to some of the tendencies of that approach: Nodier's text argues against the alienation of the *fou*, and against what he sees as juridic unfairness meted out to the *fou* (Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. Paris: Gallimard, 1972, 542, 544-548). What I call Nodier's attempts to expand Reason to include the insights offered by *fous*, fits exactly with Malrieu's notion that the Romantic era witnesses an expansion of the defining limits of humanity. Ironically, many of the tendencies of Science that Nodier rails against are already beginning to pass away during his age and be replaced by considerations with which Nodier himself would be well pleased. The resistance of Nodier's tales to fit into a dialectic schema between Reason and unreason is firmly rooted then in the historical reality of the scientific developments of his age.

semantic issue, that of defining *folie*, is aimed at the very heart of early-Nineteenth Century society. At a time when religious belief is being replaced by faith in Science and Reason, the supernatural becomes inadmissible as a means to explain the world and human experience. In such a philosophical environment, *folie*, dream, imagination, or any form of human intuition lying beyond the realm of Reason, operates as the only means to restore legitimacy to a belief in the supernatural. However, a re-investigation of the notion of *folie* in fact aims more at Reason than at unreason or the supernatural. The latter two become tools that are used to operate on the first. Nodier's fantastic tale, *La Fée aux Miettes*, is more concerned with contemporary scientific knowledge than with religious faith or belief in the supernatural. As Pierre-Georges Castex indicates, *La Fée aux Miettes* is quite possibly Nodier's reaction to a letter, "à M. le docteur A. sur l'hospice des fous de Glasgow," in the May 1829 issue of the *Revue de Paris*, in which the duc de Lévis expresses his admiration for the latest British techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of lunatics⁸.

⁸ Castex suggests that it would be impossible for Nodier not to have read the letter, since he himself had work published in the same issue. Castex describes Nodier's *La Fée aux Miettes* as the expression of the author's *indignation devant le pharisaïsme ingénu de l'excellent duc*. In the tale, Nodier *saisit l'occasion pour énoncer ses propres idées sur la sagesse et sur la folie* (Castex, *Le conte...*, 150).

As Castex notes, many of the techniques mentioned by the Duke in his letter, resurface in Nodier's tale, where they become the subject of criticism.

The tale contains two connected levels of social commentary. First, the re-investigation of *folie* questions society's faith in Science by questioning its definition of *folie* as a faulty mental state that leads only to nonsense⁹. Second, once *folie* has been re-assessed as a form of insightful perception, the lessons learned and articulated by a *fou* (Michel is the case-study in *La Fée aux Miettes*), are themselves held up as valuable lessons concerning contemporary issues such as injustice and the role of money in society. *La Fée aux Miettes*, then, is both a story about *folie*, and *folie* telling its story¹⁰.

In Nodier's tale, the re-examination of *folie*, and the pertinence of this re-examination to the larger ideological issue of Science or Reason versus unreason, is further complicated by a subtle but fundamental aspect of Nodier's personal ideological convictions. Although his tale may

⁹ According to Castex, there is a political motive to Nodier's tale: *à travers l'affabulation fantastique, nous retrouvons la présence du 'dériseur sensé', toujours ardent à bousculer les ambitions vaines ou criminelles de ces personnages graves qui se réunissent à l'Académie des Sciences ou à la Société de Médecine* (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 151).

¹⁰ Shoshana Felman notes a similar type of dual aspect of *folie* in Flaubert, where, she claims, *la folie, c'est à la fois l'ineffable et le désir de 'nommer' l'ineffable* (Shoshana Felman, *La folie et la chose littéraire*. Paris: Seuil, 1977, 173).

correspond to the schema of Romantic uneasiness with the supremacy of Reason¹¹, Nodier does not propose in his fantastic tales in general, nor in his essay on the fantastic, that unreason **replace** Reason¹². Instead, he focusses on a reconciliation between them. Unreason completes Reason, by answering the questions that Reason cannot. In an age of faith in Science, these questions can only be answered by a *fou*, and the ideas of a *fou* can only be entertained in the context of the fantastic. Myth, legend or fairy tales are dismissed as pure fancy, having little to do with contemporary social reality. Even in the case of Nodier's earlier tale, *Trilby*, it is all too easy to relegate Trilby's and Jeannie's story to the category of quaint but irrelevant folklore, in spite of the tale's implicit assertion that folklore provides a direct link to a past age when the perception of truth was unclouded by the shackles of restrictive Reason.

¹¹ An uneasiness Siebers describes in his book, *The Romantic Fantastic*, and relates to the subsequent Romantic fascination with unreason, that is demonstrated by Hegelian thought. Siebers explains the dichotomy between Voltaire's and Nodier's definitions of superstition as indicative of the historical dichotomy between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. According to Siebers, the Romantics allied themselves, symbolically, with those they considered the "victims" of Reason: the superstitious, the faithful; and associated the violence of the Reign of Terror with the Rationalists' persecution of those victims (Siebers, 21, 26-28, 30, 123).

¹² As I have already noted, Joël Malrieu recognizes that this uneasiness need not necessarily take the form of a dialectic between Reason and unreason. He says of the fantastic: *il s'est nourri de la science de son époque. En même temps il l'interrogeait afin de lui permettre de mesurer ses limites et de se dépasser elle-même* (Malrieu, 23).

If the *fou* in *La Fée aux Miettes* is to be listened to, then his message must in some way be pertinent to contemporary social convention and belief. Nevertheless, how does the writer establish the credibility of a *fou*? The answer lies precisely in the very structure of the fantastic tale, and more specifically, in what is considered to be one of the defining features of the fantastic, namely ambiguity¹³. In *La Fée aux Miettes*, one cannot say that Michel's 'unreasonable' story is proposed as undeniably true. However, conversely, the tale's structure, and especially its narrative structure, makes it impossible to completely dismiss Michel's story. Most importantly, its social and moral messages are presented as being pertinent, since Michel's mental state of *folie* is re-evaluated by the fantastic 'experiment' comprised by the very writing of the tale.

The narrator sets out to Scotland, to the Glasgow asylum, to conduct what amounts to an experiment on the subject of *folie*. He listens to Michel's story as one listens to the interviewed subject of a case-study, seeking to learn more about

¹³ Whether it is called hesitation, ambiguity, or doubt between reasonable and supernatural explanation, by theorists such as Todorov, Finné or Jackson, ambiguity between reason and unreason is understood to be a primary defining characteristic of the fantastic (Cf. the discussion on theory in Chapter I).

the mental state called *folie*. The apparent objective distance of the narrator from Michel's story means that the latter can be told more or less free of judgement by the former. Michel thus acquires narrative autonomy. However, as Joël Malrieu explains, the narrator of a fantastic tale, even a tale told in the third person, essentially acts as another character. The narrator-character must, at some point, come to terms with the strange phenomena told to him by the character who experienced them¹⁴. In the end, the narrator of *La Fée aux Miettes* expresses a desire to believe Michel, but for aesthetic and philosophical rather than scientific reasons: he admires the poetry and moral message of Michel's story. Nevertheless, the question of whether or not the story is true, remains open. Malrieu tells us that, ultimately, the interpretation of the story rests with the reader: *seul le lecteur dispose du recul suffisant pour comprendre à la fin*¹⁵. The reader is free to take from the story what he or she will. However, in the case of Nodier's tale, it is implicitly hoped by the narrator that the reader will end up with an altered notion of *folie* and a shaken faith in Science.

¹⁴ Malrieu writes: *Malgré son statut apparemment privilégié, le narrateur ne représente qu'une subjectivité parmi d'autres* (Malrieu, 139).

¹⁵ Malrieu, 144.

In order to understand the tale's social commentary, I will first investigate the issue of the narrator's credulity, because it establishes ambiguity between Reason and unreason, and effects a new respect for the insights of *folie*. I will then look at specific elements of Michel's story, such as character, space and time shifts, talismans and magic plants, that not only make it fantastic, but also play a thematic role by introducing the concepts of wisdom and learning into the tale. Finally, I shall consider the lessons learned by Michel in his journey of initiation towards and into *folie*, and, by association, into wisdom. It should be noted that his chief mentor is the Fée, who is also, by virtue of fantastic multiplicity of character, the Princess Belkiss and King Solomon's Queen of Sheba.

As I argued earlier, Nodier uses ambiguity to imprint on the tale a subtle element of his own ideological perspective; namely that Reason is to be expanded and not obliterated by unreason. Before exploring the role of the tale's narrative structure in establishing ambiguity, it is useful to provide an outline of the tale's plot, in order to introduce the structure, characters and themes to which later reference will be made.

The narrator arrives in Glasgow, where he meets a lunatic named Michel, whose telling of his own story comprises the main

body of Nodier's tale. While a boy in France, Michel was under the care of his uncle, his father being absent on sea-faring commerce. The uncle provides Michel with many good lessons, instilling in him a desire to learn languages, classics, sciences, and especially a trade. According to the uncle, an honest trade is the best defence against the whims of fortune and ruin. Generosity and charity are essential to the uncle's moral lessons.

While a schoolboy, Michel meets La Fée aux Miettes, an old beggar-woman who, it is said, is centuries old. She possesses great knowledge and wisdom, speaks all languages, and teaches Michel many things. He saves her life one day at the Mont Saint Michel and then, half expecting it to be taken as a joke, promises to marry her when he comes of age, and to live with her in her house in Greenock, Scotland. Michel then spends two years as a carpenter, expertly learning the trade. His work takes him far and wide, and, finding himself at Le Havre, he decides to look for his uncle. He signs onto the *Queen of Sheba*, a ship with a secret mission and destination. After a shipwreck, Michel drifts ashore by clutching a sack that, he later finds, contains the Fée. To thank him for his past generosity and for saving her, she gives him a medal with a

portrait of the beautiful Princess Belkiss, the Queen of Sheba. He lands in Scotland and soon finds himself working for a fellow named Finewood, the master carpenter of Greenock.

Sleeping one night at Mistress Speaker's guesthouse, Michel is asked to share a bed with a bailiff from the Isle of Man, who is a perfect gentleman, with only one peculiar trait: he has the head of a great dane! Michel, who as it happens is the only one who notices the bailiff's distinguishing feature, has a nightmare and awakens to find the bailiff dead and himself clutching the bailiff's wallet in his own hands. He is consequently arrested for the murder of the Manx bailiff. After a trial that appears to be the prototypical miscarriage of justice, and whose players all appear to Michel to have dogs' heads, Michel is condemned to death, but saved at the scaffold when the Fée arrives to announce that the Bailiff is still alive. Michel marries the Fée and moves into her miraculous little house, where he spends the days in instructive conversation with the Fée, and the nights in ecstasy with the princess Belkiss, who, as it turns out, is the Fée's other self. After two and a half years of such a life, the Fée tearfully informs Michel of an old horoscope that condemns her to death after three years of wedded bliss, unless her husband find the

elusive singing mandrake. Michel sets off to find it. He requests information about the singing mandrake from an erudite herbalist, who has him committed to the Glasgow lunatic asylum, which is where the narrator meets him and listens to his story.

The night after Michel has told the narrator his tale, some other inmates report having seen him flying over the walls of the asylum holding a flower and accompanied by singing. The narrator sends Daniel to Greenock to investigate Michel's story. The people there remember Michel very fondly, but do not corroborate his stories of fairies and canine-headed gentlemen. However, Finewood has twelve grand-children all born on the same day and named either Michel or Michelette. Each one bears the image of a mandrake on their chests. Wondering about the credibility of Michel's tale, the narrator twice encounters psychiatrists and engages them in discussion. Their scientific discourses do not succeed in convincing the narrator that contemporary psychiatry has fully grasped the reality of *folie*. The question, then, from beginning to end, is whether or not to believe that there is truth in the stories told by lunatics.

I. NARRATIVE CREDULITY

I.i. THE FIRST NARRATOR

La Fée aux Miettes essentially embodies its narrator's quest to inform himself on the subject of *folie*. The tale opens with the narrator railing against what he considers bad literature, expressing his preference for the bantering of lunatics over the dry, unimaginative tracts of historians and critics. The narrator discusses the issue with his valet, Daniel Cameron. The two men entertain different definitions of *folie*. First, Daniel proposes a view of lunatics that places them beyond the limits of humanity: *ils s'occupent aussi peu des affaires de notre monde que s'ils descendaient de la lune, et qui ne parlent au contraire que de choses qui n'ont jamais pu se passer nulle part* (175). In response to Daniel, the narrator describes *folie* as a mental state that, while it may lead the individual in question to possess a very different perspective on the world, does not make him or her any less human, nor does it make his or her ideas any less applicable to human experience. The narrator makes clear his belief that lunacy lies in a mental space somewhere between human thought and Divine thought, wherein resides knowledge of all of Creation's mysteries. Therefore, while the lunatic is perhaps somehow

above normal human beings, he is not unconnected from them. The very word 'lunatic', explains the narrator, is derived from the Earth's satellite, and therefore indicates a similar relationship between the lunatic and his world: he is not in it, and yet never escapes a dependency on it nor its pull on him.

Attempting to provide an analogy for the lunatic, the narrator evokes the theme of language¹⁶. He makes the point that, just as we cannot deny the knowledge of Eskimos simply because we do not understand their language, we therefore must not dismiss the insights of lunatics, since their only aberration is that they, too, speak a different language (177). Their ideas, belonging to a world that is unknown to us, a *monde intermédiaire*¹⁷, refer to an *ordre de sensations et de raisonnements qui est tout à fait inaccessible à notre éducation et à nos habitudes* (176). It is our perspective, not that of the lunatic, which is limited. Consequently, it is erroneous, according to what the narrator calls his 'theory' of lunatics (177), to deny that they have a type of reasoning and to dismiss

¹⁶ Hans Peter Lund states that, in his critical writing, Nodier attempts to re-establish the essential values of humanity through reflections on expression and language (Lund, 31). Nodier's tales can be said to be the putting into practice of some of these reflections. For example, we witnessed the importance of language and semantics around the definition of *charité* in *Tribby*.

¹⁷ Cf. Nodier's essay on the fantastic.

what they say as meaningless simply because it is spoken in a different 'language'. Lunatics, then, are not inhuman. They simply occupy a privileged position in relation to the world. Their ideas are not to be dismissed, and their 'reasoning', although different, is not to be denied. By virtue of their humanity, they are also part of the world in which they live, possessing insight into the matters of that world¹⁸. One then never really knows whether or not to believe the lunatic. He seems bizarre and yet oddly makes sense¹⁹. In other words, meaning can occur outside of Reason.

The narrator also has aesthetic and political reasons for defending the lunatic. Quite simply, he believes their stories because he wants to. Their stories, *d'agréables fantaisies*, not only entertain, but, he claims, produce and sustain both "equilibrium" and "health" (178). The narrator expresses a political bias in favour of countries that presumedly allow freedom of speech, and leaves France for Scotland, on his

¹⁸ Foucault's study points out that relegation of the *fou* to his own 'world', or subjectivity, his own *vérité*, is actually a Nineteenth-Century tendency (Foucault, 547). Nodier's narrator, then is both revealing a similar pre-supposition, and arguing against it, by arguing that the *fou* possesses worldly insight, and should be listened to.

¹⁹ According to Gwenhaël Ponnau, such ambiguity is necessary in the fantastic in order to create a degree of interpretative uncertainty whereby the reader remains open to new notions. In her words: *Ainsi le fou doit-il être dans la littérature fantastique un personnage suffisamment ambigu pour donner sujet moins à la compassion qu'aux doutes du lecteur* (Gwenhaël Ponnau, *La folie dans la littérature fantastique*. Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1987, 44).

mission to discover more about *folie*. He and Daniel leave at night, with the narrator's explanation that, given he lives in such a "liberty-filled" country, he is always in possession of a passport, in case he should need to leave in a hurry (178). The obvious irony of the narrator's explanation for leaving at night implies that France is anything but "liberty-filled", especially regarding any notions that may challenge the canons of Reason. Indeed, the narrator implies that *folie* is for Michel a state that nourishes the freedom of his expression, keeping it unfettered by the expectations placed on 'reasonable' discourse. Michel is a *fou ingénieux et presque libre* (179). The narrator envies Michel's candour and his clear and simple expression of what he calls *des idées naturelles* (183). He expresses a preference for the *labyrinthe fantastique* of Michel's introduction over the *séances solennelles de l'Institut* (183), and displays a self-consciousness regarding his own narrative: lamenting the constraints placed on expression by the conventions of writing, he wishes he were able to guard against *l'invasion de la métaphore* and *[le] despotisme de la phrase* (181). It is clear here what is being implied through comparison: unlike the 'normal' story-teller, the lunatic's expression is free of the conventions that cloud precision and

force the writer to take recourse to metaphor, hoping to **imply** what can not be directly **said**. It is as if language had lost its capacity to designate and could only benefit from the innovations offered by the narrative of a *fou*. However, the lunatic's narrative honesty, the fantastic, still demands from the reader a certain complicity, through credulity, or at least a suspension of judgement based on previously-held assumptions. Before giving Michel the floor, the narrator offers his reader the opportunity to quit now, or to follow the *fil d'Ariane* of Michel's story in good faith (184), not necessarily believing every word, but not dismissing the story from the outset, either.

As I have suggested, the tale's structuring into two levels of narration is crucial in establishing it as a fantastic narrative, as well as a narrative about the fantastic²⁰. The impression of objectivity provided by the separation between these two levels of narration allows Michel's fantastic narrative to become a subject for study in the quest to better understand *folie*, and to appreciate its potential for insight

²⁰ Yves Vadé points out that *La Fée aux Miettes* differs from *Trilby* in that, rather than presenting magical figures that are products of the imagination, as in the case of *Trilby*, *La Fée aux Miettes* itself is a chronicle of the workings of the imagination (Yves Vadé, "L'imaginaire magique de Charles Nodier," in *Colloque du deuxième centenaire*, 86).

into human experience.

I.ii. MICHEL'S NARRATION

Michel's story is presented as a narrative in its own right that the first narrator promises not to interrupt often (185). However, Michel explains that he himself harboured doubts about the very events he experienced. His own credulity seems only to be built up progressively, through the course of his adventures and then, through the telling of them. He admits to a certain *invraisemblance* in his story, but also suggests that prevailing public opinion can be just as unconvincing (*l'invraisemblance des vaines conjectures populaires*, 197). Michel tells of a time when he was a doubter, thinking the Fée a crazy old woman, and only promising to marry her as a way of humouring her (212-213). He does not believe her when she reveals the peculiarity of her identity, namely that she is both the Fée and the Princess Belkiss, and, patronizing her, promises, tongue-in-cheek, to marry her, **as Belkiss** (213). Trying to explain the Fée's double identity to a character named Mathieu, Michel finds himself accused of insanity. The unsure nature of Michel's narrative is underscored when he admits that even he cannot necessarily make

sense of what he is saying: *ces paroles qui n'ont pas de sens pour vous, et qui, à vrai dire, ne me paraissent guère plus raisonnables à moi-même* (219).

Michel admits that he doubted his own eyes when he first saw the dog-headed bailiff in Greenock. He tells the narrator that he tried to convince himself it was all just a dream or that the Fée was playing a trick on him, and finally found himself doubting everything that had happened to him since his arrival in Scotland (230-231). However, Michel abandons attempts to interpret his visions and concedes that, even if these events were merely *caprices* and *chimères* created by the Fée, he accepts that it was most likely done for his own benefit (231). His position is no longer one of judging the veracity of the abnormal events and visions, but of accepting them, not because they can somehow be proved by some sort of alternative system of logic, but because belief in them is beneficial to him. He recognizes their instructive purpose. Upon seeing the medal of Belkiss again, he exclaims: *Dieu soit loué, Belkiss! je n'avais pas tout rêvé* (231). There is a certain desire to believe that extends beyond the realm of rational proof. Nevertheless, Michel does not completely give himself over to that desire, and suggests that he only perceives of the

enlivened traits of the medal because he is victim to a *délire d'amour* (234). Perhaps his visions stem from nothing more than his being love-struck.

Public doubt and ridicule do nothing to aid Michel in accepting his visions. No one in Greenock knows of the Fée, who is supposed to have lived there for many years. When Michel is mocked by his fellow workers at Finewood's, he is left "dumbfounded" and "mortified" (233), and yet still admits that *ces plaisanteries n'étaient pas dépourvues de bon sens* (236).

As his adventure progresses, and Michel finds himself living in the Fée's miraculous house, he grows more accepting of the marvellous world in which he finds himself, not so much because he can explain it, but because he discovers a new sense of well-being and even "ecstasy" there (306). However, even the Fée herself seems to test Michel's credulity, when she claims: *Jamais fée n'a paru sur terre depuis le temps de la reine Mab* (309). Michel tells her that he only desires to know if fairies do exist because he fears for his faculty of reason (309). Even at this late point in the tale, Michel attempts to maintain some grasp on Reason, and does not know entirely whether to believe or not. The Fée's response essentially explains the concept of the supernatural as it is represented in the tale. She

instructs Michel to believe in his illusions as long as they make him happy. She reminds him that religion accommodates the belief in superior beings (*intelligence supérieure*)²¹, and that even Reason, *qui discute tout, parce qu'elle ne discerne rien clairement*, can not entirely contest some real historical examples of these beings (309). By extension, one is not to doubt the supernatural as represented in the fantastic; first because even Reason can not provide satisfactory proof of its impossibility and second, because these so-called illusions can in fact inspire one to act with virtue (309-310). The fantastic is to be at least entertained for both of these reasons: epistemological and moral²². However, it should be noted that the Fée and Michel believe their own illusions not only by default of disproof; indeed, they make a concession to unreason, believing their illusions because they prove to be didactic. The illusions are not proved true, and Reason, although

²¹ Here the Fée is implying a type of 'leap of faith' that is essential in both religious belief and belief in the miraculous world she opens up to Michel as part of his initiation into wisdom. We must not forget that the Fée is directly connected to the biblical tradition through her very identity as the Queen of Sheba. Beyond this link of identity, there is little more made of the connection between religion and the fantastic in *La Fée aux Miettes*, except by intimations of Nodier's general holistic philosophy that views religion, learning (even reason), and the marvellous as mutually complementary, when held in the proper balance.

The link between the fantastic and religious belief in general, is further investigated in *Inès de Las Sierras*. It was introduced through the subject of religious morality, the notion of *charité*, in *Trilby*.

²² I will explore these justifications for fantastic belief, later in this chapter.

'humbled' is not discredited.

In a spirit of acceptance, if not complete belief of his illusions, Michel challenges the narrator to hear the singing mandrake (319). As he approaches his conclusion, the narrator is still in a position of doubt and pity for Michel, telling the lad that he would not want to be present at Michel's disillusionment: *quand le dernier de tes prestiges s'évanouira* (319). The narrator then undertakes to draw his own conclusions on the enchanting but unlikely tale he has just heard.

I.iii. THE NARRATOR'S CONCLUSIONS

It is not until the tale's concluding chapter that the objective, third-person narrator transforms into a character by virtue of the judgement he must pass on Michel's story. Expanding on Malrieu's point²³, I would argue that the narrator's acquired subjectivity at the end of *La Fée aux Miettes* constitutes a privileged position, since it carries with it not

²³ That the narrator does not occupy a privileged position regarding the phenomenon (Malrieu, 139).

It should be noted that Malrieu's excellent analysis of the fantastic only includes Nodier's essay on the fantastic, and not his tales, which, I feel, provide for a subtle clarification of Malrieu's point: the narrator in *La Fée aux Miettes* brings to his judgement of the phenomenon, many of the pre-suppositions of his age. They, as much as the veracity of Michel's tale, are brought into question, which fact actually supports Malrieu's assertion that the fantastic must be historicized in order to be fully understood (Malrieu, 146-147).

only the narrator's judgement of the story Michel has just told, but also the beliefs and conventions of the age in which the narrator lives. In his attempts to judge the veracity of Michel's tale, the narrator weighs it against the scientific explanation offered him by the doctor from London. An expert in psychiatry, the doctor proposes that Michel's entire story may be the result of the hallucinatory properties of a drug derived from the mandrake plant. The narrator must decide which version of *folie* to accept: Michel's apparent demonstration that *folie* is a privileged point of access into wisdom, or the conventional view held by contemporary psychiatry that *folie* is merely mental illness. The narrator may well be seen as another character, subjectively involved in Michel's narrative, but his involvement carries with it an indictment of the status of early Nineteenth-Century Reason and Science.

Nothing indicates the broad social significance of the narrator's conclusions more than the very decision he makes concerning Michel's tale, and *folie* in general. Essentially, the narrator refuses to make a choice between Science and the literal acceptance of Michel's story. He **prefers** Michel's story to the dry discourse of the London doctor, and may **wish** to take Michel's story literally. Nevertheless, he cannot, just as his

reader cannot. All he can do, is to continue to pursue two hypotheses: that *folie* may mysteriously offer insight into real human experience, and that, for the time being, this insight surpasses the capacity of contemporary Science to explain. The narrator's indecision regarding the veracity of Michel's story leaves the subject ambiguous, a matter for the reader's own interpretation not only of the story's veracity, but of its message. However, in the narrator's weighing of Michel's story against the scientific explanation, the cultivated reader of the time would recognize the pre-suppositions and perhaps inadequacies of contemporary Science, and come to reconsider some aspects of Michel's social and moral message²⁴.

The narrator in *La Fée aux Miettes* is provided with a rational explanation for the entirety of the supernatural events and characters of Michel's story; namely the London doctor's²⁵ explanation of the medicinal uses and effects of the mandrake.

²⁴ Here, Nodier's tale presents a common Romantic theme: that Science and Scientific 'truth' are not necessarily as solid as general belief might have them be. Auguste Viatte discusses how Madame de Staël's preference for intuition, mystical religion, idealist philosophy over reason, as expressed in her essay, *De l'Allemagne*, characterizes the convictions and misgivings of early Romanticism (Auguste Viatte, *Les sources occultes du Romantisme*. (tome II) Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1928, 128-131).

This scepticism toward Science is certainly part of a general Romantic rejection of what is seen as Eighteenth-Century rationalist ideology, and its continuation in the form of Nineteenth-Century faith in Science. However, Nodier's formulation of it in his fantastic tales, and particularly his moderate stance, demonstrated by what I call his assumption of complementarity between reason and unreason, are distinctive.

²⁵ The first of two representatives of contemporary psychiatry that Michel meets.

His discourse explaining the mandrake's incapacity to produce sound is replete with almost ridiculous jargon: *l'analyse la plus scrupuleuse n'a jamais fait découvrir, ni dans le calice monophylle et turbiné, ni dans la corolle pentapétale et campanuliforme de la mandragore, l'ombre d'une glotte et d'un larynx, et qu'elle manque essentiellement de membrane crico-thyroïdienne et de ligaments thyro-aryténoïdiens...* (322). The narrator's ironic response, *c'est probablement pour cela (...)* *que la mandragore est muette*, indicates that, while he understands and does not necessarily refute the doctor's explanation, he does however object to the doctor's dogmatism and jargon²⁶. The narrator's irony only solicits further banter from the doctor: *Comme le sujet actuel est flegmatique, doux et malléable d'inclinations, et inepte de nature, il est difficile de juger de la méthode curative qu'on pourra lui appliquer avant de l'avoir vu dans le paroxysme qui va succéder à ses (Michel's) hallucinations. Le plus sûr sera d'y procéder graduellement, en commençant par les affusions d'eau glaciale sur l'occiput et l'épigastre, et en passant de là aux sinapisme, aux épispastiques et aux moxas, sans négliger, comme de raison, un*

²⁶ Castex writes: *Nodier se plaît, au début et à la fin du conte, à humilier et à confondre le dogmatisme scientifique devant la sagesse des lunatiques* (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 151).

fréquent usage de la phlébotomie jusqu'à syncope (322). The violent nature of these methods of treatment is underscored by the doctor's actions: he grabs the narrator by the coat buttons as if to force him physically into accepting the argument. Scientific prescription as well as scientific argumentation are portrayed as having a less kindly side. Ironically, the narrator has mistaken the London doctor for one of the inmates in the asylum, describing him to the concierge as one of *les plus dangereux de vos prisonniers* (322), and referring to him as a "cannibal" (322). Unyielding members of the scientific establishment are presented not only as indistinguishable from lunatics, but also as notably less gentle. When the concierge informs the narrator of the doctor's true identity and "philanthropic" mission in the Glasgow asylum, in despair, the narrator evokes the name of Uncle Tobie from *Tristram Shandy* (323), wishing to learn from this "most sage of all men" to whistle a simple tune in the face of boring discourses such as the one he has just heard from the London doctor. The narrator implicitly contrasts the didactic discourse of the doctor to the enchanting discourse of Michel's narration, or the simple wisdom of a character like Uncle Tobie, preferring the latter two to the first. Didactic discourse goes no further to explain the

mystery of Michel's condition than does whistling a simple tune, and indeed seems much more brutal. The doctor's discourse, therefore, is part of the reason for the concluding chapter's title: *Qui n'explique rien et qu'on peut se dispenser de lire* (319).

Nevertheless, the conclusion is rich in subtlety regarding explanation and interpretation, since neither Michel's narration nor the discourses of Science and Reason win the narrator's credulity. First, in spite of the doctor's pedantic tone, his explanation of the use of plant extracts and their hallucinatory properties (320) are, of course, not erroneous, and certainly provide a viable explanation for Michel's visions. Furthermore, when Daniel travels to Greenock, he finds that people remember Michel, but none of his more eccentric encounters²⁷. Daniel can not find the Fée's house. Therefore, although one might prefer the readability of Michel's narration to the dry style of the doctor, the latter is not entirely discredited. Moreover, the former, as we have seen, has its own moments of self-doubt. There is, as Malrieu might claim²⁸, a sustained interplay between

²⁷ They do not remember the Fée and scoff at Daniel's suggestion that there are canine-headed men living among them, 325-326.

²⁸ Malrieu notes that, during the early-Nineteenth Century, there is *un jeu subtil entre la science et la littérature, chacune cherchant dans l'autre sa propre légitimité* (Malrieu, 21-22).

the fantastic and Science.

However, the London doctor does nothing to facilitate this interplay. He lends no credence to supernatural explanations for the legendary vocal properties of the mandrake, choosing to see the case as an issue of enlightened Science, *la médecine philosophique et rationnelle*, combatting what he terms "superstition", *la sottise superstition (des) ignorants anciens; (...) les ténèbres du moyen âge* (320). The narrator describes the doctor's tone as haughty, saying the latter offers an explanation of the mandrake, *dont il ne me croyait plus digne* (319). Contemporary Science is portrayed as a closed system, sustained by exclusive and smug practitioners who defend against challenges to their premises by obscuring argumentation with dry and jargon-ridden diatribes. Conversely, the narrator remains open-minded. He does not presume there to be an opposition between Reason and imagination, but attempts to reconcile the two, by somehow integrating the latter into the former. The commentary on Science that is typical of Nodier's writing, criticizing Science without dismissing it, is expressed with brilliant irony in the London doctor's claim that, *il n'y avait point d'absurde folie dont on ne pût trouver l'origine écrite dans un livre de science* (321). The narrator, realizing the

possible irony of the sentence, concurs. Science explaining the irrational can itself appear more ridiculous than superstition. The humour of the discussion between the London doctor and the narrator renders it impossible for the text to be interpreted as a virulent attack by unreason on the foundations of Reason, as some critics would have us believe²⁹. Rather, the jargon and earnestness of Science are mocked for their tendency to stifle colourful and imaginative discourse. Referring to the doctor's discursive as well as physical forcefulness, the narrator laments the absence of the principle of equality: *l'égalité, si vainement cherchée par les hommes, serait-elle une chimère aussi à la maison des fous?* (322). He would have equality between Reason and imagination, and not domination of either one by the other. For example, the London doctor's discourse is based on genuine scientific evidence. He refers to actual scientific study, naming real contemporaries such as Ferrein, Geoffroy Saint-Hillaire, Court de Gébelin. The fact that he applies these studies to an investigation of the events of Michel's charming narrative, is what renders him comical. Nevertheless, comedy does not detract from the seriousness of the narrator's

²⁹ Cf. Chapter I, on the dialectic relationship between reason and unreason assumed by some critics.

implied criticism of contemporary Science. Upon hearing that Michel has escaped the asylum by flying over the wall at night, flower in hand, the narrator interprets it as Michel's escape from the torture chamber of psycho-therapy³⁰.

Since, in the mind of the narrator, neither the scientific nor the supernatural explanations for Michel's story can be proved unequivocally true, he is faced with the decision of what to make of that story. In the end, he **prefers** to believe Michel. His decision appears to be based upon a personal distaste for the jargon and exclusiveness of Science, rather than Michel's superior ability to convince. It is a type of political decision extending beyond the confines of the tale, and which is in keeping with the Romantic penchant for favouring the spiritual over the scientific. At this point, therefore, the narrator is acting purely as a reader, bringing his own meta-textual bias to his interpretation of the story.

³⁰ *Le voilà quitte, le pauvre Michel, du gilet de force, du maillot, des ceps, des poucettes, de la phlébotomie, des moxas, des épispastiques, des sinapismes, des affusions d'eau glacée, et des éméto-cathartiques !* (323).

In fact, Gwenhaël Ponnau, identifies the London doctor, with his prescriptions for treating Michel, as the caricatural image of the organicist doctor Broussais, whose clinical conception of insanity Ponnau insists could only be opposed by Nodier's notion of *folie* as a special insight that extends beyond Science (Ponnau, 44).

Nodier is indeed participating in a tradition of literary mockery of scientific and medical jargon that extends as far back as Molière, and continues in Balzac's mockery of medical pomposity in the Preface to *La Comédie humaine*. With Nodier, such mockery takes on broad epistemological and ideological dimensions, since he links medicine and Science in general not only to Enlightenment ideology, but also, and more importantly, to a Bourgeois ideology of Progress.

The question arises whether the singing sound that accompanied Michel's flight over the wall came from the flower or not. The narrator chooses to believe Michel, articulating the nature of his choice to his valet: *c'était de la fleur, Daniel, ne t'y trompe pas, quoique je comprenne à merveille que tu tombasses dans cette méprise, en te souvenant que les fleurs n'ont point de ligaments thyro-aryténoïdiens, si tu l'avais jamais su par hasard. Mais écoute, (...) Daniel, tu sais lire, et ce funeste avantage de l'éducation ne t'a fait perdre aucun de ceux de ton intelligence naturelle* (323-324). The narrator favours intuition, or *intelligence naturelle*, over a closed philosophical system with no regard for intuition. However, as we saw, Daniel's journey to Greenock does little to corroborate Michel's fantastic story³¹. As dry and unconvincing as the London doctor's explanation may be, it holds as much credibility as Michel's fantastic account of his adventures in Greenock, his memories of which, it seems, may very well have been distorted by the effects of medication. The narrator leaves Scotland, his only option being to write the tale down and leave

³¹ Marie-Claude Amblard claims that in spite of what Daniel finds in Greenock, the magical explanation of Michel's disappearance is more convincing than any other possible one (Amblard, "Sources...", 251).

interpretation to its readers³².

Later, while in Venice, the narrator has one more opportunity to expose the futility of scientific discourse as it exists in his day. He encounters a doctor from the Lunatic Academy at Siena, a name with intended ambiguity, and finds that the doctors' most earnest debates have nothing to do with the question of mental health³³. Once again, the narrator expresses his conviction that imagination should be integrated into scientific investigation, asking hopefully: *le sentiment et la fantaisie reprennent-ils partout la place qu'ils n'auraient jamais dû perdre, parmi les plus saines occupations de l'esprit?* (327) The narrator concludes that the doctors' academy is not

³² Marie-Claude Amblard describes *La Fée aux Miettes* as essentially two tales that the reader has to choose between (Amblard, "Sources...", 247). Hans Peter Lund feels that Nodier's tales show the diversity characterizing the people and ideas of his era, a type of polyphony (Lund, 31). I would argue that polyphony becomes most evident in *Inès*, when characters' varying ideological perspectives condition their interpretation of the abnormal. Céline Mathon-Baduel also insists on a somewhat dialogic nature of the tales: *Nodier fait donc partie des auteurs qui appellent au dialogue contrairement à ceux qui imposent leur discours à un monde dont ils se tiennent à l'écart* (Céline Mathon-Baduel, "Nodier et les traditions populaires" in *Colloque du deuxième centenaire*, 261).

Creating a neutral text, such that interpretation truly is up to the reader, means in the case of the fantastic, sustaining ambiguity concerning abnormal events, characters, etc. Ambiguity is sometimes misinterpreted as failure to consolidate the vision of the ideal as represented by the vision of the lunatic. Such an example of misinterpretation is provided by Brian Rogers in some of the conclusions of his psychoanalytical study of *folie* in Nodier. He speaks of Nodier's only partial ability to discover and express in his writing the world of illusions he wishes to inhabit, or to escape to (Rogers, *La tentation de la folie*, 86). This position misses the subtlety of the fantastic, which operates around the very ambiguity between what is 'real' and what is 'imagined'.

³³ The two subjects debated by the doctors are: whether Diogenes used oil or butter for his frying; and, the second, what different outcome, if any, would have been effected by Pompei re-arranging the formation of his troops at the battle of Pharsalus (327-328).

worthy of having the name of 'lunatic' attached to it, since it is actually lunatics who are the most "interesting" and most "reasonable" of all men (328). Obviously, in his eyes, there is a complementarity between intuition and knowledge, and any fault in the contemporary state of things lies with the scientists who create artificial separation between the two. Faced with such an epistemological alienation, the narrator chooses, like Villon, to occupy his thoughts with the regrets of past times, *les neiges d'antan* (328). The book he finds on sale in the Venice marketplace, *La Fée aux Miettes*, contains more "sense" and "morality", and is far more instructional than all the *babioles pédantesques de quelques méchants philosophastres brevetés, patentés et appointés pour instruire les nations* (329). According to the narrator, scholarly writing has become a vile *métier* and Science a *sèche, rebutante et sacrilège anatomie des divins mystères de la nature* (329). They are in need of revitalization and, assumedly, it is the intuition and imaginative narrative of lunatics³⁴ that could effect this revitalization, if only they would be appreciated for having the insight their alternative perspective offers.

³⁴ Or the telling of folklore, legend and fairy tales. Nodier is not alone in this belief. Other writers, like Sir Walter Scott, place great value on these less academic forms.

It is possible to describe the perspective that becomes known as Michel's *folie*, by investigating elements of his tale that fall into four categories. While these elements do not comprise an exhaustive list of the fantastic 'properties' of the tale, they do serve to highlight the most important aspects of the perspective Michel acquires through his adventures with the Fée. First, there is a statement of truth's arbitrariness, as summarized by the Fée's paradoxical assertion: *tout est vérité, tout est mensonge* (317). Second, I will explore the significance of Michel's dreams and visions. Third, I will investigate the brilliant creation of ambiguity in the Finewood dowry case, an episode that develops the theme of *charité*, which was of such importance in *Trilby*. In my fourth category, "Of talismans, the magical flower and other fantastic things," fall those objects that not only symbolize the fantastic 'world' into which Michel is initiated, but also provide the only way of making sense of that 'world'³⁵. Finding the logic that connects these objects becomes Michel's sole means of extracting meaning from his adventures. Since this logic surpasses the logic of Reason, it is defined by many around Michel as *folie*.

³⁵ I have already noted, and will further discuss, the notion that Michel's fantastic 'world' is in fact the real world seen from a radically different perspective.

II. THE NATURE OF THE FANTASTIC IN LA FÉE AUX MIETTES

II.i. TOUT EST VÉRITÉ, TOUT EST MENSONGE

Paradox. Michel's story tells of his initiation into wisdom. The odd phenomenon of the Fée's identity, that she is also Belkiss, creates a connection to Solomon and wisdom. Therefore, it is Michel's *folie*, his acceptance of the paradox behind his wife's identity, rather than academic learning, that provides him with access to wisdom. As one might expect of a fantastic tale, the basic paradox underlying the paradox of identity and all other strange phenomena in *La Fée aux Miettes*, is of an interpretative nature. It involves the process used to establish truth. Conventionally, the verity of any given concept is established through a process of reasoning. But what is made of those phenomena that defy explanation by Reason? Michel discovers that, since he cannot deny the existence of those phenomena, they are part of his experience, then he must accept the paradox that any given concept can be a matter of both *vérité* and *mensonge*. Consequently, every accepted 'truth' is open to scrutiny, and every supposed 'untruth', to re-

consideration³⁶. Michel's *folie* can be defined as embracing the equivocation generated by the paradox: *tout est vérité, tout est mensonge*. As it then becomes impossible to categorize into truth and lie those things that Michel's *folie* permits him to see, glimpses of timeless wisdom, so does it become arbitrary for psychiatrists to define *folie* solely according to their own precepts. What they see as *mensonge*, may actually be *vérité*. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that *tout est vérité* and *tout est mensonge*. The Fée's paradox does not propose a rejection of Reason, but a qualification of it. Equivocation means all voices are given fair hearing.

In Nodier's tale, wisdom is reached by a holistic quest through the 'realms' of both Reason and the imagination³⁷. We

³⁶ Hans Peter Lund explains that the arbitrariness of truth in Nodier's tales allows the author to transfer into his fiction the frustrated socio-political criticism of his earlier expository writing. In other words, if nothing can be established as purely and exclusively true, then no one system of interpretation, Reason or imagination, can take precedence over the other and issues raised in the world of the Fée are as important as ones in the real world. In fact, they are often the same, only not dismissable as unreasonable or untrue. Truth is arbitrary. (Lund, 120-122, 125).

³⁷ Cf. my discussion of Amaryll Chanady's notion of unresolved antinomy between Reason and imagination in Chapter I. An example in *La Fée aux Miettes* is the different explanations for the Fée's age, two thousand years. The reasonable explanation would have us believe that she is really many different women, who looked and acted alike, and who, for two thousand years, have come to beg at the church in Granville. The fantastic explanation is that she is a two thousand year old fairy. As much as the second explanation demands a leap of faith, the first is no more convincing, relying equally on remarkable and extraordinary co-incidence. Neither explanation completely satisfies nor is capable of unequivocally disproving the other. Anne-Marie Roux interprets the paradox of time in Nodier's tales as a way of integrating two notions of the concept as cyclical and linear, and in that way, effecting a resurrection of past times, the "Golden Age", as she terms it, with which Nodier seeks to refurbish the present order (Roux, "L'âge d'or...", 26, 28).

Paradox allows one to entertain the possibility of what is usually held to be impossible.

will later see, for example, that neither Michel nor the Fée abandon the traditional types of learning and knowledge that form the foundations of rational thought, such as language-learning, philosophy, science, etc. However, since unreason is at the disadvantage of not being widely appreciated in the academies of Michel's time, it is unreason that must be held in the foreground, and Reason that is humbled, even if not entirely discredited. The fantastic 'reality' that Michel experiences, and gradually comes to accept, is a 'reality' wherein *folie* designates a different perspective on life; it reveals things hidden from the rationalist's point of view. A cliché of Romanticism³⁸, this concept makes the fantastic a natural genre for the period. Whereas some tendencies of Romanticism may seek to obliterate Eighteenth-Century Rationalism³⁹, the specificity of Nodier's fantastic lies in its tendency not to replace

³⁸ Cf. Paul Bénichou's *Le sacre de l'écrivain*, on the Romantic conviction that the artist is seen during this period as the new spiritual guide, replacing the priest and the philosopher as the purveyor of realities and truths beyond the realm of the purely worldly.

Horst Lederer explains why French Romanticism in particular would embrace the fantastic for its irrational epistemology. As distinct from German and English Romanticism, that seek to establish the ideal of Man's re-integration with nature, à la Rousseau one might say, Lederer says of the French situation that: *Die französische Romantik definiert sich gegen die 'raison' und verhilft Gefühl und Instinkt zu neuer Geltung. Im Vordergrund des Interesses steht ein Individuum, das sich in seiner Subjectivität erleben will, um den kartesianischen Leib-Seele-Dualismus zu überwinden und seine Ganzheit wiederherzustellen* (Horst Lederer, *Phantastik und Wahnsinn. Geschichte und Struktur einer Symbiose*. Köln: dtm-Verlag, 1986, 98).

³⁹ I am reminded of Hugo's *Cénacle* movement, for example, which replaced Nodier's moderate Arsenal salon mentality with a more radical vision of art and activism.

Reason, but to enrich it with the insights of dream, intuition, even *folie*.

In Michel's case, *folie* means the acquisition of a new perspective that allows him to understand the logic linking events, identities and places. It is a logic that differs from the normal one employed to understand connections and causality. Michel begins his narration by admitting: *cette histoire est pour moi une suite de notions claires et certaines, mais telles que j'en trouve moi-même l'enchaînement inexplicable ...* (184). Others may judge him crazy according to the bizarre nature of the personages and events of his story, but to him, it is the logic linking them that escapes him and generates mystery. Events, people, places, and objects in the Fée's world are connected, and therefore must be understood in a way that differs from the usual rational connections employed to make sense of the world. For example, the Fée is a purveyor of wisdom by virtue of her double identity as both beggar-woman and Solomon's Princess Belkiss⁴⁰. We remember that Michel was well educated in the subjects of Science and Philosophy, for which his uncle instilled in him great respect. When faced with

⁴⁰ Belkiss poses enigmas to which Solomon's wisdom always allowed him to find the solution (*The Bible, Book of Solomon*).

events that defy explanation by the conventional versions of these subjects, Michel finds access to a different system of explanation. As in the case of Michel's trial for murder, where the brutality of the court is represented by the bestial image of its members, perception is relied upon to describe the events at hand. Imagination must be employed to explain them. Michel's first experience of the Fée's garden provides a metaphor for the transformation he undergoes. He wanders around all day, and when night falls, he says: *mon imagination s'était entretenue longtemps dans des impressions délicieuses qui ne pouvaient plus lui être transmises par mes sens* (282). Michel's association with the Fée involves first the seeing of strange things, and then the attempt to somehow understand them. Understanding them proves to be much more complicated, and becomes the subject of his initiation into wisdom.

Michel, a man of Science and learning by upbringing, is accustomed to looking for the rational logic linking any string of events. Although he may be considered crazy by those around him, he is a young man of his Age. Steeped in the ways of Rationalism, he tries to make sense of the abnormal events and

characters he encounters⁴¹. Indeed, the first instance of *folie* in the tale does not belong to Michel, but to his uncle, his mentor in the canons of contemporary knowledge and learning. Michel's uncle has by all reports found an island that he claims is ruled by Princess Belkiss, and wishes never to return to civilization (218-219). It appears then, that there exist abnormal or supernatural realities which defy explanation by Reason, and that the way to understand and enjoy these realities is through escapist fancies. However, on Michel's sea voyage to Scotland, during a wild storm that causes the shipwreck, Michel reminds the narrator of a seemingly supernatural manifestation of electricity, St. Elmo's fire, that adds to the extraordinary effects of the storm. Some marvellous occurrences can have purely scientific explanations. Those phenomena that today may be dismissed as impossible, may very well be rationally explicable tomorrow, if one only grasp the logic of them from a new point of view⁴².

⁴¹ While Rationalism had clearly been under considerable attack by other French Romantics (cf. my earlier notes on Lederer and on Hugo and the *Cénacle*), Reason, in the form of Science, was certainly becoming a cornerstone of a Bourgeois ideology of Progress. Once again, Nodier's originality lies in his apparent position between these two poles: attacks on, and faith in, Reason. His tale's hero, Michel, embodies such an integration between reason and unreason, by virtue of his education and experience.

⁴² This point will be further developed in *Inès*, where it will indeed constitute the author's main understanding of the relationship between reason and unreason in the fantastic.

Grasping a new logic means for Michel that his old way of seeing the world must be questioned; for example, at the mention of the name of Belkiss: *il y avait dans le rapprochement de ce nom et de celui qui occupait ordinairement mes pensées je ne sais quel mystère sous lequel ma raison fut un moment anéantie* (239). Michel's state of wonder at this point is referred to by Folly Girlfree as his "falling back into his *folie*" (239). *Folie*, then, means stepping back from Reason to try to understand, or at least appreciate, the connections that Reason is inadequate to explain. Nevertheless, in Michel's experience, accepting the logic of *folie* brings good things: the perfect harmony of the Fée's ninety-nine sisters in song, and the extraordinary beauty of her garden. Once Michel becomes accustomed to the mysterious world of the Fée, he finds "new well-being" and "ecstasy" there (306).

Michel ultimately learns that wisdom and *folie* are interconnected. As the Fée tells him, towards the end of his stay with her: *n'as-tu pas remarqué que les vaines sagesses de l'homme le conduisent quelquefois à la folie? et qui empêche que cet état indéfinissable de l'esprit, que l'ignorance appelle folie, ne le conduise à son tour à la suprême sagesse par quelque route inconnue qui n'est pas encore marquée dans la*

carte grossière de vos sciences imparfaites? (310). In other words, *folie* could very well be a system of understanding experience that quite simply is itself not yet understood by Science. It can perhaps contain a great deal of wisdom. It should not be dismissed solely because it cannot be assimilated by Reason. Conversely, Reason should not be dismissed, since it may someday reach an understanding and appreciation of the wisdom contained in *folie*. Therefore, the Fée tells Michel not to be alarmed at what he does not understand and to accept enigma, which will one day be resolved in its fullness by God, if not by Science (310). While the Fée's message may seem an escapist one, *résignation et prière* (310), it does not propose abandoning real-world considerations. Instead, Michel is to become resigned to the things he cannot change, and to pray for insight into life from a comprehensive perspective that may surpass, but does supersede scientific knowledge. A good example of Michel's newly-learned appropriation of Science is his treatment of the Science of language. When the Fée reads the Bible or ancient philosophy and poetry to Michel, he can understand it whether in its original language or in translation. He has grasped the underlying logic of language that makes it possible to understand any language, whether or

not one has previous knowledge of it (308).

Sadly for Michel, his new-found understanding leaves him sorely misunderstood, and so he stands a *proscrit* among the people of his community (312). When Michel comes to tell the last chapter of his narration, he expresses his alienation: he indicates that he cannot properly tell his story in French, because the language has lost the *naïveté* necessary for the expression of truly imaginative reality (318). Even though there may be a logic of communication that underlies all languages, evidently it is possible to distort a particular language, robbing it of some of its communicative potency. Ironically, in its desire for objectivity of expression, language has itself become subjective. Its subjectivity causes it to deny the 'reality' of imagination, a great part of the human experience. Imagination must never be stifled as a tool to understand or communicate reality, as according to the Fée, one must embrace the totality of experience, whether it make rational sense or not. Ambiguity and paradox are as real as certainty and single truths. She tells Michel: *la nuit tous les chats sont gris (...) tout est vérité, tout est mensonge* (317).

Evident in some of the chapter titles, is a similar appreciation for the principle that nothing decisively separates

vérité from *mensonge* or Reason from *folie*:

Chapter II: *Qui est la continuation du premier, et où l'on rencontre le personnage le plus raisonnable (Michel, the lunatic) de cette histoire à la maison des fous (179);*

Chapter III: *Comment un savant (Michel), sans qu'il y paraisse, peut se trouver chez les lunatiques, par manière de compensation des lunatiques qui se trouvent chez les savants (185);*

Chapter XV: *Dans lequel Michel soutient un combat à outrance avec des animaux (the members of the law court) qui ne sont pas connus à l'Académie des sciences (246);*

The irony with which these chapter titles are composed indicates the pleasure that is taken in poking fun at the Academy; moreover, that irony serves to highlight the notion of ambiguity between Reason and *folie*⁴³. Ambiguity is further explored in Michel's dangerously close brush with death by execution, when he encounters, and allegedly murders a canine-headed bailiff

⁴³ Hans Peter Lund reminds us that irony is often employed as a substitute for real integration of, in the case of Nodier, imagination into the dominant epistemology. Irony becomes a means for the writer to mock the rupture between imagination and reason without being able to truly resolve it (Lund, 126).

from the Isle of Man.

II.ii. PERSPECTIVES ON DOGS AND DREAMS

Michel, it seems, sees things differently from most, especially after he has arrived in Greenock. He describes his first night at Mistress Speaker's, where happens upon the wedding reception of the bailiff from the Isle of Man. Odd as it may seem, the guests comprise "an elegant society of dogs, differing from each other only in their respective sizes and species" (230). They display the utmost in politeness, manners and taste, and are exquisitely clothed and preened. Even though Michel reminds us that dog-headed people are well-documented in the writings of such respectable authors as Herodotus, Aristotle, Plutarch and Pliny, he admits he had not previously put much stock in such stories. At Mistress Speaker's inn, he sees it for himself, and can not help but believe. Even then, upon waking the next morning, he has trouble convincing himself that it was not all just a dream, or some trickery by the Fée. It is enough to cause him to doubt all that happened to him in the few days leading up to that evening, including his ever having seen the portrait of Belkiss given to him by the Fée

(231). However, Michel tells us, pulling the medal from his pocket, he discovers with great joy that the portrait "speaks to his soul with a mysterious voice" (231). Upon this discovery, he finds himself crying out: *Dieu soit loué, Belkiss! je n'avais pas tout rêvé* (231). Just how much he did dream, Michel then undertakes to discern.

In spite of his doubts, Michel comes to the conclusion fairly quickly that he will accept his visions, or dreams, for what they are, and not question their veracity. For him, they constitute a different perspective on reality, or perhaps a perspective on some new plane of reality imperceptible to the normal eye⁴⁴. He admits to the narrator: *pour dire la vérité, monsieur, mes impressions de la veille et du sommeil se sont quelquefois confondues, et je ne me suis jamais fort inquiété de les démêler, parce que je ne saurais décider au juste quelles sont les plus raisonnables et les meilleures. J'imagine seulement qu'à la fin cela revient à peu près au même* (240). Refusal to distinguish between dreams and waking vision may appear to one informed by Freudian theory not to be a radical

⁴⁴ Both Marie-Claude Amblard and Jean Richer interpret the dogs as symbols that serve as extensions to reality. Richer claims that the dogs are symbols of a Golden Age when people and things were seen more for their true essences but that now appear to us as allegorical because our rationalism inhibits us from directly seeing what is truly there (Amblard, "Sources...", 376; and Richer, "Têtes d'animaux...", 96).

position, but to the reader, or writer, of 1832, it earns the designation of *folie*. In his *folie*, Michel does not distinguish between dream vision and lucid thought; they simply amount to different perspectives on the same reality.

Indeed, at this point in his adventure, Michel expresses a preference for dream vision over waking thought and knowledge. He adores his dreams, which he says are *mille fois plus doux que la vérité* (244), and feels his conversations with the dog-headed Manx bailiff are far more fruitful than time spent studying dictionaries: *on est vraiment confus de penser au temps que les hommes perdent à feuilleter les dictionnaires, quand on a eu le bonheur de causer quelque temps avec un chien danois bien élevé, comme le bailli de l'île de Man* (245).

Michel comes to look at life as though through a dream, saying: *je croyais sentir que la faculté de rêver s'était transformée en moi. Il me semblait qu'elle avait passé des impressions du sommeil dans celle de la vie réelle, et que c'est là qu'elle se réfugiait avec ses illusions* (246). In a situation of complete reversal of the conventional view of things, it is Michel's daytime impressions that strike him as "bizarre" and "imaginary" (246). Michel has trouble distinguishing between reality and his strange and violent

nightmare about the murder of the bailiff. Did Michel murder him in a hallucinatory fit, or was the dream not a dream at all? In keeping with the tale's ambiguity concerning what is real and what is not, the question is never answered. What matters more are the consequences of the 'dream', since, having been found with the bailiff's wallet on his person, Michel is arrested for murder. As I will discuss further in Part III of this chapter, the trial of Michel is as bizarre as his dream; Michel's new perspective on reality reveals certain unpleasant truths about society that are usually hidden by institutional rules of procedure.

The other principal instance of dreams are Michel's sensuous visions of Belkiss when he is living platonically with his wife, the Fée. In this case, dream serves the purpose of allowing the double identity of the Fée and Belkiss, a perfect integration of the two elements Michel most needs in a wife: passion and enlightened discussion. Feeling guilt over his adulterous fantasies with Belkiss, Michel is told by her not to worry, because she is, in fact, the Fée. In turn, the Fée assures Michel that it is alright to submit to his sensuous dreams of Belkiss, later telling him: *Belkiss, c'est moi!* (313). Pierre-Georges Castex explains that Michel's double life with

the Fée and Belkiss allows him to enjoy an environment of stability, a balance between *les contraintes de l'existence quotidienne et les enchantements du rêve*⁴⁵. I would add that it is not only the constraints of daily life that are held in this balance, but also the rational inquiry and study Michel undertakes with the Fée's guidance.

Adopting the new perspective contained in dream vision becomes for Michel essential to his new education and his initiation into the wisdom tradition. Of course, there are those who doubt. Finewood, a character noted for his honesty, advises Michel that all he really needs to set him back on normal course is some good, hard work: *le travail te distraie des fantaisies qui t'offusquent, et rend le calme à ta raison troublée par de mauvais songes* (299). However, in the ensuing tragedy that occurs in Finewood's life, and in Michel's charitable response to that tragedy, we see that poor Finewood simply lacks the insight to adopt Michel's new perspective, and to understand it all. The fantastic in *La Fée aux Miettes* can be said then, to be a matter of insight; its dismissal, a matter of ignorance or misunderstanding.

⁴⁵ Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 152. Castex further points out that the mandrake acts as a symbol of the integration of sumptuous dream into worldly reality (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 153).

II.iii. CHARITY AND THE FINWOOD DOWRY CASE

Finewood has established dowries for the wedding of his six daughters' to six lairds, but the lairds turn out to be opportunistic. Michel's involvement in rectifying the sad affair shows that the fantastic can be simply understood as a matter of perspective. Different perspectives on reality and possibility produce different interpretations and understandings of events. As it happens, the lairds disappear with Finewood's dowries, without marrying his daughters. As he has saved diligently to provide his daughters with the sums of money, he is almost ruined by the theft. Michel, in his *folie*, expresses a very different understanding of the event, claiming that Finewood is in fact very fortunate to discover the treacherous nature of his intended sons-in-law, before they have a chance to ruin his daughters' lives. The financial loss, Michel contends, will not ultimately be a problem. He even congratulates Finewood on his good fortune in the matter of the discovery of the lairds' true characters.

The Finewood dowry case is an explicit example of the type of interplay of perspectives involved in the fantastic. Finewood lacks faith in Michel's insight and Michel understands

the source of this doubt, saying to his boss: *je comprends que mes paroles ne vous paraissent pas sensées (...); c'est une énigme à vos yeux* (299). Michel's perspective allows him to understand the apparent enigma: Finewood's loss is actually his good fortune. In contrast, Finewood's own perspective at first leaves him pessimistic. Nevertheless, once Finewood understands Michel's point in congratulating him (on what had seemed to be his misfortune), he does agree that what initially appeared as *folie* is in fact, "supremely reasonable" (300). Sometimes, *folie* is no more than a matter of being misunderstood. Michel himself begins to offer sharp criticism of those who misunderstand him, including Finewood. He makes statements such as: *il n'y a rien de plus méprisable que la dérision des ignorants* (301), and rails against *l'aveugle suffisance du vulgaire, qui se croit le droit de mépriser tout ce que sa faible intelligence n'explique pas* (304). All that Michel has predicted for Finewood in the way of wrongs rectified comes true: one day, a dog on the beach drops a bag full of Finewood's thirty thousand guineas. The money had been stolen by the lairds, but their ship sank, setting the money adrift. Michel's perspective allows him to know that the dog is really Master Blatt, another character, while Finewood only thinks him a

simple, albeit fortuitous dog (303). Finewood humbly says of Michel's predictions: *tout ce que tu m'avais annoncé dans une de ces illuminations soudaines où tu dérites souvent, passe-moi l'expression, d'assez singulières rêveries s'est réalisé à la lettre comme par enchantement* (302). He has his money returned and has found six honest men to marry his daughters. In a reversal of expected protocol, he says he would be honoured by the presence of Michel and his wife, the Fée, at the weddings. In Finewood's case, the fantastic consists of the literal, and not simply symbolic, **realization** of the unreal or the marvellous, and a great deal of this process of realization involves understanding events from a different perspective⁴⁶.

However, there is yet another twist on the Finewood case, one that involves the reader. In a very clever way, the tale sustains ambiguity regarding the source of Finewood's returned money. We are never sure whether the money really was set adrift in a shipwreck, or whether it was the result of Michel's charity. Perhaps, Michel gave the money to Blatt to drop at the feet of Finewood. In that case, the 'miracle' of the returned dowry is merely an act of charity. Could it be that the new

⁴⁶ Insistence on the importance of charity echoes the principal semantic issue in *Trilby*, where charity is presented as a counter-cultural force.

perspective, the *illuminations soudaines*, is simply the realization by Michel that money's purpose is to better the condition of others and not to bask in oneself? We cannot tell for sure where the money comes from, and therefore may find ourselves in a position of uncertainty that mirrors Finewood's *aveugle suffisance*. Through acts of charity, Michel puts into practice the lessons he has learned from the Fée, and tries to communicate them to Finewood as well as to the reader⁴⁷.

We are further suspicious of Michel's *illuminations* when we discover that the Fée, through some clever trickery, has managed to provide the six couples with some of Michel's money. She convinces them that a rich uncle of theirs has died in America, *et cetera* (307). The degree of pre-meditation involved in Finewood's luck becomes more obvious to us with this revelation, and the case becomes a matter of both charitable connivance and, perhaps, clairvoyant insight. The Fée, according to Michel, has proven in this matter that she is more "imaginative than the writers of novels and comedies" (307). Ultimately, however, it matters not if it is artifice or the purely supernatural, charity is the true lesson of the fantastic; since, *une bonté*

⁴⁷ There is further analysis of the moral lessons of the tale in Section III of this chapter.

active et inépuisable est plus ingénieuse que l'esprit (307). The double level of this episode is underscored by the fact that the Fée's interventions are compared to those of a writer. She performs a sleight of hand on Finewood, like those a writer performs on his reader. These two levels co-inciding in the Finewood case causes the reader to replicate Finewood's uncertainty, and hopefully become aware of the limitations of each perspective, Reason and imagination. One must then accept that there may be irresolvable ambiguity between the two. The only truth lies in the morality involved in actions taken, which is best understood by Michel: in his *folie*, he ceases to interpret causes, and concentrates on the importance of effects. From the Finewood case, we learn that reality is only a matter of perspective. While novel writing, or the attempts to tell a 'true' story are shown to be artificial, there are alternative points of access to truth. In *La Fée aux Miettes*, these points of access are arrived at by the use of special objects symbolizing the fantastic. In their own paradoxical way, these objects provide a unifying logic to the events that escape narrative explanation.

II. iv. OF TALISMANS, THE MAGICAL FLOWER

AND OTHER FANTASTIC THINGS

A central symbol of the fantastic in *La Fée aux Miettes* is the medal containing a portrait of the Princess Belkiss. It is enlivened for Michel, who says: *elle* (the image of Belkiss) *parlait à mon âme par une voix mystérieuse* (231), and that between him and the portrait there had developed *une espèce d'intelligence merveilleuse qui suppléait à la parole* (234). The fantastic not only involves a different perspective, the one that permits Michel to see the enlivened traits of the portrait⁴⁸, but also exists as a form of communication, on a type of mystical and spiritual level. It is a form of communication that supersedes human speech. However, as enchanting as the portrait may be, casting Michel into a *délire d'amour* (234), it none the less causes him to worry about the reality of the experience: *je désespérais de réaliser le bonheur que j'aspirais dans ses regards* (234), a desire that is reminiscent of the invitation by the imp to Jeannie in *Trilby*: *réalise le bonheur de nos rêves*⁴⁹. As in *Trilby*, the fantastic involves impulses

⁴⁸ For example, when Michel kisses the portrait, he feels the kiss of a woman in return (234).

⁴⁹ Cf. Chapter III.

toward integrating the purely marvellous, spiritual or mystical into the realm of reality. It does not strive to separate the two.

Within the context of Michel's story, the medal provides a symbol of integration. On one side is the portrait of the Princess Belkiss, while on the other is the image of the Fée (314). It literally holds together images of the two women who embody the devotion of the ideal spouse: passionate love and intellectual respect. It is constantly a source of support for Michel and it is very much alive; all he has to do is believe. The portrait is a symbol for the fantastic itself, since it is the only way Michel can make sense of his experiences. In what looks to be a state of *folie*, Michel ceases to distinguish between the image and reality, entering into communion with the medal, as if it were another character. The medal integrates the intellectual and moral side of Michel's wife into the sumptuous and beautiful. It therefore becomes a key to establishing meaning in Michel's narrative⁵⁰.

The mandrake, of which we are periodically reminded by the

⁵⁰ Jean-Luc Steinmetz says as much when he claims that: *ce récit ne peut être compris, appréhendé, sans l'apport de cet objet*, and that Nodier confers on the medal, *une force illuminatrice dans le processus narratif*. Steinmetz writes that: *le portrait n'est pas un thème, mais un prisme révélateur* (Steinmetz, 22-23). The medal, the portrait, become agents that help Michel to understand the moral ramifications of his adventure, what it is all about, its meaning.

recurrent song⁵¹, symbolizes the accomplishment of integration that is intimated by the medal. If Michel finds the magical flower, the temporary happiness brought to him by the medal, becomes permanent: the flower is capable of restoring Belkiss' youthful beauty to the Fée⁵².

The Fée's house and garden are also symbols of the magic that comes with seeing the world from the perspective of the fantastic. Her house is minuscule, like a doll's house, "at first sight", but after entering it, Michel discovers it is actually large and elegant, containing a *monde d'imagination et du sentiment* (279). It is indeed a house that has resonances in the life of Nodier, since it is attached to the Greenock arsenal and contains what would surely be ideal to Nodier the bibliophile, an excellent library. In keeping with Michel's

⁵¹ *C'est moi, c'est moi, c'est moi,
Je suis la mandragore,
La fille des beaux jours qui s'éveille à l'aurore,
Et qui chante pour toi!*

is the song sung by Michel in the asylum (180), by the school children in Granville (210), by the Princesses in Michel's dream (216), by the Fée's sisters in her house (304), and by the Fée when she sends Michel on his final quest (316).

⁵² Castex says of Michel's quest for the mandrake: *c'est une façon de valider ses rêveries, et de leur donner raison contre la raison*. Nodier, he claims, is *toujours ardent à bousculer les ambitions vaines ou criminelles de ces personnages graves qui se réunissent à l'Académie des Sciences ou à la Société de Médecine*. The writer's attitude in *La Fée aux Miettes* is no exception (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 151).

The rêveries to which Castex refers may possibly extend beyond a notion of pure beauty, as the mandrake, in which some saw the shape of human reproductive organs, was held by ancient belief to have aphrodisiac properties (C. J. S. Thompson, *The Mystic Mandrake*. New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1968, 229).

training in manual work as well as academic study, there is a carpenter's workshop in the house (279). Likewise, the garden is small, but very imaginatively designed: in spite of its size, one can stroll around it for an entire day, never passing the same spot twice (281)! The garden seems to defy the laws of geography and climate. It always boasts clear skies and pleasant temperatures (281), weather conditions that, in Scotland, indeed exist mainly in dreams or imagination. The Fée, having mastered the study of natural sciences, has managed to *naturaliser dans ce jardin enchanté les plus rares merveilles de la végétation des tropiques et de l'Orient* (281). It also contains beautiful gems, and flourishes in "perpetual Spring" (282). Time and space are completely transformed in the Fée's magical garden, where the exotic is naturalized, just as in the medal, where the marvellous is realized.

Michel's last question to the narrator carries an invitation and a challenge to change his perspective and listen for the intimation of perfect harmony in the mandrake's song: *Mais, je vous le demande, monsieur, n'avez-vous rien entendu, et ne vous semble-t-il pas qu'une harmonie exquise court en murmurant sur ces fleurs mourantes, avec le dernier rayon du soleil horizontal?* (319) Far from the illness that contemporary

Science holds it to be, *folie*, paradoxically, produces the ideal balance between the head and the heart that allows the *fou* to find perfect happiness⁵³.

Michel chooses to believe that the Fée is truly a "superior intelligence", but must settle for himself the question of whether her intelligence is really a force for goodness or for evil. Do her powers really provide access to wisdom, or do they emanate from Satan? Michel discerns that the former is actually the case, due to the sound morality of the Fée's teachings (311). In *La Fée aux Miettes*, the ambiguity surrounding the concept of truth, a characteristic of the fantastic, frees *folie* from the fetters of psychiatry. If the *fou* is the only one who can perceive the logic that makes sense of the tale, then should the reader not, as part of his or her new appreciation for *folie*'s insight, be inclined to consider the social and moral message communicated from that insightful perspective? In fact, the *fou* has something to say about injustice, money, work and morality.

III. THINGS LEARNED

⁵³ Castex writes of *folie* in *La Fée aux Miettes*: *Les savants peuvent bien voir dans cet état le signe de la confusion mentale: n'est-il pas permis d'y voir aussi, d'un autre point de vue, la condition même du bonheur parfait?* (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 153).

In Nodier's tale, the fantastic mirrors its social context. It not only refutes the given scientific definition of *folie*⁵⁴, but goes further. Michel's visions, legitimized by the respect the tale accords *folie*, also contains a commentary on other aspects of society. Joël Malrieu writes: *Les figures du surnaturel auxquelles recourt le fantastique sont l'expression d'une angoisse de l'homme, non plus face à une quelconque divinité, mais face à lui-même et aux autres. L'homme est désormais réduit à fonder sa propre morale*⁵⁵. According to Malrieu, the fantastic is the expression of a society, which, facing a *profonde crise des valeurs*, must re-define moral and social imperatives. Concerning the genre's social referentiality, Malrieu claims: *Le message peut être plus ou moins directement exprimé; il peut être d'ordre moral, politique, philosophique, ou autre, peu importe, il existe*⁵⁶. In *La Fée aux Miettes*, *folie* is the *prisme prestigieux* that allows Michel to see the entire reality of his situation in its component parts. He therefore understands his situation

⁵⁴ In fact, Joël Malrieu identifies a great distinction between Romanticism and the fantastic, claiming that their co-incidence is not inevitable, but calculated. Romantics select the fantastic as a useful genre in which to conduct their own "battles" (Malrieu, 15).

⁵⁵ Malrieu, 31.

⁵⁶ Malrieu, 133.

differently than another might, since his *folie* gives him access to information that is otherwise hidden by social convention. For example, one such convention would be an unquestioning respect for the venerable institution of the law courts, which Michel's day in court certainly calls into question⁵⁷.

Further to his point on the social context of the fantastic, Malrieu writes: *De la même manière que le phénomène profite de la situation particulière du personnage, de son vide intrinsèque et de son isolement, il profite des vides institutionnels d'une certaine société. Il s'introduit dans un État de droit dont il respecte les règles, tout en profitant des défaillances de cet État*⁵⁸. However, Malrieu claims the fantastic text tends to fill in the institutional void in countries such as Nineteenth-Century Russia, Britain and the United States, where moral and juridic values are more commonly established as a matter of custom than as part of institutions. He claims that, while these values are solidly established, they are often variable and unwritten. In contrast, Malrieu cites the solidity of France's institutions governing law and morality, and adds that, due to its institutionalism, France *n'a*

⁵⁷ I discuss Michel's almost disastrous day in court, in Section III of this chapter.

⁵⁸ Malrieu, 57.

*finalement que peu favorisé l'essor d'une littérature fantastique. He continues: les récits de Maupassant mis à part, les oeuvres des auteurs français relèvent plus de la mode ou de l'exercice de style (...), que d'un courant profond*⁵⁹. It is fair to say that Nodier's tales at least in part constitute an exception to Malrieu's hypothesis. In *La Fée aux Miettes*, legal and moral customs are certainly scrutinized, all the while maintaining respect for the general rule of the State; and in *Inès de Las Sierras*, as I will show in the following chapter, the imperialistic exportation of French customs is criticized. Nodier's tales reveal the author's attempts to grapple both with the new literary style known as the fantastic, and with the institutions of scientific research and law. Furthermore, the moral customs that may seem firmly entrenched in French society and institutions, certainly elicit serious criticism in the form of Nodier's fantastic tales. In *La Fée aux Miettes*, Michel's experiences permit him to see the sometimes brutal and often hidden reality behind some of these institutions.

It is, perhaps, the very solidity that Malrieu associates with French institutions that inspires Nodier to situate the tale in Scotland, rather than in France. Coupled with the fact

⁵⁹ Malrieu, 58.

that the tale is a reaction to the duc de Lévis' admiration for British psychiatry, the danger of striking too close to home and the Romantic penchant for idealizing Celtic folklore⁶⁰, seems reason enough to place the story in Scotland. Placed in the context of Nodier's other works, especially his essay on the fantastic, where he clearly expresses concern over the decadence of French institutions, *La Fée aux Miettes* must surely be understood as making pertinent comment on French institutions and customs. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that it is in France that Michel begins learning his lessons.

Michel's story is essentially one that documents his processes of learning. He is initiated⁶¹ into wisdom through experiences that teach him to conceive of the world from a new perspective, one that does not refuse to see things simply because they can not be explained by Reason. Michel is also instructed by two mentors: his uncle and the Fée. The first

⁶⁰ The entire MacPherson incident epitomizes the Romantic tendency to look to the Celtic countries for mythological inspiration.

⁶¹ Both D. Ligou and A. Lebois see in *La Fée aux Miettes* an allegory of masonic journeymanhood. Although Nodier himself was never an active freemason, his father, Antoine, was and Charles was well aware of masonic ritual. Ligou makes the point that due to Nodier's only casual acquaintance with the freemasons, it would be erroneous to read too much into the story to associate the allegory with anything other than an expression of an idealized link to ancient wisdom through unbroken tradition. In other words, Nodier is not part of a scheme to establish freemasonry as a socio-political force (D. Ligou, "La vision maçonnique de Charles Nodier," in *Colloque du deuxième centenaire* 241-253. André Lebois, *Un bréviaire du compagnonnage. La Fée aux Miettes*. Paris: Archives des Lettres modernes, 1961).

mentor is clearly well situated in the real world, even though he finally departs into a fantasy-land, while the second obviously occupies a position that is unconventional: she is a beggar-woman and an ancient Princess at the same time. Essential to an appreciation of Nodier's fantastic in *La Fée aux Miettes* is the fact that the Fée's lessons build on the uncle's, and do not necessarily refute them. Neither system of knowledge denies either the established precepts of conventional education nor the more mystical lessons of the supernatural. Furthermore, Michel's education is meant to be applied to the real world.

III.i. MICHEL'S TWO MENTORS

Michel's uncle looks after him while his father, a rich merchant sailor, is off on long commercial voyages to the Indies. The uncle is a moderate and kindly man, but years at sea have inspired him with *une sorte de mépris systématique pour la société et pour les mœurs européennes* (187). He tells Michel many marvellous and exotic stories of Oriental lore, but always with an instructive purpose, usually of "moral utility" (187). These stories, Michel tells the narrator, were *d'admirables emblèmes qui enveloppent agréablement les leçons*

les plus sérieuses de la raison (187). Already, we are introduced to the idea that the marvellous can teach lessons about everyday life. The uncle ends every such story with a phrase that serves as a type of apologetic:

Et si cela n'est pas vrai Michel, chose dont je suis à peu près convaincu, ce qu'il y a de vrai c'est que la destination de l'homme sur la terre est le travail; son devoir, la modération, sa justice, la tolérance et l'humanité; son bonheur, la médiocrité; sa gloire, la vertu; et sa récompense, la satisfaction intérieure d'une bonne conscience (187).

Later, it will be seen that these first principles are very much confirmed by the lessons Michel learns from his experiences and conversations with the Fée.

Michel is taught three general subjects by his uncle: ancient and modern languages from classical studies; the fine arts that are most applicable to society's needs; and even more than the first two, the Sciences and their common utility (187-188). Michel's uncle also instills in him the need for a trade, something to fall back on, to be able to support oneself with, since a trade is far more certain than the luck of birthright. Michel is told that this is quite simply a matter of Reason (188-189). It does not, however, preclude Michel's uncle from instilling in his nephew *Ancien Régime* loyalties: faith in the

priest, respect for the King and honour for the worker⁶². The uncle wishes to create a renaissance man of Michel and is successful, since Michel expresses to the narrator his conviction that practical and academic learning do not work against each other's interests (191). His wish was to become a master craftsman well-steeped in the knowledge of languages and literatures.

Michel's uncle teaches him egalitarianism and respect for the working class as a group that instinctively knows right from wrong. The uncle preaches moderation in matters of pleasure, love and religion. Love must not turn one away from one's duty and honour, and even if one lose some of one's religious fervour, one must always retain a love of God and of one's fellow person (204). Through his holistic approach to learning, Michel's uncle instills in him a taste for the extraordinary and the supernatural, creating in the lad a receptivity to the lessons the Fée will later teach him.

The Fée knows her way around a textbook. When Michel is a

⁶² Anne-Marie Roux reminds us that, for Nodier, *l'âge d'or français s'incarne dans le Moyen âge, avec la langue romane et les langues du midi, avec la naissance de la monarchie, avec l'épanouissement de la religion chrétienne, des valeurs de la chevalerie et de l'amour courtois, avec la poésie des couvères et des troubadours et les contes et fables populaires* (Roux, "L'âge d'or...", 29). The values that Michel receives from his uncle, and which are not for the most part refuted by the Fée, clearly represent an admiration for the past *Âge d'or*.

schoolboy in Granville, the Fée, a beggar-woman living under the church steps, helps him with his lessons from school. She goes above and beyond the call of duty by teaching Michel all of the languages on Earth, combining the pedagogical techniques of what Michel calls both "practice" and "education" (186). She explains the most difficult of ideas to the schoolboys, from which, Michel tells us, he learns more in one hour than from one month of reading (198). She possesses an ability for perfectly clear communication. Michel tells of her *manière* (...) *saisissante et lumineuse de communiquer ses idées*, which reflect in Michel's mind like in the glass of a mirror (198). The fact that she is far from being part of the educational establishment does not inhibit her from providing great insight into the subjects that comprise the canons of that establishment. Ironically, toward the end of his time with the Fée in Granville, Michel tells her that his education is completed (200). Little does he know that his future will take him to her home in Greenock, where what he has learned as a boy will be further refined through more learning.

While living with the Fée, Michel engages her in many serious discussions, which she uses to enlighten him for the dual purpose of his "instruction" and his "happiness" (282-283).

According to her instructions, belief and love are the only two paths to happiness. Her message becomes the central theme of the tale: the acceptance of a perspective on life that extends beyond the limits of pure Reason, and a conviction to the principle of *charité*, are all that is necessary for one's happiness. In evidence here is a perfect combination of the principles behind Nodier's fantastic itself: its utility as a form of interpretation and understanding of the world, and its usefulness in communicating morality.

In fact, the Fée and Michel discuss morality, history and languages; the last of these three being important for its ability to unite people in society. There is a connection between the three subjects: as noted earlier, Michel, having adopted a new intellectual perspective from the Fée's lessons, discovers an underlying logic that links all languages. His new perspective gives him access to wisdom, since this linguistic reality is a manifestation of God's plan for people: God has given all people a recognition of the underlying system of language, but as a mystery to be discovered (308). Language then, can be a force for harmony, if only one take a different, holistic approach to it. The same principle holds for those concepts that are communicated by language, such as points of

morality, history and philosophy.

The Fée's lessons are called *ses sages enseignements* which encompass the entirety of human experience to produce a comprehensive moral message. Michel explains: *notre vie morale (...) se partageait (...) entre les riantes déceptions de l'enfance et les convictions austères que l'expérience apporte un jour à l'enfant qui s'est fait homme* (284). Their discussion of morality focusses on career choice and social duty. While Michel, clinging to the work ethic and humility instilled in him by his uncle, wishes to remain a simple carpenter, the Fée expands on the uncle's lesson to love one's fellow human beings: she insists that all persons, especially the wealthy, have a duty to help others. She provides the examples of Michel's old schoolmates who have fallen on very hard times and who could dearly use help from their old friend (292-294). Her point becomes pertinent when Michel inherits a large sum of money.

Although Michel becomes convinced of the greater good effected by the application of the principle of charity, as in the Finewood dowry case, he rejects the notion that social power through money can bring about much good. He refutes any theory of social progress, claiming rather that the world is for

working in and surviving in, not for building Utopias in⁶³. While this credo may seem to undermine the progress of the working class, by preaching deference to the status quo, it is not entirely conservative; it also carries with it a sustained criticism of the power of the monied class. Michel also refutes the authority of the bourgeois 'theoreticians', the rationalists and *philosophes* that, as we have seen, Nodier associates with the Revolution and the society that follows it, those who believe in social progress and perfectibility⁶⁴. Carpentry is of far greater value than thought, economics or philosophy (290)⁶⁵.

At the Fée's continual question, what is happiness?, Michel responds: *vivre près de la Fée aux Miettes et d'en être aimé*

⁶³ Although not in the exact way that Monleón posits, the moral message of *La Fée aux Miettes* can be said to "tame" the working class. The tale's message essentially to 'cultiver votre jardin' can certainly appear to disarm any threat of rising proletarian power. However, unlike Monleón's model, the threat to order represented in the fantastic is not undermined by a resolution of ambiguity in favour of reasonable explanations that then relegate visions of unreason to prisons and asylums. The ambiguity regarding the veracity of Michel's story is not resolved, and in fact, the tale's ending actually gives preference for his story over the rationalized version of events. Therefore, if *La Fée aux Miettes* does carry a message that co-opts the working class, it is not because reason triumphs over unreason, but rather because the initial conciliatory message of Nodier's fantastic aims at moderation rather than subversion. It should also be noted that Nodier's tale does sustain a clear criticism of the power of money which, given the context of the tale, can only be seen as a comment on the rising power of the bourgeois class.

⁶⁴ Cf. my chapter on Nodier's essay on the fantastic.

⁶⁵ Michel's criticism of economists, philosophers and statesmen is quite acerbic. He criticizes them for their *utopies de vieux enfants, si malheureuses en pratique* (290). This clearly constitutes an attack on the progressives of the day.

The morale of using money with a conscience, employing the principle of charity, can certainly be interpreted as a formula for quieting the guilty conscience of the bourgeoisie, as Monleón terms it. Therefore, it is difficult to see Nodier as a social revolutionary, but his misgivings about the power of money in the status quo also make it impossible to view him as an ally of bourgeois society.

(306). It is very important to note that Michel makes his own decisions regarding the moral issues discussed. The Fée proposes an idea of morality, which Michel mainly accepts. In spite of his misgivings about her suggestion that the powerful can change the world for the better⁶⁶, Michel basically adopts her moral principles as his own. The process of discernment he undergoes, learning from the body of writings on human history as well as from his extraordinary experiences, no matter how supernatural they may seem, matters as much as the lessons learned. Michel concludes from his discussion with the Fée that he would take part in his duty to civilization, if civilization were a place of *amour et charité*⁶⁷, and of universal good-will. However, since it is not, he will submit to the laws and powers that be, and he will even honour those who believe they can improve society through progress, but will not take part in their enterprise (290). Politically, then, Michel chooses not to be an actor on the social scene, and yet he does not choose to completely escape it either. He decides to submit to, but not to accept, the status quo. Interestingly, it is the Fée who

⁶⁶ Which may only be a ploy to test Michel, tempting him with power to determine whether or not he has really been properly initiated into the Fée's moral code.

⁶⁷ Echoing the principles of *Trilby*.

proposes social action and keeps Michel from entire escapism. Michel's adventures force him to scrutinize the real world and to take decisions about his involvement in it. Therefore, they are more than a simple invitation to escape, even if he does ultimately 'fly away' with the mandrake.

The role of money in the decision to be a political player or not is of consequence here⁶⁸, since Michel inherits a great deal of money, as does the Fée, and a moral decision must be taken as to what use it shall be put.

III.ii. THE MORALITY OF MONEY

Several of the chapter titles in *La Fée aux Miettes* contain comments on the subject of money⁶⁹. Part of the title of Chapter XIV, *comment on fait des louis d'or avec des deniers, pourvu qu'il y'en ait assez* (238), humorously suggests the unlikelihood

⁶⁸ It is also timely, since in the years around 1830, Nodier was forced to sell much of his prized personal library, having fallen on hard economic times.

⁶⁹ Even though Hans Peter Lund claims that Nodier's attack on bourgeois culture in his tales is mainly abstract and that his tales do not concern the social issues of the specific period of 1830 to 1840, he does feel nevertheless that the tales do display *une attitude moralisante* (Lund, 17, 142). Marie-Claude Amblard states that Nodier *recupère lui-même son fantastique à des fins de démonstration morale* (Amblard, "Sources...", 1009).

Of course, moralizing rarely occurs in a vacuum and, if not directed at specific contemporary issues, still indicates the bearing of a work in regard to the prevalent social and moral atmosphere of the times. It is therefore not unreasonable to see in Nodier's development of the theme of money a certain commentary, even if somewhat abstract, on the values and socio-economic structure of his times.

of realizing the capitalist ideal: wealth through hard work and determination. Chapter XXI, *dans lequel on lira tout ce qui a été écrit de plus raisonnable jusqu'à nos jours sur la manière de se donner du bon temps avec cent mille guinées de rente, et même davantage* (283), contains the debate between Michel and the Fée concerning the connection between money and happiness. The last phrase is intentionally ambiguous for the purpose of humour. Does it mean that the chapter contains much more, or that one can have a good time with much more than one hundred guineas? The title of Chapter XXIV, *ce qui Michel faisait pour se dédommager quand il fut riche* (306), implicitly questions the link between happiness and wealth.

Michel's *folie*, a perspective cultivated in him by the Fée and legitimized by the fantastic, permits him to recognize the determining role of money interests in social stratification and conventions. He demonstrates an acute class-consciousness, when he learns that his wife, the Fée, is the rightful heiress to the Isle of Man. He tells her: *une si riche héritière (...) ne peut pas être la femme d'un ouvrier sans ressources et sans espérances* (286). She tries to convince him that, since he has helped her so much in the past, he has just as much claim to the fortune as she. Nevertheless, the true solution to his feelings

of class-division come when they receive word that Michel's father and uncle have themselves become very rich. As a result, Michel should now feel comfortably part of the Fée's class. Echoing the new bourgeois reality, birth is replaced by money as the main class determinant. The Fée has been instructed to keep Michel in opulence, and has invested his money in commerce. However, Michel is dazzled by the thought of being a rich man, and feels "estranged" from the notion of a future of great wealth (287). Michel expresses the need to learn what to do with his money so as to prove to the world that he merits it. The Fée, he feels, being of noble birth, has no need of such self-justification. Clearly, the fantastic world of Michel and the Fée does not escape the reality of class division, based especially on wealth. Michel's final decision to remain a humble carpenter reinforces the notion that class boundaries are insurmountable, and that the bourgeois concept of upward mobility is illusory, or even undesirable. Michel adopts that notion from both his uncle's lessons and his process of discernment carried out in conversations with the Fée.

The Fée sets out to instruct Michel in the ways of the wealthy, and, as we have seen, teaches him that money is a force for great goodness, as long as it is directed towards charitable

purposes. She warns him against the option of adopting the leisurely life of a prince, because people would hate him, openly or secretly, for changing his station in life (288). Socio-economic mobility is not then a problem-free possibility, even in the fantastic world of the Fée, quite simply because that fantastic world is not separate from the real world concerns of class and money. The Fée teaches Michel that money is of fundamental importance in society. It would be difficult to speak of Nodier's fantastic tale as escapist, or non-referential to society in the Fée's following discourse:

tous les travaux de l'homme en société ne se réduisent pas aux oeuvres matérielles de la main. Il (money) influe par son crédit et par son habilité sur les développements de la richesse et de la prospérité publiques. Il prend part à la création des lois et à l'administration des Etats. Il tient les balances de la justice dans les tribunaux, ou les rênes du gouvernement dans le conseil des rois; et pour arriver aux grands emplois, l'or est dans tous les pays la première de toutes les aptitudes. Pauvre, ton savoir et ton éducation ne te promettaient qu'un petit nombre de succès obscurs qui n'auraient jamais tiré ton nom de l'oubli; opulent, il n'est point de carrière qui ne te soit largement ouverte, et au bout de laquelle tu n'aies à recueillir, vivant, les faveurs de la popularité, mort, les illustrations de l'histoire (289).

I have already raised the possibility that the Fée is testing

Michel, by tempting him with social power to see if he can resist. The fact remains, though, that her points refer very directly to social reality, or a conception of it, and not away from it. The fantastic story's relationship to society is therefore more complicated than one of pure escapism. The Fée, Michel's mentor in all things fantastic, actually tries to persuade him to become part of society. Part of his initiation into wisdom involves having to decide precisely what social role he will play. Far from being led away from society by his encounter with the Fée, he is encouraged to consider the respective morality of both possibilities: complicity with, or escape from, society. In keeping with the overall moderation of Nodier's tales, including the structural moderation of complementarity between reason and unreason, Michel chooses a middle ground⁷⁰. The fantastic tale, then, with the new perspective and the moral questions it entertains, provides a forum in which to bring new judgement on that social reality. It permits the writer to expose and perhaps question the

⁷⁰ One must be very careful not to imply here that either the tale's structure or Michel's decision are indicative of a "conservative" text, in other words, a text that poses challenges to social convention, only to undermine those challenges by vicarious problem resolution (a type of social pressure-release valve that ultimately serves to strengthen the stability of Bourgeois culture). On the contrary, Nodier's moderation is meant as a challenge to the extremism of reason and Michel's decision does not mean that he accepts everything in society of which is he is critical.

dominant role of money in social institutions, public image and esteem, and even in morality. Just as the text's unresolved antinomy between Reason and unreason leaves the reader free to choose either interpretation of the events of Michel's story, so is the reader free to take into consideration and yet not necessarily accept the moral message of the lunatic's tale.

Refusing to take part in bourgeois society, Michel decides to remain a carpenter and to use his money mainly for charitable purposes. He gets his first chance in the Finewood dowry case, which demonstrates the immorality of the rich, the six lairds having run off with Finewood's money. Finewood, himself, has fallen victim to social stratification, for, even though he hears before their disappearance that the lairds are "scatter-brained" and "debauched", he is still honoured to have his daughters marry into the upper class (298). However, Michel values morality above social standing. He suggests to Finewood that, due to their lack of moral fibre, the lairds are not worthy of the goodness of the Finewood family. Implicitly referring to the monetary advantage Finewood had expected to accrue from his daughters' marriage into nobility, Michel informs his employer of the superior advantage to be found in righteousness: *l'avantage que vous retirez de cet événement est*

incalculable (300). In a move of class solidarity, Michel counsels Finewood to marry his daughters to six fine carpenters who will bankrupt neither his "fortune" nor his "honour" (300). As we have seen, Michel either genuinely foresees, or charitably arranges for, the return of Finewood's money, and all is set right. Michel then invests in Finewood's operation, and as it flourishes, he becomes its administrator (307).

However, Michel's money becomes a "torment" to him, since it causes him to feel out of his element. He and the Fée are growing ever more wealthy from their investments in trade on the ship, *La Reine de Saba*. They keep this quiet so as not to provoke envy, and Michel finds a way to deal with his new wealth: he opens hospitals and poor houses (308). He has learned the lesson of *charité*, even if most rich people never do: *Hélas! il n'y a que les pauvres gens qui donnent, parce que l'habitude du besoin leur a enseigné la pitié* (295). It is Michel's *folie*, perhaps publicly defined more as 'foolishness' than 'insanity' in this case, that leads him to choose charitable action over greed, and to remain a humble carpenter. The reader may be arriving at the realization that the *fou's* actions, **and** his justification for those actions, indeed comprise a moral code that could well answer to the *crise des*

valeurs of early Bourgeois society⁷¹.

In addition to what Michel learns about money and charity, while in Greenock, he learns a very sore lesson about injustice. The lesson is presented with mocking humour that is nevertheless not lacking in bitterness. The depiction of Michel's trial contains a strong implication of unjust court procedures, not unlike the ones under the Reign of Terror to which Nodier alludes in his essay on the fantastic⁷².

III.iii. MICHEL IS TRIED FOR MURDER

In a sense, Michel's court case is a microcosm of the whole tale, since it contains many of the major themes developed through the tale: money's potential power to corrupt, jargon and misunderstanding, the roles of Reason and the designation of *folie*, the intimidating negative force of public judgement and mob rule⁷³. The titles of chapters XVI through XIX, in which the trial is recounted, depict the incident as both farcical and unjust:

⁷¹ Cf. my previous notes on Malrieu, at the beginning of Section III of this chapter.

⁷² Cf. Chapter II.

⁷³ In *Du Fantastique en littérature*, Nodier refers to the fantastic as effecting, *le procès moral du juste et de l'injuste* (84).

Chapter XVI: *Où l'on voit ce que c'est qu'une enquête judiciaire, et autres choses divertissantes* (250);

Chapter XVII: *Qui est le procès-verbal naïf des séances d'une cour d'assises* (252);

Chapter XVIII: *Comment Michel le charpentier était innocent, et comment il fut condamné à être pendu* (263);

Chapter XIX: *Comment Michel fut conduit à la potence, et comment il se maria* (266).

First, it is absurd that Michel should be condemned to death by a mere judicial inquiry, which is more farcical entertainment than it is the serious exercise of justice. Second, the farce turns ugly, as, in spite of his innocence, Michel is condemned to death. Furthermore, the very legality of the affair is questionable, since the whole procedure is marked by corruption and absurdity⁷⁴. It is preposterous, for example, that Michel can be saved from hanging by the offer of a woman's hand in marriage. From beginning to end, the entire affair acts as an indictment of the court for its lack of legitimacy. This indictment may be aimed more at the real world than it may first appear. Nodier's memories of the Reign of Terror are vivid and

⁷⁴ Grant Crichfield notes that a study of the symbolism of numbers in *La Fée aux Miettes* reveals that during the trial, all is disorder and chaos, working against Michel's movement toward understanding and coherence (Crichfield, 166-167).

bitter, and he links them to an over-extension of the principles of Reason, as was clearly demonstrated by the metaphors he used in his essay on the fantastic⁷⁵.

The issue of social class is once again brought to the fore. When the accusations against Michel are read, he learns that the character he allegedly murdered was in fact a laird, Sir Jap Muzzleburn. With no evidence whatsoever, the court accuses Michel of having poisoned Sir Jap with a concoction of mandrake extract (250). The coroner and chief judge appear to be in complicity with each other with a view to condemning Michel, regardless of the evidence. Michel expresses a bitter criticism of them, as they nod to each other in affirmation of their own faulty conclusions: *ce hochement de tête affirmatif et (...) ce bourdonnement complaisant qui dispensent les ignorants d'approfondir et les faibles de contester* (251).

Michel is jostled about by the constables, who comment on the apparent inevitability that he will be hanged: *pris 'in flagrante delicto' pendant les assises, et pendu entre deux*

⁷⁵ Cf. Chapter II.

Brian Rogers and Marie-Claude Amblard also make the connection between Nodier's memories of violence and what he sees as the age of Reason (Rogers, *La tentation de la folie*, 81; Amblard, "Sources..." 956).

Castex concurs, writing: *La condamnation à mort rappelle de cruels souvenirs. La foule bestiale qui assiste au jugement et se presse autour de la potence est l'image de foules, qui, sous la Révolution, se pressaient aux exécutions, peut-être aussi le symbole de la société tout entière, que Nodier a maudite* (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 152).

soleils! il y a des coquins prédestinés! (251) The "atrocious physiognomy" of these men that the law has designated as his guards, fills him with terror (251). Michel's two great fears are that his character will be defamed by the local newspaper, besmirching his public image and that of his family, and that, if these corrupt "men of justice" see his bejewelled medal of Belkiss, they will surely steal it. Already, Michel has not much faith in the constables' integrity.

In confirmation of Michel's greatest fear, the inquiry turns into a very public event. His re-entry into the courtroom is met with a *rumeur excitée* (252). Michel calls the event a spectacle of which he is the star, as the audience stares at him with looks like piercing arrows. He feels there is a barbarity to the very pretext of the court. They appear to him to be animals. In fact, he has to strain to see the humanity in these people whose job comprises sending individuals to die *légalement* in the public square, all for the purpose of "moral instruction" (252-253). The court's "moral instruction" is clearly contrasted to the moral instruction that Michel derives from his discussions with the Fée. Perceiving the bestial reality that is thinly disguised by the formality of the court, Michel wonders why God has made such pathetic creatures of those who

are supposed to be the most perfect in all Creation:

N'est-il pas extraordinaire (...) si l'homme est, comme on l'assure, le plus parfait des ouvrages de Dieu, que ce grand artiste de la création, qui avait à sa disposition tous les moules d'une invention inépuisable, ait été réduit par impuissance, comme un ignoble fabricant de pastiches, ou se soit amusé par caprice, comme un peintre de caricatures, à composer son chef-d'oeuvre des rognures de tous ses essais, et à reproduire sur le masque de ce triste quadrupède vertical toutes les formes plastiques des brutes?
(253)

Michel expresses his theory concerning the so-called "mystery" of the sixth day of creation, that guilty men are reduced to animals as part of God's punishment. His lawyer points to the theory as proof of Michel's *folie*, which Michel, himself, denies⁷⁶. The defence attorney's language stretches legal jargon to a ridiculous length. He speaks in Latin of proof that is true to the toe-nail: *ad unguem* (254). His behaviour and argumentation are no less unbecoming. He performs *les trémoussements tumultueux, les passes étourdissantes, les écarts et les estrapades gymnastiques, les points d'orgue perçants, les sibilations déchirantes et les cadences à perte d'ouïe* (255). However, the lawyer's theatrics appear to be in

⁷⁶ As Pierre-Georges Castex reminds us in a note on the text, this theory corresponds in fact to some of Nodier's thoughts (254n).

vain, as the court "snores" through the entire defence. Michel laments that true eloquence has all but disappeared from earth, taking its only refuge in the speech of "oppressed innocents" (255). From his perspective, it is nonsense and jargon that reign supreme in the courtroom; and if the defence attorney is bad, the prosecutor, a "speaking automaton", is worse. One need only note some of the terms Michel finds to describe the presentation of the case against him: *une voix factice et pénible; quelques groupes de mots entremêlés d'interjections froides, mais qui avaient l'air de former un sens; cette machine à réquisitoires tragiques; sa diatribe mécanique; c'était LA MORT* (256).

Michel becomes the victim of a system that misunderstands its own very purpose. The judges feel they must have him executed, because, if they do not, they will never execute anyone. If there are never any executions decreed, they argue, the system will have no purpose at all. Following the judges' reasoning, the *raison d'être* of the justice system is to kill people (256). Consequently, the prosecutor claims it is "in the interests of humanity" to have Michel put to death (257). The blood-thirstiness of the prosecutor is evident in the terms Michel finds to describe him: *les lèvres sanglantes du 'rictus'*

homicide (257).

Adding to the absurdity of the trial, the chief justice completely over-reacts to the prosecutor's speech. He speaks as if evil itself were on trial in his courtroom: *O perversité de ce siècle de décadence (...); Nous sommes donc arrivés aux temps calamiteux annoncés dans les prophéties!* (257). Behind these remarks can be heard the ironic voice of Nodier, mocking the pomposity of unjust courts: if the century is indeed decadent and perverse, it is in no small part due to the perversion and corruption of the justice system so colourfully suggested by this scene. The chief justice even wishes he could hang Michel three times, and yet, underscoring the unfairness of the tribunal, does not even remember the accused's name.

The court displays its hypocrisy when Michel makes a touching speech about his love for the Fée, and forgetting himself, shows the medal of Belkiss. Upon seeing the bejewelled medal, the court takes Michel for a rich man, speculates that he will be able to pay for the entire proceedings, and decides the affair is, in the words of the chief judge, *plus digne d'attention que je ne l'avais pensé d'abord, et mérite quelques éclaircissements* (259).

Jonathas the banker is called to the court to appraise the

value of the jewels. He and the chief judge barter over the value of the medal, which is finally set at two million guineas (260-262). Both the judge and Jonathas swear on their honour, of which they clearly have none. When the judge becomes enraged at Jonathas' attempt to undervalue the medal, he exclaims that he will hang everyone, and the defence attorney, obviously suffering from a guilty conscience, jumps out the window of the courtroom (262).

Juxtaposed to the avarice of the judge and Jonathas, whose only interest in the medal is for its monetary value, Michel expresses a true love for the medal solely because it carries the portrait of Belkiss and was given to him by the Fée. Jonathas, however, wants the matter settled immediately, saying crassly: *on ne peut plus contracter de marché valable en justice, une fois que l'on est pendu* (263). Clearly, money takes precedence over life and justice. The judges' deliberations over how they might divide up the profits from the sale of the medal, cause them to forget Michel's case. He says: *Ma condamnation n'était plus qu'un incident imperceptible dans une magnifique opération* (263). As an innocent, Michel finds himself caught up in a corrupt system that unfortunately has the power to decide his fate.

After many rationalizations, the judges pretend to believe that the portrait of Belkiss is capable of speech, and that she has told them what she wants: Michel he must choose between the portrait and its jewels. Expressing a true love for Belkiss, and loyalty to the Fée, Michel makes his choice known. The portrait is given to Michel, the judges take the jewels, and Jonathas cries the only tears he has ever shed. Michel speaks of the entire affair as *cette scène grotesque* (265), and is condemned to death without appeal. It appears that money was the only thing keeping Michel from the scaffold. Once the judges have succeeded in appropriating his riches, he is doomed.

The public reaction to Michel is typical of the menacing crowd scenes in Nodier's tales. While the innocent is being led to the gallows, *mille voix qui ne formaient qu'une voix s'élevèrent comme une bourrasque. 'Le voilà!'* (266). They shout at him: *voleur! assassin!* (266). It all becomes a vertiginous spectacle, in which even the children express *leur malice rieuse* (267). In Michel's eyes, the members of the crowd lose their individual identities (he no longer recognizes any of them), and transform into a single ferocious force. Young girls on the street sell a printed account of his grizzly story, and the mob reminds him of, *les peuples les plus sauvages à un sacrifice*

humain (...), palpitants de curiosité et de joie (268).

Whether or not the entire trial was merely dream or hallucination, Michel extracts from the experience a serious moral, and more broadly social, meaning. The injustice he has suffered is bad enough, but Michel abhors the people more for what he considers an even greater crime:

Hélas! ces gens-ci, me disais-je, ont raffiné la parole pour les plus puériles frivolités de la vie, pour échanger des faux souhaits et des compliments imposteurs, et la loi qui tue ou qui sauve est encore écrite dans le jargon des sauvages. Assassiner judiciairement un homme, c'est un crime effroyable! mais le plus grand des crimes, c'est de tuer la langue d'une nation avec tout ce qu'elle renferme d'espérance et de génie. Un homme est peu de chose sur cette terre, qui regorge de vivants, et avec une langue, on referait un monde (269-270).

Misunderstanding, lack of communication, and ultimately injustice are the results of jargonized language which can be used to coerce and to prove anything, whether true or false. From what we have seen in Nodier's essay on the fantastic and in *Trilby*, and, we are reminded by Pierre-Georges Castex⁷⁷, in many other places in Nodier's works, it is fair to conclude that the de-meaning of language by rationalist or scientific discourse is of great concern to Nodier. In his fantastic tales, Nodier

⁷⁷ Cf. Castex' note on p. 270 of the tale.

attempts to demonstrate the need for language to be purified of the influences that pervert it to their own purposes. In the present case, justice and juridic jargon twist language in order to cloak an underlying agenda of monetary interest and self-justification.

Allowing Michel to recount his entire story, the narrator is told things he might not originally have expected to hear. Even though Michel's trial is cast with bizarre characters, the protagonist's commentary on it⁷⁸ contextualizes it in contemporary social reality. Michel's commentary echoes the narrator's lament of the lack of freedom in his own country⁷⁹, as well as Nodier's own concerns about language. In Nodier's other works, we have witnessed an anxiety over the misuse of language to create hegemony in thought and behaviour. In Michel's encounter with the injustice of the court, we discover what is assumed to be at the base of that hegemony: money. Only the insightful perspective of the *fou* is capable of perceiving the brutality of the methods used to enforce that hegemony, but the monetary link is obvious. It is at this point that the

⁷⁸ Especially evident in my last long citation from the episode.

⁷⁹ I have already mentioned the narrator's ironic description of France as a "liberty-filled country" (178).

structure of the fantastic, its purpose in finding a new, innocent language, and the themes it presents come together.

At the scaffold, Michel is tempted with a way out of his execution. If he agrees to marry Folly Girlfree, and to allow her to watch over him and act as his "reasonable" side, then his sentence will be commuted⁸⁰. However, he chooses the ideal of true love, and turns her down. Happily, his luck turns, and the Fée arrives with the news that Sir Jap is not dead after all. In fact, he is lunching with the chief judge and the coroner! Michel is free to go, and having satisfied the test of loyalty to his ideal of love and his sense of duty to the Fée, returns to live with the Fée as her husband.

The crowd is unwittingly won over to Michel's way of seeing things and yells out: *merveille!* (274) They mock him for thinking that he can simultaneously be the fiancé of both Belkiss and the Fée, but the Fée reassures him: *tu n'es pas aussi trompé qu'ils l'imaginent* (277), alluding to her double identity as both Belkiss and the Fée. All is forgiven, and there is harmony between all players: the crowd, the judges, the coroner, Sir Jap, Michel, the portrait of Belkiss, the Fée and

⁸⁰ Pierre-Georges Castex indicates the transparency of Folly's name, which ironically implies that the tables are turned, and 'normal' life with Folly constitutes *folie* more than does life with the Fée (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 152).

Folly. The Fée quietly hints to Michel what he can expect from his future with her, as the next stage in his process of learning will involve initiation into the realm of wisdom: *la veuve de Salomon, ce n'est pas la beauté, c'est la sagesse* (277).

III.iv. WISDOM

In addition to her identity as Solomon's widow, the Fée is linked to the wisdom tradition through the mandrake, which is mentioned in the "Song of Songs" of the old testament⁸¹. When the Fée suggests that Michel become engaged to her, he ironically compares the two of them to famous couples from the old testament: *Fiancée, comme Rachel le fut à Jacob, Ruth à Booz, et la reine de Saba qu'on nommait Belkiss, ainsi que vous, au puissant roi Salomon!* (215). Michel's joke accidentally implies what will later become an important connection for him: the Fée will indeed serve as the agent of his initiation into

⁸¹ According to Marie-Claude Amblard, the reference to the Solomon story constitutes a way in which the tale can insert the past into the present, and especially a past that brings with it the secrets of wisdom (Amblard, "Sources...", 296). This notion certainly corresponds to Anne-Marie Roux's conclusions about Nodier's search for the language of a past Golden Age through the writing of tales (Roux, "L'âge d'or..."), and Hans Peter Lund's claim that Nodier's tales essentially search for a primitive and perfect language with which wisdom can be expressed and understood. According to Lund, this aspect of Nodier's tales is the result of the influence on him by Ballanche and Senancour, who seek a primitive language to transcend the muddled language of Science and Reason (Lund, 34-35).

the wisdom tradition.

There can be no doubt that, to Michel, the Fée represents wisdom and knowledge. She presents him with enigmas to be resolved, just as the Queen of Sheba did to Solomon. Michel respectfully addresses her as, *vous qui savez toutes choses* (223). When the Fée presents Michel with the medal, a symbol of Michel's new link, through love, to the wisdom of Solomon (it even emits light, 226), she warns him that it troubles the reason of the most solid men, causing those who gaze on it to become insane (224-225). *Folie* and wisdom have a definite connection in the fantastic, and that connection is love. The Fée expresses a wish for Michel: *s'il m'en reste un désir, c'est que tu conçois un jour quelque bonheur à posséder l'âme de la Fée aux Miettes sous les traits de Belkiss* (280). She reassures him that her transformation into Belkiss is indeed possible due to mysterious quirks of nature: *la nature est si variée dans ses caprices que cela peut se rencontrer* (280).

In their conversations, the Fée has taught Michel the essential secret of wisdom: acceptance of one's lot in life, and submission to the mysteries of the universe, the reasons for which reside in the mind of God, alone. She instructs him: *si tu sais te contenter dans ton état et te réjouir dans ton*

ouvrage, tu auras atteint à la suprême sagesse (280). She counsels Michel to use money charitably and to be involved in public service, adding that true wisdom lies in moderation, in not upsetting the apple cart. He finds this to be "wise" advice (287).

Michel learns the lesson well, and in a long paragraph, summarizes wisdom as he now understands and accepts it:

Voilà qui est bien, dis-je en moi-même. Ce vain besoin de tout savoir et de tout expliquer qui me tourmente ne serait-il pas une marque de la faiblesse de notre intelligence et de la vanité de nos ambitions, le seul motif peut-être qui nous empêche de goûter sur terre la part légitime de félicité qui nous est dispensée? Que m'importent les causes et les motifs du bien dont je ressens les effets, et de quel droit irais-je m'en informer avec une sottise et orgueilleuse curiosité, quand tout m'avertit que je suis né pour jouir de ma vie et de mon imagination, et pour en ignorer le mystère? Funeste instinct qui ouvrit à Eve les portes de la mort, à Pandore la boîte où dormiraient encore toutes les misères de l'humanité, et à je ne sais quelle noble châtelaine, dont j'ai oublié le nom, le cabinet sanglant de la 'Barbe Bleue'! Ce que je ne sais pas, si j'avais intérêt à le savoir, la Fée aux Miettes qui le sait me l'aurait dit. C'est pour cela que mes interrogatoires l'affligent, moins parce qu'elle craint d'y voir percer l'apparence d'une défiance injurieuse, que du regret de s'y confirmer dans l'idée qu'elle commence à se faire de l'insuffisance et de la légèreté de mon esprit. Et depuis ce

moment-là je n'interrogeai presque plus. Je pris ma vie comme elle était (283).

From his uncle's first lessons on the virtues of humility and hard work, Michel has arrived at an ethic involving those very same principles. It is perhaps only a broader statement of the ethic taught by the uncle, but it represents an experiential acquisition by Michel. Through his fantastic adventures, he has come to investigate and learn this ethic, which he feels embodies wisdom and leads to happiness. An ethic of moderation and submission, it is held up against the rationalist discourses that express the "vain need to know and explain everything", and that dismiss all notions or ideas exceeding their limits. It is neither a capitalist ethic, since it rails against the accumulation of capital except for the use of charity, nor is it anti-capitalist, as it does not deny that wealth rightfully places one in a position of public power. It does point an accusatory finger at the institution of justice as unfair and unduly subject to monetary and class interest. It is conservative in the assumptions it makes about belonging and adhering to one's social class, and of course communicates a strong work ethic that is essentially patronizing: Michel never does work his way to success; rather, he is saved by chance,

luck and inheritance. The message to work hard, and submit to authority could easily be understood as administering a type of opiate to the working class⁸².

The social messages of *La Fée aux Miettes* depend, though, on the acceptance that the one who formulates them indeed does possess a wise, albeit *folle*, perspective on reality. The ambiguity inherent in Nodier's fantastic leaves one with a choice between two possibilities: Michel is wise but his 'wisdom' (and hence, *folie*) is misinterpreted as insanity (unwellness, incorrectness, wrong); or, Michel is simply insane (a prisoner of his own delusions, which are meaningless beyond his own subjectivity). The choice, as at the beginning, is in fact between two definitions of *folie*: insight or illness? The narrator chooses the first option. The reader is free to choose either one, or perhaps neither one, since neither one on its own is entirely satisfying⁸³.

⁸² And would therefore correspond to Grivel and Monleón's notions of the fantastic as a vicarious resolution of real social problems. However, as I noted earlier, *La Fée aux Miettes* is open-ended. Nothing is resolved and therefore while Michel's ethic is raised, it is done so in a fashion that is typical of Nodier's fantastic: it is not necessarily the only ethic that the reader need accept, since it may be nothing more than the bantering of a lunatic. Of course, if it is taken seriously, there is enough in it by way of criticism of the role of money in determining social relations and institutions, such as the judiciary, that it would be difficult to assign it the designation of a conservative text at the service of the social status quo. It should also be remembered that Michel has the opportunity to participate in the bourgeois power structure, and refuses.

⁸³ *La Fée aux Miettes* actually corresponds to two of Ulrich Döring's categories of the fantastic: two equally good explanations; and one explanation which, although more plausible than the other, fails to satisfy completely (Döring, 170).

Nodier's fantastic tale constitutes an extension of Reason rather than an obliteration of it. The basic antinomy between Reason and unreason remains unresolved due to the dichotomous interpretative possibility offered by the tale's narrative structure. As a result, the tale can make strong commentary on social practice and institutions without necessarily seeking to subvert them or without entering into a strict dialectic with them. What may be called ideological discourses, à la Décottignies, do arise and at times appear oppositional to the fantastic. A good example is the case of the scientific discourse of the London doctor. Nevertheless, the position in which the text holds them is one of neither defeat nor victory; the subtlety of Nodier's fantastic tale permits social commentary that is neither subversive nor co-optive. However, this commentary does indicate a profound crisis of faith in scientific certitude, strong misgivings over the power of money, concerns about the use of language and jargon, and anxiety over the perceived lack of an adequate moral code in early-Nineteenth Century society.

In the last of Nodier's tales that I will look at, *Inès de Las Sierras*, Reason and unreason correspond respectively to the forces of imperialism and regionalism, thus producing a tale

that, by virtue of its very structure, is even more directly political. First, though, I will introduce two of Nodier's shorter tales, both of which correspond to his category, the *histoire fantastique vraie*. They are: *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*.

CHAPTER V

THE 'OUTMODED' FANTASTIC:

THE *FANTASTIQUE VRAI*

AND THE *FANTASTIQUE EXPLIQUÉ*

As previously noted, Nodier's *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, published in the same year as *La Fée aux Miettes* (1832), contains a brief description of three types of fantastic stories: *l'histoire fantastique fausse*, *l'histoire fantastique vague* and *l'histoire fantastique vraie*¹. The narrator explains that the *histoire fantastique fausse* results from credulity shared by the tale-teller and the audience, and is exemplified by Perrault's *Contes de fées*. The *histoire fantastique vague* leaves the reader suspended in "dream-like and melancholic doubt," while the *histoire fantastique vraie* "shakes up the heart" without causing a complete break-down of reason. This third type of tale presents the reader with events that, while materially impossible, are widely recognized as true.

Essentially, all three categories assume various sorts of complementarity between reason and unreason. It is my belief that the purpose of Nodier's tales in presenting strange

¹ *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, 330-331. As in previous chapters, all citations to Nodier's tales refer to the collection, *Nodier. Contes*. ed. P.-G. Castex, Paris: Garnier, 1961.

phenomena is not to obliterate one's faculty of reason, even though some degree of credulity is an assumed condition in all three cases. In the first case, credulity leads the reader to be charmed; in the second, credulity produces a dream-like enchantment; while in the third, it causes uneasiness, but not alienation from one's original frame of reference. However, Nodier's own tales do not necessarily correspond entirely to the categories defined in his introduction to *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*.

In *Trilby*, assumed credulity is reinforced by the usual pact between tale-teller and audience in a folkloric tale. Truth, and in *Trilby* the truth about economic relations and the notion of *charité* in particular, is communicated when the reader suspends disbelief and accepts the strange and magical phenomena of an order that is long past. Nevertheless, *Trilby* fits into both of the first two categories, since it presents a world seen through Jeannie's day-dreams, but also rests heavily enough on its intertext, the history of Saint Columban, to be grounded in a special type of history: legend. The tale does not simply offer dream-like entertainment; rather, it makes a social point, established through its valorization of legend as pseudo-history: the story may have indeed occurred, and may have

something to teach its reader.

La Fée aux Miettes is more precisely an *histoire du fantastique vague*, since Michel's entire tale is told through the eyes of *folie*. However, by questioning the accepted scientific notion of *folie*, and seeking to lend credibility to the *folie*'s insights, the tale lends a type of veracity to Michel's story. Consequently, the tale creates some measure of the uneasiness that characterizes the *histoire fantastique vraie*. Functioning as a literary vehicle with which to question Science by re-defining *folie*, *La Fée aux Miettes* moves Nodier's fantastic closer to the social realm. Where *Trilby*'s 'possibility' is established through its connection with a legendary past (thus creating an indirect social referentiality), the 'possibility' of Michel's story in fact achieves a social aim: it questions the ability of contemporary Science to give a diagnosis on Michel's experiences. If, in turn, those experiences are somehow taken seriously, then the tale contains a very direct commentary on the social role of money and the corruption of the justice system.

It is, though, the *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* that most closely corresponds to the category defined by its own narrator as the *histoire fantastique vraie*. Real happenings that surpass

reason's capacity to explain, such as the cases of clairvoyance in the *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* and in *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*, published in the same year, leave unresolved the antinomy between reason and unreason, but not so as to destroy either one. In these tales, leaving antinomy unresolved serves to establish an uncertainty that begs satisfactory resolution; hence, the stage is set for a fourth type of tale that undertakes to resolve antinomy. Referring to Nodier's *Inès de Las Sierras*, Roger Caillois somewhat pejoratively calls this fourth type of fantastic tale, the *suraturel expliqué*². Explaining the supernatural, he feels, destroys the fantastic. Nevertheless, using the example of *Inès de Las Sierras* (1837), I will endeavour to show how both reason and unreason are valued

² According to Jean-Pierre Picot, Caillois' category of the *suraturel expliqué* includes the understanding that, once explained, the fantastic ceases to be. I would however agree with Picot that *Inès de Las Sierras* does not constitute a failed attempt at the fantastic. In fact, I will later discuss the unnerving degree to which the rational explanation rests on co-incidence, making it harder to use as a replacement for the supernatural explanation. What Picot sees as a tale associated with the Twentieth Century literature of the uncanny, or *de l'étrange*, dealing with similar metaphysical uncertainty, I see as a tale about the fantastic that seeks to demonstrate the role of fantastic literature in metaphysics in the age of Science. (Because *Inès* so much more directly addresses the very nature of the fantastic as a genre, my analysis of the tale tends to concentrate far more on the issue of genre, and other interpretations of the tale, than did my analyses of previous tales). The weakness of the rational explanation in *Inès de Las Sierras* (*Le vrai, décidément, n'est pas vraisemblable*, Picot, 178), is the fact on which Picot places his claim that the tale belongs to a *fantastique de la modernité* (Picot, 180), where it is the laws of the natural world, rather than those of the supernatural order, that are doubted, especially concerning causality. While Picot is correct in suggesting that the fantastic is not necessarily defeated by the reasonable explanation, I would argue that, when placed in the context of Nodier's earlier tales, *Inès de Las Sierras* represents a movement toward reason, a concession to it; therefore, it posits a new type of complementarity in the fantastic that, far from discrediting reason or unreason, attempts to somehow confirm both of them (Jean-Pierre Picot, "*Inès de Las Sierras, ou la comédie du trompe-l'oeil*," *Colloque du deuxième centenaire*: 163-180).

in a relationship I define as latent complementarity³.

Before investigating the relationship of reason to unreason in *Inès de Las Sierras*, I will examine the two tales that serve as examples of *histoires fantastiques vraies*, *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*, identifying the social and political themes associated with the tales' valorization of clairvoyance.

I. HISTOIRE D'HÉLÈNE GILLET AND JEAN-FRANÇOIS LES BAS-BLEUS

In the beginning of *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*, Nodier discloses his observation that the fantastic has, by 1832, become somewhat *passé* (362). However, in the introduction to *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, he explains that the story he is about to recount constitutes a different type of fantastic, one which presents supposedly real, documented events and characters that

³ Therefore, it is possible to say that, although the basic tendency toward moderation, or complementarity, holds through the course of the tales, Nodier seems generally to move from an orientation on social issues (in *Trilby*) to philosophical issues (in *Hélène Gillet*, *Jean-François* and *Inès*) concerning the fantastic. *La Fée aux Miettes* addresses both quite equally. In terms of Eagleton's view of ideology, then, Nodier's tales move from a concentration on "lived relations" to broader considerations of "speculative theoretical systems", which perhaps explains why the tales become more polyphonic: ideology changes from a set of social rules and beliefs governing relations and behaviour, to actually playing a part in the interpretation of the story, by its own characters and narrator (for example, in *Inès*, Boutraix and Sergy espouse very different ideological positions extant in early-Nineteenth Century France). I will conclude this thesis with a consideration of the possible broader implications of this evolution.

defy rational explanation. The same can be said of *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*. Nevertheless, I would argue that the *histoires fantastiques vraies* do not abandon the relationship between reason and unreason that I have identified in Nodier's tales as complementarity. Rather, they present it in a different light.

Histoire d'Hélène Gillet tells of an innocent, young noblewoman of the early-Seventeenth Century, who, at the age of twenty-two becomes pregnant as the result of her naïve love for a ne'er-do-well. The child, whisked away at birth, is later found dead, wrapped in a shirt marked with Hélène's name. The innocent Hélène is condemned to be executed for her alleged crime, but her mother, while praying in a convent, encounters an old nun, Soeur Françoise du Saint-Esprit, who claims God has revealed to her that Hélène's life will be spared. The tragedy almost occurs, but at the scaffold, the executioner twice fails in his commission, and the crowd, initially demanding Hélène's death, subsequently turns against him, killing him and his wife. Hélène survives the wounds caused by the executioner's faulty hand, which proves to have been providential: the king, Louis XIII, although noted for his cruelty, is moved to pardon Hélène as part of the celebrations of his sister's marriage to Charles

I of England. Ironically, Hélène lives much longer than Charles, who is executed twenty-four years later, at Whitehall. She spends the rest of her many years on earth as a nun in the convent of Bresse.

The narrator assures his reader that Hélène's story, complete with Soeur François' predictions, is chronicled in the *Vie de l'abbesse de Notre-Dame du Tart*. In fact, in his notes on Nodier's tale, Castex includes an extract from the *Mercure françois* (1629), showing the accuracy of Nodier's text to the original story (338n-339n). At the end of *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, the narrator in essence, justifies having told the tale by providing a moral: abolish capital punishment and leave to God the power to decide life and death⁴.

In *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, the supernatural intervenes beyond the understanding of most, except the spiritually enlightened, in order to provide a moral lesson that rational

⁴ Nodier expresses the same opposition to capital punishment in an essay published in the collection, *Miscellanées, Variétés de Philosophie, d'Histoire et de Littérature*:

La société est certainement en droit de priver de tous ses avantages sociaux l'homme qui s'est séparé d'elle par un crime. Comme elle est créatrice des lois, elle peut refuser leur protection à quiconque les a enfreintes par la ruse ou par la violence (...). La société a donné beaucoup à l'homme social. Elle ne lui a pas donné la vie naturelle; ici finit son pouvoir. Or, si la vie ne procède pas de la société (...), elle sort tout à fait des bornes du droit en s'arrogeant le privilège de la prendre. Les condamnations capitales sont donc un abus monstrueux de la force.

This quotation can be found in: *Oeuvres de Charles Nodier*. vol. V, *Rêveries*. Paris: Librairie d'Eugène Renduel, 1832, 29-30.

law-makers seem not to have arrived at. In this sense, reason and unreason may be understood less as mutually complementary partners than as autonomous of, even alienated from, each other. However, it is important to note the insistence of the narrator that this fantastic tale merely documents an historical fact. It is not presented in a way that is counter to reason. Indeed, the narrator writes: *il n'est pas besoin d'avoir pénétré bien avant dans l'étude des choses passées pour reconnaître qu'il y a quelque chose de mystérieux et de symbolique au fond de toutes les histoires* (346-347). The fantastic, as the *histoire psychique de l'homme*⁵, simply shows forth that which is mysterious and symbolic in historic fact, without changing that fact; consequently, it brings unreason to the aid of reason, allowing more of the truth to show. Then, moral lessons can be more surely deduced from historical events, like the events of Hélène Gillet's life.

In *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*, the relationship may be viewed similarly, except for the fact that Jean-François' clairvoyance, like that of the Fée in *La Fée aux Miettes*, provides him not only with insight into the supernatural, but also with an extraordinary mastery of philosophy and other

⁵ One of Nodier's definitions of the fantastic in his essay on the subject.

academic subjects.

Jean-François, we are told in the tale's introduction, is based on an historical character from Nodier's youth. Jean-François Touvel lived in Besançon, when the story takes place, in the year 1793. His lack of conversational skills and his unconventional dress and behaviour lead the narrator, based on his own memories of Jean-François, to describe him as *un idiot, un monomane, un fou* (364); yet possessing a *noble physionomie* and eyes full of *douceur* and *tendresse* (364). Not unlike Michel in *La Fée aux Miettes*, Jean-François is an insightful lunatic. The townsfolk mockingly refer to him as the member of a good old Comtois family *qui est (...) devenu fou à force d'être savant* (364). Ironically, what they say is true: Jean-François was the laureate of all of his classes, a young man of genius (365). In fact, Jean-François only lacks clarity of expression in banal discussions about the weather, the latest town gossip, the theatre, the news. However, in discussions on morality or science, *les rayons si divergents, si éparpillés de cette intelligence malade se resserraient tout à coup en faisceau, comme ceux du soleil dans la lentille d'Archimède, et prêtaient tant d'éclat à ses discours, qu'il est permis de douter que Jean-François eût jamais été plus savant, plus clair et plus*

persuasif dans l'entière jouissance de sa raison (366). The most difficult scientific problems are a mere game for him. His eloquence on these subjects places him above the vulgate, who in turn, misunderstanding him, judge him an idiot (366). As in *La Fée aux Miettes*, *folie* is merely a different perspective, a lens that allows for the reconstruction of fractured truth, even scientific truth. The narrator associates Jean-François with the illuminist philosophers Swedenborg, Saint-Martin and Cazotte, a friend of Nodier's father (369)⁶. The protagonist's clairvoyance is proved when, having had a vision of her ascension into heaven, he manages to predict the execution of Marie-Antoinette (372).

The only political point made in *Jean-François les Bas-bleus* is that the execution of the Queen was an act of *cruelle et inutile lâcheté* (373), a *catastrophe* (374). The tale is far more an *exposé* of visionary powers that defy reasonable explanation. The narrator's father can only speculate that Jean-François' accurate prediction is a matter of pure

⁶ As Pierre-Georges Castex reminds us, Nodier did in fact claim to have remembered visits to his father by the aging Cazotte. The writer, whom Castex calls *Le Précurseur français* (of the fantastic in France), greatly influenced many writers, including Gautier, Baudelaire and Apollinaire, but most directly, Nerval and Nodier, who even began to compose a fable titled, *Monsieur Cazotte*. The importance of dream-vision in the fantastic, as we saw it in *Trilby* and *La Fée aux Miettes*, seems to be an idea that comes to Nodier from his reading of, and admiration for, the works of Cazotte, and most specifically, *Le Diable amoureux*. Indeed, in the Preface to *Trilby*, Nodier refers to his protagonist as *le Diable amoureux de toutes les mythologies* (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 37-39).

coincidence, of which popular belief, religion and philosophy frequently make use (374). His speculation on the matter proves, nevertheless, to be made in bad faith, since, after the narrator refuses to accept it, and seeks rather to speak what he considers to be the truth about Jean-François, his father tells him not to do so. Reporting such a 'truth' would only expose one to ridicule, and, furthermore, says the father, *la vérité est inutile* (376)⁷.

The advice given to the narrator by his father perhaps indicates Nodier's own attitude toward the fantastic, and marks a transition in his tale-telling. Jean-François is a character whose visionary powers stymie reason, and yet do not refute science. In the tale's introduction, the narrator explains that belief in fantastic phenomena is not as ridiculous as some would have it. Entertaining the possibility of these phenomena indicates an open-mindedness that may someday be legitimized by scientific proof of the phenomena. The narrator reminds us that, before its discovery by Columbus, the whole idea of America was a fantastic notion to the European, and that the discovery of physical properties, such as magnetism, has served

⁷ Reminding us of the ambiguity between *vérité* and *mensonge* that was a central notion in *La Fée aux Miettes*.

to explain many a magical stone (363)^a. Complementarity as the basic relationship between reason and unreason in the fantastic, alters somewhat in *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*. Where the unreason of the protagonist's powers surpasses reason's capacity to explain, the final message of the tale suggests that reason is perhaps only temporarily inadequate to the task. Therefore, unreason is to be trusted, since someday, reason may quite possibly confirm it.

The altered notion of complementarity between reason and unreason in the fantastic is more fully explored in *Inès de Las Sierras*, wherein a reasonable explanation is found for the apparition of a ghost.

II. INÈS DE LAS SIERRAS

The story opens with a former officer in the Napoleonic Army telling of his adventures in Spain, in 1812. He promises that the ghost story he is about to relate is not a tale, but a true story (660). While a captain of dragoons in Catalonia, the narrator finds himself and his two favourite lieutenants, Sergy and Boutraix, having to travel to Barcelona on Christmas eve, in

^a *La Fée aux Miettes*' Eskimos illustrate the same point.

order to join up with their forces. The stormy weather forces travellers to seek lodging early, leaving all of the local inns full. The three Frenchmen are left with no choice but to seek shelter in the chateau of Ghismondo, which, according to legend, is haunted. Pitting their army's reputation for courage against local superstitions, the officers persuade a local guide, Estevan, to take them and Bascara, who leads a troupe of actors in Barcelona and whom they meet by chance, to Ghismondo. On their way, Estevan recounts to them the legend of Ghismondo, the castle where, in the Sixteenth Century, the young lord of Las Sierras lived a particularly debauched existence. In hiding from his creditors, he shared Ghismondo with a page, a squire and a small private army, all equally as debauched as he. According to the legend, the lord took his niece Inès as a companion, who, in her innocence and purity, tried to dissuade the men from an orgiastic party one Christmas Eve. In drunken anger, her uncle pierced her breast with a dagger, killing her. However, Inès returned to haunt Las Sierras, his page and squire, each night as they would retire from their parties. Legend has it that, the very next Christmas Eve, Inès appeared to them, announcing her arrival with the words: *me voilà* (670). She ate and drank with them, sang, danced, and, placing her hand

upon their hearts, caused the death of Las Sierras and his two men.

Reaction to Estevan's tale ranges from Boutraix's complete dismissal of it as ignorant superstition; the original narrator's⁹ admiration of its poetic style; Sergy's enchantment with the notion of Inès as a romantic heroine; and Bascara's complete credulity. Estevan tells them that, over the centuries, Inès' ghost has reappeared at the castle each Christmas Eve. In fact, the French officers, along with Estevan and Bascara, are doomed to experience the haunting that very night. In jest, they dress up in Sixteenth Century costume, and are visited by Inès, who repeats the pattern described in the legend, short of causing the death of the men present. The French officers can find no rational explanation for the apparition, and are henceforth profoundly effected by the evening: Boutraix, originally sceptical of the legend, eventually enters a monastery; Sergy falls in love with the notion of Inès, but later dies in battle; and the narrator promises not to tell of the event until he can reach a reasonable explanation for it. He wishes to conclude his story at this point, but is persuaded by his interlocutors to relate

⁹ That is, the French officer.

the reasonable explanation he is given by his friend Pablo de Clauza, while on a later visit to Barcelona.

The real Inès, he is told, is a dancer from the old noble Las Sierras family that had emigrated to Mexico. She fell in love with the villainous Gaetano, with whom she escapes to Spain. He robs and abandons her to a life in the theatre. Upon her rise to fame, Gaetano returns and stabs her, robbing her once again. Driven to insanity by her tragic love for Gaetano, Inès hides in the chateau of Ghismondo, her ancestral home, where the three French officers had surprised her several years previous. The narrator's "true story" is thus explained. As a moral to his story, he asserts that strange phenomena should never be discounted, as they are often real, even if temporarily inexplicable.

Inès de Las Sierras is a tale **about** the fantastic. It **contains** a fantastic tale, the story of the apparition at the castle of Ghismondo, which seems to confirm local legend. The tale as a whole differs therefore from the four I have previously discussed, and is more like Nodier's essay on the fantastic in that it takes up the issue of the fantastic in relation to History and Science. Indeed, the relationship of the fantastic tale to Science comprises the essential message of

the narrator's conclusion to the tale. However, even within the first part, where Inès appears to the three French officers at Ghismondo, there are instances where identical considerations are formulated into a debate between two of the officers, Sergy and Boutraix. After listening to Estevan's story and before Inès appears, the two discuss the role played by the *merveilleux* in matters of serious inquiry. Sergy poses the questions:

D'où vient (...) que ces idées solennelles (superstition and the supernatural) dont la philosophie se fait un jeu ne perdent jamais entièrement leur empire sur les esprits les plus fermes et les plus éclairés? (680)

and:

La nature de l'homme aurait-elle un besoin secret de se relever jusqu'au merveilleux pour entrer en possession de quelque privilège qui lui a été ravi autrefois, et qui formait la plus noble partie de son essence? (680)

Sergy's speculative second question accurately describes the fantastic in *Trilby* and *La Fée aux Miettes*, where dream and *folie* provide access to a primordial wisdom or insight. The narrator's conclusions to *Inès de Las Sierras* further develop the case for the utility of the fantastic, this time paying more respect to reason. As we will see, reason and Science are not so much enhanced by the fantastic, as is the case in the two

earlier tales, nor are they completely stymied by the fantastic, as in *Jean-François les Bas-bleus* and *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*; instead, they act to confirm the supernatural, or *merveilleux*, as represented in the fantastic.

Boutraix opposes Sergy's speculation, insisting it is no more than the result of centuries of ignorance and childish superstition. Invoking Voltaire, he dismisses Sergy's idea as *préjugé, superstition et fanatisme* (681). Clearly, in Boutraix' version of rational thought, there is no room whatsoever for the *merveilleux*. However, he is later frightened into changing his position, and at the end of the first part of *Inès de Las Sierras*, the mystery of the apparition remains unsolved.

Speculation in the tale about the veracity of the fantastic and about its role *vis-à-vis* reason, can best be understood by investigating its chief underlying theme, theatre. Theatre operates as both a metaphor for the fantastic (listening to a fantastic tale is like watching a play), and as a venue for participation in the fantastic event (the officers act in the roles of Inès' tormentors *cum* victims). After discussing the organizing role of the theme of theatre, and how it relates teleologically to the tale's closure, I will investigate the ideological implications of *Inès de Las Sierras*, which are

broader and more general than those of *Trilby* and *La Fée aux Miettes*.

II. i. THE FANTASTIC AS THEATRE¹⁰

La patrie est une muse.

Ainsi, l'histoire du théâtre est celle des sociétés¹¹

As a metaphor for the fantastic in *Inès de Las Sierras*¹², the notion of theatre is used primarily to explore the

¹⁰ Nodier's metaphor is naïve. Malrieu reminds us that, as distinct from cinema, which is like a play, the tale contains a narrative filter, which mediates, by virtue of the narrator's unavoidable subjectivity, between the abnormal phenomenon and the reader (Malrieu, 139-140, 147). However, one may say in Nodier's defense, that the play also contains an interpretative filter in the form of the director, whose own subjectivity conditions how the action is presented, and therefore, how it will be received. In fact, these considerations are not explicit in Nodier's metaphor, but there is, nevertheless, an implicit admission of narrative subjectivity when the narrator himself takes part in the 'play' with Sergy, Boutraix and eventually, Inès. Apart from any consideration of narrative mediation, the key point intended in Nodier's metaphor is that the fantastic should be approached with the same suspension of disbelief as one holds while watching a play.

¹¹ Charles Nodier, "Variétés," *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* (16 déc. 1822).

¹² In her study, mainly on Nodier's involvement as a theatre critic, Ginette Picat-Guinoiseau gives examples of Nodier's frequent use of theatrical metaphors in describing the Revolution, executions under the Reign of Terror, his own past loves, politics and religion. Picat-Guinoiseau also identifies Nodier's belief that, like the fantastic tale, theatre has a great capacity to represent truth and liberate the imagination (Ginette Picat-Guinoiseau, *Nodier et le théâtre*. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1990, 2, 298-302).

The word is also used metaphorically in the introduction to *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*: *l'histoire d'Hélène ne passe presque toute entière sur un théâtre dont le seul aspect révolte les organisations délicates ...* (322).

Jean-Pierre Picot considers the apparition of Inès to be a *jeu théâtral*, in which the spectators become actors. As an actress, Inès ceases to be a "pure sign", and enters their lives, effecting a process Picot calls *la quête, ou la reconquête de l'identité*, on the part of Inès and some of the spectators. In Picot's schema, theatre mediates between insanity (Inès' search to rediscover herself) and superstition (the legend about Inès) (Picot, 165-166, 171, 173).

relationship between the spectator and the spectacle, where one follows the story depicted on stage as if it were real, knowing all the while that it is artifice. Underlying the metaphorical relationship of theatre to the fantastic in Nodier's tale, is the fact that, not only do the spectators witness a scene, they also take part in it¹³. The fantastic tale, then, solicits from its reader both credulity and an awareness of the tale's artificiality, just as the fantastic scene witnessed by the officers confounds them. Moreover, in *Inès de Las Sierras*, the scene engulfs its spectators in the very action of the play. The three French officers are indelibly effected by the scene they witness, but even more so, by their participation in that scene. Boutraix, the greatest doubter of the three, is so moved by the scene, that he repudiates his former faith in rationalism (692), and becomes a devotee of Christianity, believing he has communicated with a soul from purgatory. After the war, he joins a monastery (696-697). Sergy has fallen irrevocably in love with Inès, and dies in the battle of Lutzen with her name on his lips (697). Judging from the conclusion, the narrator has taken from his experiences at Ghismondo, a new respect for

¹³ The double role of the metaphor should remind us of the portrait in *Trilby*, which was both a metaphor for the fantastic and miraculously transformed into an actor in the story, itself.

the fantastic and notions of the supernatural.

The fantastic in *Inès de Las Sierras* is, in this respect, like that in *Trilby*, due to the suspension of disbelief inherent in both folklore and theatre¹⁴. However, there is one crucial difference: in the case of theatre, by virtue of the immediacy of the play, one is more inclined to admit or to be aware of suspending disbelief. When applied metaphorically to the fantastic, the **admission** that one is suspending disbelief clearly indicates that more heed is paid to the inescapable presence of reason. In fact, where the legend of Saint Columban is never questioned in the tale, *Inès*' identity certainly is held up to scrutiny, and it is finally ascertained that she does not belong to the legend of Ghismondo. This point of difference between *Inès de Las Sierras* and the earlier tales is critical in understanding the evolution of Nodier's works, and will be discussed at greater length at the end of this chapter. First, it is important to further explore the particular application of theatre as a metaphor for the fantastic in *Inès de Las*

¹⁴ In the chapter on *Trilby*, I discussed the idea of suspension of disbelief that is typical of folklore. As metaphors for the fantastic, the portrait in *Trilby*, the medallion in *La Fée aux Miettes* and theatre in *Inès*, perform the same function. Where in *Trilby*, the portrait of MacFarlane becomes the vehicle linking *Trilby* to the legend of Saint Columban, thus offering a possible verification of the supernatural explanation for the story, and in *La Fée aux Miettes*, the medallion symbolizes the integration of Michel's present experience (his wife, the Fée) into the Queen of Sheba and the wisdom tradition, in *Inès*, it is *Inès*' performance that links her to a legendary past, which, again, provides a supernatural explanation for the apparition.

Sierras.

Before the night of the apparition at Ghismondo, Sergy and Boutraix have very different perspectives on the theatre. Sergy's last love was a singer in Bascara's troupe (661), which foreshadows Sergy's infatuation with Inès at the castle. He is particularly astounded by the supernatural perfection of her singing and dancing. However, before the apparition, Boutraix expresses a much different notion of theatre. Far from confirming that theatrical performance can have any transcendental or spiritual quality, Boutraix chastises Bascara for believing in legend and superstition: he claims that anyone with such a liberal profession as Bascara's, director of a theatre troupe, should not fall prey to *le plus inepte des préjugés populaires* (667). Theatre, then, is presented in two lights: through performances that seem to defy normal human capabilities, it can inspire belief in the supernatural; and yet it is also a liberal profession managed by those who, assumedly by virtue of their exposure to the world through travel, are enlightened and should therefore be sceptical of superstition. These two perspectives on theatre correspond initially to the points of view of the two officers, but exposure to a performance of seemingly supernatural quality entirely reverses

Boutraix' point of view.

The apparition of Inès to the three French officers is narrated in language evocative of the theatre. The narrator's choice of descriptive vocabulary not only implies the notion of theatre as a possible explanation for the event (it is all an act), but it also, more importantly, underscores the idea of theatre as a metaphor for the fantastic in general (the spectator-spectacle relationship we discussed above).

Added to the notion of the fantastic scene as theatre, is the narrator's admission that Ghismondo reminds him of a scene from *Don Quixote* (673). As Nodier argues in his essay on the fantastic¹⁵, not only theatre, but also fantastic literature and art are able to surpass reality in order to represent aspects of experience that escape the otherwise unimaginative human eye. In *Inès de Las Sierras*, the theme of literature is introduced by the narrator's comment on *Don Quixote*, and the theme of art plays an important role, as it did in both *Trilby* and *La Fée aux Miettes*. Upon seeing a portrait of Inès in the castle, Sergy claims: *jamais la vie n'est descendue plus vivante du pinceau* (677). The point at which Sergy reads the name under the portrait, *Inès de Las Sierras* (677), is reminiscent of Jeannie's

¹⁵ Cf. the chapter on Nodier's essay.

discovery of the portrait of John Trilby MacFarlane, in a similar setting, which led to a similar enchantment with the fantastic character. Putting the character on stage, *Inès de Las Sierras* adds an important dimension to the theme of art, by forcing the issue of the spectator's credulity. This is one reason for reading *Inès de Las Sierras* as being much more **about** the fantastic than were the other tales¹⁶.

The narrator's description of the banquet room at Ghismondo certainly approximates the description of a theatre hall. The room is elegant, in contrast to the other rooms of the derelict castle. The *éclat imposteur* of the oil lamp shines on the costumes Bascara has thrown over the armchairs, lending a *lustre factice* to the scene (678). They also light ten bright candles in the room, which, we are told, leaves it better illuminated than any small theatre (678). The image of the room as a stage is reinforced by further description of its lighting:

la partie la plus éloignée (...) n'avait pas perdu toutes ses ténèbres. On eût dit qu'elles s'y étaient amassées comme à dessein pour établir entre nous et le vulgaire profane une mystérieuse barrière (678-9).

The 'spectators', those who are about to witness the 'spectacle'

¹⁶ Others would be the narrator's own philosophical conclusion, and the argument between Sergy and Boutraix in the first part of the tale.

of the apparition, have actually crossed the boundary between audience and play, and have entered onto the stage. When the narrator describes the setting metaphorically as *la nuit visible du poète* (679), we know that they are in a very special space, one in which the normal rules of perception are transcended. As a metaphor for the fantastic in general, poetic insight that pierces through darkness is not new to us. It is like the *prisme prestigieux* in Nodier's essay on the fantastic, and the special insight of *folie* in *La Fée aux Miettes* and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*. Essentially, it indicates a condition or situation in which things are perceived of that would normally go unnoticed or ignored. Specifically, in *Inès de Las Sierras*, that situation takes the form of a performance¹⁷.

Moreover, theatre is used as a possible explanation for the strange apparitions that had taken place in the castle for years before the arrival of the French officers. Boutraix speculates that the apparitions were no more than the sightings of "good natured adventurers" who had decided to come to the castle to "play out the scene" of the legend. He suggests that Estevan's father, who supposedly witnessed the apparition, was in fact

¹⁷ I have mentioned, and will later discuss at further length, that, as a metaphor for the fantastic, theatre adds a nuance to complementarity: it grants reason a far more predominant role in the fantastic.

only seeing *une comédie de ce genre* (679). Boutraix' rationalization of the legend, ironically leads them to become involved in it: deciding to dress up as the legendary characters and mockingly reenact the haunting, they enter into the play. Or is it only a play? The narrator dons a captain's coat, Boutraix, the costume of the squire, and Sergy dresses as the page. Borrowing from Bascara's inventory, the three officers are very convincingly costumed, adding to their transformation into characters in the fantastic play. As the narrator claims: *les héros mêmes de la galerie de Ghismondo, s'ils étaient descendus subitement de leurs toiles gothiques, ne se seraient pas trouvés très dépaysés dans leur castel héréditaire* (679). Foreshadowing the apparition of Inès, and adding to the fantastic nature of the officers' theatrical game, Bascara refuses to play along, saying that, unlike the roles his profession usually calls him to play, this one concerns the very well-being of his soul (679). Both the narrator and Sergy feel partially uneasy about their game, sensing that there is something quite serious involved, while Boutraix is undisturbed, and continues to drink. At the stroke of midnight, they lift their glasses to her in jest, but the narrator's uneasiness proves warranted.

Me voilà! she answers from the portrait gallery (681). Each of the officers freeze, *immobile et muet* (682). The vision of Inès, while shocking, is also an "illusion surpassing the beauty of nature" (682), once again implying the super-reality of the scene. Her traits reveal an *immuable perfection* and an *éternelle régularité*, typical of the depiction of Ancient Gods (682). In fact, the beauty of the apparition is so overwhelming, *il ne restait rien dans cette physionomie qui appartînt à la terre* (682), that it defies description by *les artifices de la parole, de la plume ou du pinceau* (683). Since the normal means of description are inadequate and "artificial", the narrator tells his listeners that the only appropriate way to conceive of the scene, is through one's own imagination. Moreover, there is something uncertain about this 'super-real' character: the narrator admits that Inès' expression betrays *un doute inquiet qui cherche à s'expliquer à lui-même* (683), reinforcing the notion that she is playing a role of which she, herself, is not exactly certain¹⁸. Her dress also links her to the theatre, in that it seems borrowed from a wardrobe director. However, it also appears to be the exact dress worn in the

¹⁸ This fact anticipates the later explanation that the 'apparition' is really only a disturbed young actress in hiding.

portrait, and is very old, like the dress of a dead woman (683).

The narrator's response to the apparition replicates that of a spectator at a play. He is seduced by her, and yet retains some critical distance, or as he puts it: *j'étais parfaitement rendu au libre exercice de mes facultés*, those of an *esprit raisonnable* (683). He comments on her features and her costume as one might comment on an actress. Nevertheless, the critical distance dissipates when Inès speaks: *Je suis Inès de Las Sierras* (684). In spite of the efforts of his *esprit raisonnable*, the narrator admits: *je cherchais en vain quelque chose qui trahît la feinte ou le mensonge* (684). However, he remains sceptical, telling her that he will play her game, and will address her as Inès de Las Sierras, but that she must not mistake this for credulity (684). His game is essentially the 'game' of theatre, where the spectator and the actors are aware of the artifice¹⁹, and yet sustain the illusion that the story is real. Inès also seems aware of the game, demanding no credulity on their part. However, she paradoxically insists that she is indeed Inès de Las Sierras (685).

Inès acknowledges that the officers may possibly entertain

¹⁹ A fact underscored by the description of the lighting as *imposteur* and *factice* (678).

more than one explanation for her appearance, and, showing them her mother's jewels, challenges them: *voyez si je suis en effet Inès de Las Sierras, ou une vile aventurière, vouée par la bassesse de sa naissance aux divertissements de la populace* (685). Is she only an actress playing a part, or is she indeed the legendary personage of Inès? The officers cannot convince themselves of the former, and therefore stand motionless, in awe of her. Boutraix, completely terrified, finds himself *incapable de raisonner* (686). Sergy is love-struck by this character who, the narrator explains, *réalisait les rêves favoris de sa folle imagination*²⁰ (686). The narrator, himself, comes to doubt his former precepts concerning mystery and the supernatural. He now feels those precepts may have been too hastily formulated (686). The three officers, like spectators within the play, or as the narrator describes, resembling *ces figures pétrifiées des contes orientaux que la mort a saisies au milieu de la vie* (686), watch her every move, while ironically, she, herself, becomes much more animated. Just as in the theatre, the audience suspend their activities, and are moved in whatever way by the act on

²⁰ There are certainly echoes of Jeannie and Trilby in Sergy's reaction to Inès. The fantastic scene once again occasions a process wherein dreams and imagination that exceed past experience, are somehow realized. As we saw in *Trilby*, and as is the case in *Inès de Las Sierras*, the subject in question, Jeannie or Sergy, is forever transformed by that process which brings the imaginary object of their ideal of love into their experiential reality.

stage, which, temporarily at least, becomes the only activity. However, in the case of Boutraix and Sergy, the spectators enter the play, and are irremediably effected by it. In this sense, the play is more than a metaphor for the observation of a fantastic scene. It is also a metaphor for participation in that scene. As we later learn, the narrator discovers the truth behind the apparition. By contrast, his two fellows remain forever convinced that, one stormy December night in Catalonia, they were indeed visited by a soul from purgatory.

The play continues, as Inès drinks to the three of them, or to the three characters they represent: the lord, the squire and the page (686). Sergy declares his love for her, forming a type of pact with her when he drinks from her glass. He touches her hair, and, becoming part of the 'play', refers to himself as *votre Sergy* (687). Inès, improvises a seductive song for them: *la romance de la Niña matada* (687). Unlike Sergy, the narrator maintains a critical distance from her performance, saying there is no greater joy than to witness artistic invention *in media res*. Nevertheless, for the narrator, the very act of watching the performance does transform him, causing him to feel the presence of his "soul" and of a *vie nouvelle*. He senses himself becoming alienated from his physical reality: *les deux essences*

de mon être se séparaient (688). The difference between the narrator and Sergy is that the former realizes he is reacting to the performance he witnesses, while the latter, enters into it: *Sergy criait, Sergy pleurait, Sergy n'était plus lui-même* (688). Essentially, the narrator is so impressed by the beauty of the performance, that his imagination and his reason separate, while Sergy surrenders completely to his imagination, leaving all reason behind. For the time being, it appears that the fantastic event has caused an alienation between the two 'senses', reason and imagination, rather than the integration between them that we witnessed in the first two tales. Nevertheless, the end of the present tale effects a different type of integration, or complementarity, which I have promised to address later.

Inès then dances for the three, striking poses, and moving with such ease, that she seems to drift above the floor and become a new character with each pose (689). She moves in and out of the shadows, as her song swells and fades, and then, explaining that she must leave, beckons Sergy, if he loves her, to follow her to her tomb under the castle (691). After she leaves, Boutraix and the narrator restrain Sergy from following her, but he is forever smitten.

The three then attempt to understand what they have just witnessed. They wonder if Inès was sent by a band of brigands to put them off their guard, leaving them open to attack or robbery by the brigands. However, they decide that this is unlikely, since it would in effect only warn them of the brigands' presence. The narrator then posits that Inès actually belongs to Bascara's troupe, and that her 'apparition' is a publicity stunt. Being able to so frighten three brave French officers would gain her great fame on stage. He urges Bascara to admit to this ploy: it may have been a good joke at first, but, *maintenant la comédie est jouée* (693). Bascara reminds them that they only met that morning, and that, since that time, he has not left their sight. The theory of Inès as a publicity stunt is thus abandoned. While the entire incident may have appeared very theatrical, the narrator's attempts to implicate Bascara's troupe in the affair, prove to be in vain. In the second part of the tale, we learn of Inès' real association with the theatre, but for the time being, the three cannot arrive at any reasonable explanation for the apparition, and swear each other to secrecy, so as not to become objects of public ridicule. The narrator expresses the essential notion of the fantastic in *Inès de Las Sierras*, when he posits that the truth

of the apparition is a secret, *caché sans doute dans quelque fait naturel dont l'explication nous arracherait un sourire, mais qui échappe à la portée de notre raison* (695-696). He is certain that, sooner or later, the enigma will be explained (696). The narrator's convictions anticipate the tale's conclusion, where it is argued that superstition is a valid way of describing phenomena that science has not yet been able to fully explain.

A question then arises: is the fantastic in *Inès de Las Sierras* undermined by rational explanation in the second part of the tale?²¹ Marie-Claude Amblard argues that, for two reasons, the fantastic is not defeated by the rational explanation. First, the effect that the scene has had on the officers, Boutraix enters a monastery and Sergy goes to his death loving Inès, means that the fantastic has indeed survived its rational explanation. What matters is not the fantastic scene, but its effect. However, it must be remembered that these two officers are never privy to the true story of Inès. Second, the rational explanation is so dependent on coincidence that it seems

²¹ According to Bessière, Jackson and Grivel, whom I discussed in Chapter I, this type of resolution in most fantastic stories indicates that they are conservative in regards to the social and ideological status quo.

Hans Peter Lund sees *Inès* as an escapist tale, *qui présente l'ailleurs comme le seul champ de libération* (Lund, 194). However, we will see how the tale's conclusion argues squarely against escapism.

scarcely more acceptable than the superstitious explanation: that Inès is a soul come back from purgatory²². Amblard feels that, in a type of *jeu de miroirs* between the natural and the supernatural, where the second enters and effects the first, and the first only explains the second by taking recourse to coincidence, there is a complementarity sustained between these two "points of view"²³. While this is generally true, it only partly explains complementarity in *Inès de Las Sierras*, ignoring the important message of the conclusion: namely that, given enough time, reason can indeed explain unreason, and yet does not necessarily destroy unreason's rightful role in human understanding. In order to make her point, Amblard looks too much for complementarity between the two parts of Nodier's tale, without considering the relationship established between them by the tale's conclusion. Reason is very much more prominent in *Inès de Las Sierras* than in Nodier's earlier tales, and the evolution represented by this fact is crucial to understanding the tale. Complementarity takes on a very different appearance in *Inès de Las Sierras*, and it revolves very much around the structuring of the tale into two autonomous parts, with a

²² Amblard, "Sources...", 673-4, 681.

²³ Amblard, "Sources...", 148-149.

critically important third part, the conclusion²⁴.

In fact, the first part, the telling of the ghost story, ends with the narrator's reluctance to offer any further explanation of the event.

II. ii. THE "COMPLETENESS" OF THE FANTASTIC

In the middle of *Inès de Las Sierras*, lies a short but important section where the narrator finishes telling his story, and is interrogated by his interlocutors, Anastase, Eudoxie and a deputy public prosecutor, referred to only by his title, *le substitut*. They want to know what 'really' happened to the narrator and his friends that night in 1812 at the castle of Ghismondo. Anastase coaxes the narrator to tell more, saying: *Tu dois en avoir su davantage*, to which the narrator responds:

²⁴ The two parts are far more autonomous than Amblard seems to indicate in her discussion of the tale. While this alone would seem to disprove any idea of complementarity between reason and unreason, when taken in the larger frame of the tale, including its conclusion, it actually works toward a notion of complementarity, but one that is radically different from either the one Amblard first suggests or the one that operates in Nodier's earlier tales. It is important to recognize that between the first and second parts, taken without the conclusion, there is little complementarity between reason and unreason. Amblard's model places *Inès de Las Sierras* on the same plane as the earlier tales, ignoring the fact that the later tale is far much more a tale about the fantastic, than it is a fantastic tale. The fact that the measure of complementarity that does exist in the tale is somewhat imposed on it in the concluding pages, reveals a very interesting fact about the evolution of Nodier's notion of the fantastic. There is an underlying sense of the inevitability of reason that Amblard's model bypasses.

Cette histoire est très complète dans son genre (697). He tells them that he has no obligation to tell more, since he has provided them with the ghost story that they wished to hear, adding: *Tout autre dénouement serait vicieux dans mon écrit, car il en changerait la nature* (697). These two points are central to the way the fantastic is presented in *Inès de Las Sierras*, and they anticipate the tale's conclusion. Essentially, the fantastic is very much a self-sufficient genre, a way of viewing, and then telling, experience. It has its own internal rules and rubrics, and, although not invalidated, is transformed into something quite different when subjected to other ways of making sense of experience. Uncertainty, ambiguity, or what might be called unresolved antinomy between reason and unreason, are not to be removed, as they fit into the rubrics of the genre. The fantastic story, the ghost story that the narrator has just told, is to be considered for its own merits. As in *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*, unreason is a substitute for reason, and complementarity between the two depends only on a notion that they are both valid versions of truth²⁵. However, they do not, as in *Trilby* or *La*

²⁵ Concerning the story he has just told, the narrator assures his interlocutors: *c'est une histoire véritable, du commencement à la fin* (698). In other words, complete and valid, as it stands. The other version of the events, which Anastase, Eudoxie and the substitut

Fée aux Miettes, operate together. In fact, at this point in *Inès de Las Sierras*, unreason and reason appear to be independent of each other. Nevertheless, the concept of unreason as an autonomous discourse, having no relationship to reason, will be radically altered by the second part of the tale: one month later, the narrator confides in Anastase, Eudoxie and the *substitut* the truth about Inès.

The 'real' story of Inès, which the narrator learns from a Spanish friend, Pablo de Clauza, upon a subsequent visit to Barcelona during the peace of 1814, seems to dispel the mystery of the first story; it therefore appears that unreason has been defeated. The tale's conclusion actually casts a different light on this defeat. However, before discussing closure, it is important to note those instances where the 'real' story is not necessarily more coherent than the fantastic one, but, quite simply, belongs to a different *genre*.

II. iii. WHO REALLY IS INÈS DE LAS SIERRAS?

During the short peace of 1814, the narrator finds himself

so wish to hear, does not enter into it, since, as the narrator tells them: *l'histoire qu'on réclame, c'est une autre histoire* (698).

in Barcelona, visiting his friend, Pablo de Clauza. One evening, they go to the theatre to see the great dancer, *La Pédrina*, who, the narrator soon learns, is Inès. Her performance in Barcelona takes the narrator back to the evening two years previous at Ghismondo, which reinforces the image of the apparition as a type of play: *une illusion terrible* that he is still unable to explain rationally (702). Pablo tells the narrator the 'true' story of Inès de Las Sierras, a young noblewoman whose family had emigrated to Mexico. In order to escape her step-mother, the young Inès changed her name to *Pédrina*, and ran off with Gaetano, the wanderer with whom she had fallen in love. Pablo admits that the Las Sierras line is the subject of many popular legends. His description of legend approximates the role that the narrator will later ascribe to superstition and folklore in general:

*une de ces traditions populaires du moyen
age, qui furent probablement fondées sur
quelques faits réels ou sur quelques
apparences spécieuses, et qui se sont
maintenues de génération en génération dans
le souvenir des hommes, jusqu'au point
d'acquérir une espèce d'autorité historique
(703).*

In other words, folklore is not pure fancy, but a type of account made of real events, a certain way of explaining

reality. The explanation may make some incorrect assumptions, but the events behind the explanation are real. The narrator's moral, which concludes the tale, is built upon a similar understanding of legend and superstition; accordingly, the moral teaches that they should not be dismissed.

However, Pablo continues to recount the real events behind the legend. Inès' wounds are easily explained: after a first parting of ways, Gaetano finds her once again, robs her of the jewels bestowed on her by a wealthy theatre patron, and stabs her in the process²⁶. Inès flees to her abandoned ancestral home, the castle of Ghismondo, dressed in the tatters of her theatrical costume. It is at this point that the narrator, Sergy and Boutraix witness the 'apparition'.

Now that the episode at the castle has been explained, one might feel that the fantastic element of the story has been completely dissipated²⁷. Nevertheless, there are elements of contrivance in Pablo's story that render it unsatisfying, to say

²⁶ It is interesting to note here Nodier's continued commitment to the notion of charity. He makes sure to mention that, even though Inès is richly endowed by her patron, she exercises great charity toward the poor (707), a virtue that would surely edify her in the eyes of Jeannie, Michel and the Fée. After the attack on her by Gaetano, she becomes insane, and wanders the streets, begging for a living (711), also not unlike the heroine of *La Fée aux Miettes*. As much as the relationship between reason and unreason in Nodier's fantastic may evolve from 1822 to 1836, many of the themes and images are consistent.

²⁷ This is the belief of Todorov and Cummiskey. Todorov, *Introduction...*, 51; and Gary Cummiskey, *The Changing Face of Horror. A Study of the Nineteenth-Century French Fantastic Short Story*. New York: Peter Lang, 1992.

the least²⁸. His explanation fits into Döring's second category: reason that explains, but does not entirely satisfy. I would argue that this type of explanation is as capable of causing an 'undoing' of reason, by **implying** its inadequacy, as is a resolution where reason **obviously** fails to explain the strange phenomena²⁹.

Pablo's explanation of the apparition at Ghismondo demands that one accept the enormous coincidence of identity: the 'ghost' really does happen to be a woman named Inès de Las Sierras; the coincidence of time: she happens to be at the castle on Christmas Eve, the very evening of the legendary apparitions; and the coincidence of the location of the wound. Furthermore, Amblard reminds us of the unlikelihood that Inès would disappear from the castle banquet room at the very moment prescribed by the legend, when she was so taken with Sergy³⁰.

²⁸ Marie-Claude Amblard bases her notion of a *jeu de miroirs* between fantastic and real, on the unnerving level of coincidence involved in Pablo's story. In addition, Cumiskey, who feels the fantastic is dissipated by Pablo's explanation, nevertheless notes that Pablo's story rests on an acceptance of enormous coincidence: *The solution provided by the appendix (Pablo's story) dissipates the fantastic altogether, but, as we have said, it is too contrived to be taken seriously* (Cumiskey, 67). Picot also insists on the unlikelihood of the co-incidence between Pablo's story and the legend (Picot, 178).

I would agree in principle with Amblard that, if Pablo's story is contrived, it is intentionally so, on the part of the author, who wishes to concede the day to reason, but not, in so doing, to discredit the legend. If the explanation cannot not be taken entirely seriously, then neither can it entirely dissipate the fantastic.

²⁹ Döring, 170.

³⁰ Amblard, "Sources...", 147n.

Underscoring the general sense of misunderstanding of the event, are the incorrect conclusions drawn by the locals who see the lights on at the chateau, and the police who later discover the remains of the events: the many empty wine bottles. First, when Inès disappears from her patron's home, the people assume she has thrown herself into the sea: *cette explication se présentait si naturellement à l'esprit, qu'on fut à peine tenté d'en chercher une autre* (711). The police, *peu disposée à partager les croyances de la populace*, wrongly conclude that the activity at the chateau on Christmas Eve of 1812, was due to the presence of conspirators from the old Spanish party, taking advantage of the French army's pull-out (711). These two instances of misunderstanding analogically support the notion that seemingly logical conclusions, perhaps including Pablo's explanation, can indeed be faulty. Consequently, there results a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the rational explanation of the events. Nevertheless, the apparition is explained by Pablo's story, if somewhat unconvincingly, and the subsequent relationship between reason and unreason is something quite different from that of Nodier's earlier tales.

Inès convalesces in a convent, and is slowly healed of her grief. However, restoring her faculty of reason does not

suffice to make her happy. It becomes necessary that her talent as a performer be cultivated: *elle était décidée à se consacrer au théâtre* (714). Theatre, or performance, becomes a recipe for happiness, for coping with the problems of identity³¹. Taking theatre as a metaphor for the fantastic helps in understanding the crucial role of the tale's conclusion, toward which both parts of the tale have built. The metaphor also aids in understanding the relationship between reason and unreason in *Inès de Las Sierras*.

II.iv. LATENT COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN REASON AND UNREASON

Gary Cummiskey underestimates the conclusion of *Inès de Las Sierras*, when he claims that the reasonable explanation in the second part dissipates the fantastic of the first part. In Pablo's story, reason surely provides an answer to the mysterious apparition at Ghismondo. There can be no doubt that, in spite of the great coincidence upon which Pablo's story relies, reason more effectively explains the abnormal in *Inès de Las Sierras* than it does in earlier tales. However, what one

³¹ In the castle, the 'act' allows Inès to become the personage of the legend, while, on stage, it allows her to become *La Pédrina*. In both cases, the harsh reality of her past, which reason would not permit her to escape, is set aside.

deduces about the tale's posited relationship between reason and unreason, depends on how one views the ultimate goals of the explanation. In short, the tale's conclusion, its moral, is an attempt to remind the reader that reason and unreason, assumedly not being incompatible from the outset, need not necessarily be understood as mutually competitive. They may quite simply offer different versions of the same event. Indeed, on occasion, one tells of realities that temporarily escape the scope of the other. As reason, or its investigative branch, Science, evolves, it sometimes comes to explain mysteries that were previously understood in terms of superstition or legend. Such is the general process at work in *Inès de Las Sierras*. Nevertheless, if the narrator's moral is to be accepted, reason's explanation of mystery does not discredit superstition or legend, but, quite the opposite, confirms them. They depict real events with perfect accuracy, and using their own internal logic, they offer explanations for those events.

Reliance on coincidence notwithstanding, reason manages to explain unreason in Nodier's tale. However, the context in which the narrator places this process of explanation supports the notion that the two are indeed complementary, in a **latent** way. His corresponding example from natural history, Science

which confirms the existence of dragons and harpies, shows how reason often "justifies" and "authenticates" the old legends (717). Therefore, when the narrator's moral is summarized as: *Tout croire est d'un imbécile, tout nier est d'un sot* (715), he really means this to operate in both directions. In other words, to believe everything in legend **and** in science is facile, while to doubt everything in legend **and** in science is foolish.

Therefore, in a time when the fantastic, at least the Hoffmann-style of fantastic, is *passé de mode*³², as is already noted in *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*, Nodier seems to find a new way to accommodate unreason. It is not in the style of Poe, as Cummiskey describes him, where abandoning the notion of a separate supernatural universe leads to looking inward and finding disturbing elements in the human psyche³³. The fact that Nodier does not orient his later fantastic tales in this way is perhaps due to his conviction all along that the supernatural

³² While the influence of Hoffmann on French Romanticism, especially in its early years, is undeniable, Pierre-Georges Castex asserts that Nodier did not much fall under that influence. While Nodier's style corresponds to, and certainly reveals a sensitivity to general literary vogue, Castex claims his tales are original and personal (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 141-142).

Although I recognize the originality of Nodier's tales, I feel there must be an admission of the author's awareness of literary trends, which were in large part set by imitators of Hoffmann. This point actually assists in the assessment of Nodier's work on an ideological score.

³³ Readers no longer believe in a dualistic world composed of supernatural and natural orders, as with fantastic stories in the style of Hoffmann (Cummiskey, 47).

and natural orders are not separate, but complementary. Indeed, Nodier's fantastic evolves in order to perpetuate his constant belief that the two orders are complementary. He therefore undertakes to demonstrate that the natural order, understood in scientific or rational terms, confirms the older, legend-based descriptions, not of a separate, supernatural order, but of the very same reality, seen differently. In *Inès de Las Sierras*, the light refracted through the *prisme prestigieux* of the fantastic, is reconstructed by reason³⁴, indicating a recognition, on Nodier's part, of the ascendancy of Science. Superstition or legend can no longer exist without the confirming role of ever-advancing Science. In broad ideological terms, Nodier's tale demonstrates a concession made to the undeniable power of Science and reason. However, *Inès de Las Sierras* does also contain a more specifically focussed political message, having to do with the role of Imperialism as a proselytizing force for the faith; not the old Faith, but faith in reason.

³⁴ However, the contrived nature of this reconstruction still emphasizes Nodier's general uneasiness with complete faith in reason.

II.v. THE EMPIRE AT THE SERVICE OF REASON

Both Sergy and Boutraix have gone through the Establishment schools, but differ from each other greatly in temperament and inclination toward those ideas that fly in the face of Reason. Sergy, a romantic at heart, is susceptible to belief in superstition and legend, as long as it contains a love story. Boutraix responds to all popular belief, religious, superstitious or otherwise, with disdain. In response to anything having to do with faith or sentiment, Boutraix habitually spouts: *fanatisme et préjugé* (662). Even though he has never read two pages together, he founds his convictions on what he assumes to be the philosophy of Voltaire and Piron, a strategy that solicits respect for his position. However, he displays no respect for those who differ in opinion. He curses Estevan with the wrath of all the devils in Hell, knowing how seriously the Spanish guide will take the malediction (663).

In contrast to Boutraix, and all he represents in unbending adherence to the principles of Reason, are the Spanish characters, Estevan and Bascara, who cling with equal resolve to their Catholic beliefs. On the voyage, Bascara wishes to invoke the protection of Saints Nicholas and Ignatius, the patrons of travellers, and all along the trip to Ghismondo, he says psalms

and litanies (667). Estevan responds to Boutraix' curses by crossing himself and mumbling prayers. When he learns that they will go to Ghismondo, Estevan exclaims: *Que la bienheureuse Vierge ait pitié de nous!* (666).

From the outset, there is an opposition between the two 'faiths': Spanish Catholicism blended with superstition, and stubborn conviction to what are assumed to be the precepts of Reason. Estevan and Bascara prescribe to the first faith, Boutraix, to the second. Sergy is charmed by the first, especially when he meets Inès. Pablo, who tells the 'real' story of Inès in the tale's second part, is alone among the tale's Spaniards in expressing criticism of the first type of faith: he refers to the legend of Ghismondo as, *cette superstition ridicule* (711). The narrator is the only character who occupies any middle ground in the confrontation between Reason and faith, this due to his open-mindedness.

The conflict between reason and unreason, specifically, between Reason and faith³⁵, takes on political coordinates. For the most part, the two sides correspond to the positions represented by French Imperialism and Spanish nationalism. In

³⁵ I reiterate that 'faith' must be understood here as a combination of religion and superstition. It is not cartesian Christianity.

a muleteer's response to the officers' predicament of having nowhere in Mattaro to spend the night, the narrator recognizes an insolence typical of the Spaniards' way of addressing them, an insolence that upsets him (665). When he tries to force an innkeeper to accommodate them, saying: *c'est pour le service de l'empereur*, he receives her unimpressed response: *l'empereur lui-même ne trouverait pas dans toute mon hôtellerie une place où se tenir assis!* He retorts with a curse on Spain: *la peste soit des proverbes et du pays de Sancho!* (665). Directing them toward Ghismondo, the innkeeper mockingly challenges them, playing on their pride: *vous n'êtes pas hommes, vous autres Français, à ceder un bon gîte au démon* (666). Alluding to the military might of the French forces in general, and to his threesome in particular, the narrator responds: *nous sommes trop bien armés pour en redouter aucune* (666). They set off for Ghismondo, with Boutraix dismissing the legend as pure fancy, invented for the profit of monks by *quelque buveur d'eau de théologien*, and arrogantly charging that Voltaire and Piron should have been translated into Spanish, *comme ils devraient l'être dans toutes les langues du monde* (667). Upon hearing such disrespect for Spanish customs and beliefs, Estevan agrees to tell them the legend of Ghismondo, adding that, after they

hear the story, they are free to return (668). Implied in his statement, is the 'invitation' that they should feel free to return not only to Mattaro, but to France, entirely.

Estevan's story enchants Sergy, the poetry of it impresses the narrator, and Bascara is completely terrified by it. Boutraix, though, remains unmoved. He argues that the Las Sierras' position as lords is typical of the barbary, ignorance and slavery of Feudalism (669), and that the entire story is nonsense, only one of many ridiculous legends: *vieilles fables de la superstition qui n'ont plus de crédit qu'en Espagne!* (672). As a provocation to his guide, he drinks a toast to Satan, himself. The tension builds between the French doubter and the Spanish believer.

Indeed, even within Estevan's notion of spirits and hauntings, there is a hierarchy that implies a criticism of the 'refined and civilized' French. Upon their arrival at Ghismondo, he wishes to remain in the stable, saying: *je crains moins les démons de l'écurie que ceux du salon*³⁶ (674). It is as if Spanish culture, along with its legends and beliefs, sustains

³⁶ The idea that there are different types of spirits, the mischievous yet harmless imps, like Trilby, and the more dangerous demons from Hell, is one that Marie-Claude Amblard points out in a comparison of the writings of Walter Scott, where the French demon is contrasted to the Scottish imp (Amblard, "Sources...", 394-396). Given this broader context of the idea of a hierarchy of apparitions, it is not inconceivable that Estevan is implicating the French in his comparison of spirits.

an internal balance between the powers of good and evil, and is only disturbed by the interference of the French. The narrator admits that entering the chateau is like an invasion, and that it excites him: *J'avouerais que cette incursion sans périls avait cependant quelque chose d'aventureux et de fantastique dont mon imagination était secrètement flatée, et je puis ajouter qu'elle présentait des difficultés propres à exciter notre ardeur* (675). He later likens entering the castle to attacking a redoubt, speaking of their progress in terms of an "invasion" (675).

The officers are penetrating into a place that represents not only something typically Spanish, but also something essentially medieval. The narrator describes the castle's portraits as, *vestiges de l'art des siècles reculés* (676); and when it is noted that one of the portraits depicts a woman of the court of Charles Quint, Sergy bows his head, demonstrating his respect for the past, and more specifically, the **Spanish** past³⁷. When Inès appears to them, she demands, not that they believe in her, but that they cease to contest her title in her own ancestral home (685). As proof of her title, she shows them her mother's golden bracelet, which Sergy treats with respect,

³⁷ Charles V was long a thorn in the side of the French King François I and his successor, Henri II.

in deference to her aristocratic lineage. The narrator, though, has arrogantly patronized Inès, when he offered her his *hospitalité discrète et respectueuse* in her own house (684).

Finally, at the end of the scene at Ghismondo, the officers are unable to explain the apparition, and their 'invasion' into one of Spain's legends, leaves the narrator baffled, questioning his former commitment to the principles of reason. Boutraix' convictions to Voltaire and Piron are completely destroyed (692), as the experience has opened his mind to "new ideas": he later converts to monastic life! Sergy is enchanted, in love with Inès, and can only be restrained from following her by the narrator's appeal to his *esprit de corps*, telling him: *tu nous appartiens avant tout*, and: *À nous, maintenant, messieurs* (691). The three swear an oath to speak nothing of the event, lest it undermine the respectability of their position as French officers (696). Rather than admit the defeat of their principles by an old Spanish legend, they prefer self-censorship in order to sustain respect for their beliefs, even if they, themselves, can no longer express whole-hearted adherence to those beliefs. However, shortly after the events at Ghismondo, this symbolic defeat of French Imperialism is followed by the military defeat of the French Army, and they pull out of Spain

(697).

The French occupation of Spain, and French Imperialism, with its associated 'mission' of enlightenment, comes to play in the story of *Inès*, where the officers find the very principles of that enlightenment undermined by their encounter with a ghost, in a fantastic scene at the castle of Ghismondo³⁸. The fact that the scene is later explained in rational terms, matters neither for Sergy, who goes to his grave in love with a ghost, nor for Boutraix, who has converted to Catholicism, nor even for the narrator, who, judging from his conclusions, is no longer willing to disregard unreason. Instead, he entertains the notions of unreason, as one might entertain the story-line of a play, confident that they present a version of reality that is not to be dismissed, since it may potentially be confirmed and legitimized by reason, itself.

³⁸ Already in 1815, Nodier writes unsympathetically of the Imperial cause in Spain: *On n'a que trop bien qualifié la guerre d'Espagne quand on l'a appelée une guerre impie. C'est une des grands crimes politiques du dernier âge de notre histoire* (Nodier, "Variétés," *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, mercredi, le onze janvier, 1815). While in the 1815 article, Nodier proceeds to lay all blame for the criminal action on Napoleon personally, in *Inès de Las Sierras*, written twenty-one years later, he seems far more inclined to associate the war with the avowed French mission of bringing the Enlightenment principles of the Empire to the other nations of Europe.

III. CONCLUSIONS

What then is the connection between ideology, the fantastic, theatre and the tale's conclusion? Essentially, the tale tells of an incident, an apparition, that forces those who witness it to decide what to make of it. Each witness corresponds to an ideological position. Boutraix represents French Imperialism, especially ideological Imperialism, that rests unbendingly on the precepts of Reason. As his convictions to that position are completely destroyed by his experiences at Ghismondo, it is fair to say that the tale shows the inadequacy of uncompromising Reason to answer all of life's questions, and the inappropriateness of the Napoleonic adventure in Spain. Sergy, the romantic hero, perhaps representing the Romantic *penchant* to answer all of life's questions in poetic or artistic terms³⁹, finds himself completely swept away by the vision of Inès into an imaginary world of ideal love. He may achieve ecstasy through imagination, but only understands an imagined truth about the situation. Bascara, the theatre director,

³⁹ Paul Bénichou reminds us of the Romantic *penchant* of consecrating the poet, the artistic visionary, as the chief interpreter of reality. Taking recourse to intuition and imagination, the poet is the one person gifted with the type of insight that allows him to view the true reality behind human experience (Bénichou, *Le sacre...*).

represents Spanish faith in religion and superstition, blended together. His faith is confirmed by the apparition, even though the superstitious interpretation of the event may later seem to be undermined by Pablo's story of Inès. The narrator, of course, represents the type of philosophical and ideological position that is offered as a moral in the tale's conclusion. He is moderate, observant and open-minded. Although his scepticism towards the superstitious version of the event, the legend of Inès, is validated by Pablo's story, he does not ultimately convert to Boutraix' initial type of blind faith in Reason. Instead, as apparent in the tale's conclusion, he promotes open-mindedness. It is significant that the narrator feels compelled to state his moral not only in French, but also in the form of an old Spanish adage: *De las cosas mas seguras, La mas segura es dudar* (716). He is also resolute in insisting that not being able to see apparitions does not disprove their existence. Therefore, the French officer implies a repudiation of the Imperialism of Reason, as carried out by French military Imperialism, and a respect for Spanish legends and faith, even though they may be widely regarded as pure superstition.

Ideology plays an important part in *Inès de Las Sierras*, since it determines each of these approaches to the apparition.

The event then confirms, alters or destroys each of these ideological positions, indicating their differing degrees of validity.

Where does theatre, as a metaphor for the fantastic, fit in? First, it provides the venue for the officers' encounter with the 'supernatural' comprised by the legend. Not only do they witness the 'play', but they also take part in it. Second, the cognitive and interpretative stretching that the spectator brings to a play, is a model for the type of approach to the fantastic that the narrator prescribes in his conclusions: *tout croire et tout nier*. Accept the play as real, all the while remaining aware of its artificiality, a point that also underscores the subjectivity and relativity of competing ideologies: they are like the individual perspectives held by spectators at a play. Third, looking at the fantastic as theatre, indicates an awareness of the narrator's distance from the event, showing a certain self-consciousness of the fantastic. The narrator and his interlocutors debate whether or not the story's events should be taken literally. As a type of epilogue to that debate, the narrator's conclusions point to the fact that *Inès de Las Sierras* is a tale **about** the fantastic, about how to approach it, what to make of it and what its

purpose might be; namely, to cultivate philosophical and cultural open-mindedness. This last point, that French Imperialism does an injustice to local culture, is the tale's only real political message, but the message is clear.

Inès de Las Sierras can then be said to represent a point of evolution in Nodier's fantastic, since it is essentially about the fantastic, rather than a purely fantastic tale. Where earlier tales were fantastic stories containing associated ideological and political messages about injustice, the death penalty, the power of money, etc., *Inès de Las Sierras* no longer takes acceptance of the fantastic as a given. Instead, it dissects the fantastic and addresses the relationship between reason and unreason in a new way; namely, unreason preserves its validity in so far as it tells truths that reason has not yet managed to explain. By someday progressing to a point where it can explain those truths, reason confirms unreason's first intuitions, once again indicating a relationship of complementarity, albeit latent, between the two. It must be admitted, though, that this new model of complementarity, when compared to the complementarity in earlier tales⁴⁰, makes a great

⁴⁰ Especially in *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*, where unreason must be accepted as a substitute for reason, since the latter possesses absolutely no means for explaining the fantastic events. These two plays may be said to represent the

concession to reason.

Why does Nodier's fantastic evolve in such a way? Does the answer to this question lie quite simply in aesthetic fashion? Nodier begins *Jean-François les Bas-bleus* with the acknowledgement that the fantastic is *passé de mode*⁴¹. Is there a change in social taste and belief that favours reason, and internalizes unreason? In his prefacing comments to *Inès de Las Sierras*, Jean-Luc Steinmetz posits that the tale announces the beginning of the end for Romanticism, which is to be replaced by Positivism⁴². Perhaps the most helpful speculation on the evolution of Nodier's fantastic, though, is provided by Pierre-Georges Castex, who associates the writer with a generation he calls *l'école du désenchantement*⁴³. Castex contends that, faced with the exile of Charles X to Holyrood, Nodier the legitimist loses his faith in the political life of France, and begins to

high point in Nodier's campaign against Enlightenment thought and the Bourgeois ideology of scientific and material Progress. After that point, and with the writing of *Inès*, he must concede ground to reason and Bourgeois ideology.

⁴¹ As mentioned earlier, Gary Cumiskey advances the idea that the fantastic in France undergoes a general evolution from Hoffmann-style tales to a more psychologically-oriented fantastic, like the works of Poe. Cumiskey feels this is in great measure due to a change in public expectation, society growing less accepting of the notion of a supernatural realm, as the Nineteenth Century progresses (Cumiskey, 32, 46-47).

⁴² Charles Nodier, *Smarra, Trilby et autres contes* ed. Jean-Luc Steinmetz. Paris: Garnier, 1980, 435.

⁴³ Pierre-Georges Castex, "Nodier et l'école du désenchantement," *Colloque du deuxième centenaire*. 9-16.

demonstrate a profound pessimism regarding social progress. The critic reminds us that, *la société française, sous Louis-Philippe, s'enlise dans un matérialisme sans horizon*⁴⁴, to which Nodier reacts very negatively, being convinced that, *la culture de l'esprit est vaine, si elle ne s'accompagne du développement de la conscience morale*. Recognizing that, during the Bourgeois Monarchy, *la conscience morale est en régression, et même en déshérence*, Nodier loses all faith in human progress⁴⁵. The writer then turns to the doctrines of human palingenesis, which marries philosophical optimism in the metaphysical progress of humankind with social pessimism. Castex feels, therefore, that Nodier's literary response to Bourgeois society, and to his own anxiety about it, is to turn his fantastic tales into forms of escape from the social reality around him⁴⁶.

Nodier certainly does, in all of his tales, criticize the

⁴⁴ Castex, "Nodier et l'école...", 14.

⁴⁵ Castex, "Nodier et l'école..." 15.

⁴⁶ Castex, "Nodier et l'école...", 15-16.

Miriam Hamenachem turns to Nodier's personal life to explain what she defines as duality in the imaginary universe of his tales: his bitterness and timidity prevent him from allowing himself to express the fullness of his literary imagination, wherein he seeks to make a legend of his own life and favourite illusions. My position comes closest to Hamenachem's when she speculates on Nodier's desire to be the *dériseur sensé*, clinging both to Classical and Romantic convictions. However, I am more inclined to situate Nodier's tale in the actuality of its production, and question whether his *penchant* towards imagining a complementarity between reason and unreason is not more directly due to his recognition of the dominant role of reason and Science in bourgeois epistemology (Miriam Hamenachem, *Charles Nodier. Essai sur l'imagination mythique*. Paris: Nizet, 1972, 203-205, 212, 214-215).

materialism and faith in Reason that characterize Bourgeois society. However, rather than constituting an escape from reality, his tales address the issues in the form of the fantastic, which provides a forum for imagining an integration between unreason and reason. It is in *Inès de Las Sierras*, that this integration, presented in terms of what I have described as latent complementarity between the two, is most openly explored, since reason is given its full due in the tale⁴⁷. While Nodier may very well express a pessimism regarding the society around him, his ideological position does not essentially alter. His tales all employ the fantastic as a means to promote moderation: complementarity between reason and unreason, social and moral messages that may be called reformist, even if in a reactionary direction, without being subversive. In *Inès de Las Sierras*, Nodier does not create an imaginary world in which to escape contemporary social reality, but indeed pays even more heed than before to the undeniable primacy of reason in the Bourgeois Age. He does so not to confirm that primacy, nor to subvert it, but to somehow find a place in it, where the legends and beliefs of

⁴⁷ I admit that Pablo's reasonable explanation is somewhat inadequate, with its huge reliance on coincidence leaving it almost as difficult to believe as the legend. Consequently, one could say there is a general equilibrium sustained between reason and unreason. Nevertheless, Pablo's story is ultimately held as the true story of *Inès*, a fact which lends reason much more legitimacy than was accorded it by earlier tales.

old may be accommodated and respected. This 'place' is represented, at least metaphorically, as one that replicates the conventions of theatre. In *Inès de Las Sierras*, the associated political component of Nodier's moderate ideology is a necessary attack on the intellectual hegemony that French Imperialism endeavoured to propagate.

If Nodier's use of the fantastic to represent his moderate ideology in terms of the complementarity between reason and unreason failed to excite future generations of writers, it is not due to a lack of ingenuity or originality in his model of the fantastic. Rather, it is far more a function of the reliance, within his ideological perspective, on the past rather than on a concrete notion of progress, to challenge expanding bourgeois social and ideological power.

CONCLUSIONS

My reading of five of Nodier's tales and of his essay on the fantastic leads to several conclusions, which allow me to speculate on the author's orchestration of the genre, specifically in relation to ideology. Nodier's writing spans a period of evolution in the fantastic, in how it assumes and constructs a relationship between reason and unreason, and in the social and ideological implications of that relationship. His works not only make sense within the context of the ideological climate of his times, but, when read closely, they reveal an awareness of, and address, important issues of his times.

In this study, the investigation of Nodier's works has been two-fold. First, I noted how the very choice of genre and Nodier's specific tailoring of it (antinomy unresolved, paradox accepted and even celebrated, and complementarity between reason and unreason) reveals his "moderation". Second, I found that Nodier's tales also incorporate certain social and political themes. In turn, these themes correspond, at least analogically, and sometimes directly, to the issue of genre: specifically, an ideological "moderation" in accordance with Nodier's vision of complementarity in the fantastic.

Analogically related are issues of morality, money, justice, injustice and imperialism. Directly related are questions concerning social power, the definition of *charité* and social rules governing behaviour (*Trilby*); the status of Science, the meaning of *folie* and its potential connection to wisdom (*La Fée aux Miettes*); the possibility of gaining access to truth through clairvoyance (*Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*); and the role of religion, even superstition, in seeking truth (*Inès de Las Sierras*).

My investigation was two-fold, and my analysis of the tales reveals an evolution in both aspects of Nodier's tale-telling. First, an acceptance of the concept of unresolved antinomy between reason and unreason is assumed at the beginning (*Trilby*) and begged at the end (*Inès*). Second, the tales' ideological stance alters, moving from mainly social questions (social authority and rules of behaviour are the chief issues in *Trilby*), to far more speculative, theoretical and philosophical problems (*Inès* is almost exclusively about the epistemological validity of religion and superstition). Nevertheless, while Nodier's fantastic does evolve over the course of his career, there remains a definite, and quite fundamental, consistency to his work. Basically unchanging is Nodier's conception of what

makes up the fantastic (the *prisme prestigieux*, the *histoire psychique de l'homme*, the poeticization of (hi)-story, as discussed in Nodier's essay on the fantastic); and his belief that it structures the relationship between reason and unreason as complementary. What does alter, is Nodier's notion of how the fantastic fits into broader literary and philosophical realities, which are themselves dynamic. Where Reason is virtually absent from *Trilby*, it wins the day in *Inès*. This change reveals a great deal about Nodier's awareness of the rising power of Reason and Science in the Bourgeois Age. Nodier none the less resists representing reason and unreason as dialectically opposed. In his essay, and all through his tales, there is evidence of his underlying assumption, or wish, that reason and unreason not be held as oppositional, but as complementary. This assumption becomes most poignantly a wish in *Inès*, when the narrator intervenes at the end. He is left having to argue in favour of respecting superstition, after his very own story, by providing a reasonable explanation for the apparition, has resolved antinomy¹. A parallel evolution occurs

¹ And polyphony, which is also between the supporters of reason and unreason (a 'poetic' vision of experience). I note with interest that the polyphony between Jeannie and Ronald, which is not between reason and unreason, and between the London doctor and the *Fée's* narrator, which is between extremist reason and willing adherence to unreason, is unresolved. Perhaps the growing force of reason is demonstrated in this later concession, in *Inès*, to reason's inclination toward the resolution of paradox, antinomy and polyphony.

in the tales' metaphors for the fantastic. In *Trilby*, the portrait becomes a personage and, through integrating identities, tells an historical truth. In *La Fée aux Miettes*, the medallion serves a similar purpose, coming to life and representing a true balance between beauty and wisdom. The mandrake, however, must be sought after in order to perpetuate this ideal, and whether or not it is ever found by Michel, is a question the tale leaves unanswered. In terms of metaphorical description, then, the image of the fantastic as a medium to ideal harmony and truth, is evident in *Trilby*, but becomes fleeting in *La Fée aux Miettes*. In *Inès*, theatre as a metaphor, mirrors the tale's overall purpose: to question the very capacity of the fantastic to access truth. Each of the metaphors in fact embody an assumption of complementarity between reason and unreason, even if, in *Inès*, it is imposed in the conclusion. However, these metaphors do reveal an evolution in the author's own estimation of his tales' credibility: the acceptability and pertinence of his version of the fantastic.

It remains, then, to speculate on the ideological implications of this evolution. In the first pages of *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet*, Nodier envisioned a three-part classification of fantastic tales. With some variation, the tales I have

looked at correspond to these categories, moving chronologically from the *histoire fantastique fausse* to the *histoire fantastique vraie*. *Inès* contains an *histoire fantastique vraie*, but proceeds to resolve the mystery, becoming a tale **about** the fantastic, a case of the *fantastique expliqué*. What causes Nodier's departure from the assumption that his tales can unapologetically use ambiguity and paradox to make social, moral and political points? Why does he end up feeling compelled to question and reassert that very assumption?² In order to respond to these questions, one must take into account the aesthetic, epistemological and social, indeed ideological changes occurring in 1830's France. The "innocent" *fantastique faux* is *passé de mode* because, as Cumiskey points out, readers no longer uncritically entertain the notion of a supernatural realm containing pure truth³. Reason and Science become cornerstones

² Both Paul Bénichou and Pierre-Georges Castex indicate an evolution in Romanticism in general, from literary *engagement* to pessimism about society and about the capacity of literature to effect any real changes (Bénichou, *Le Sacre...*, 338, 341; Castex, "Nodier et l'école du désenchantement..."). Bénichou proposes that royalist Romanticism underwent a change in 1830, accepting the "real" France, and thereby giving up the cherished mythology of the old Monarchical and Christian France (Bénichou, *Le Sacre...*, 342).

Daniel Sangsue associates the literary phenomenon of the *récit excentrique*, in which he would include the fantastic, with the social phenomenon of emulating British dandyism. Together, the two represent an ideological position of refusal to be associated with any class: neither the declining, if not already residual, aristocracy, nor the dominant bourgeoisie, which is seen as too pragmatic and capitalistic to embody good taste, and certainly not the masses of the proletariat (Daniel Sangsue, *Le récit excentrique. Gautier-De Maistre-Nerval-Nodier*. Paris: Corti, 1987, 31-32).

³ Cumiskey, 32-33.

of the Bourgeois ideology of Progress, and almost automatically refute all notions of a superstitious nature. The fantastic, especially Nodier's fantastic which holds that unreason has a viable epistemological purpose, must justify itself in a new environment of critical enquiry. In light of these changes in philosophy and ideology in general, I would argue that Nodier's self-justification in *Inès* does not represent a wavering of his convictions; rather, it shows a willingness to make his work, and the social commentary it both comprises and contains, timely. However, Nodier's agenda for the fantastic changes from inserting the past into the present, to having the present validate the past. Both strategies are reactionary, placing enormous value on the past, but the second, indicating an acceptance of the unlikelihood of accomplishing a reactionary agenda, tends toward moderation. Moderation, but not conservatism. There can be little doubt that Nodier disapproves of the values and ideology of Bourgeois society. Nevertheless, *Inès* is perhaps Nodier's last attempt to justify his works to contemporary currents in philosophy. His later tales become far more mythological in nature, and while some of the basic social themes are sustained, their applicability to the contemporary social environment becomes at most a matter of allegorical

interpretation⁴.

My analysis of Nodier's tales allows me to elaborate on his three types of fantastic tale (plus the fourth category of *surnaturel expliqué*), to describe what they do ideologically. As demonstrated by *Trilby*, the *histoire fantastique fausse* proves to be the type of tale that is most inclined towards addressing ideology as a matter of "lived relations." However, its indirect social referentiality makes that depiction of lived relations distant, sometimes obscure to the contemporary reader. The points about social authority and money interest are well made, but appear to refer to a long-past social order. In *La Fée aux Miettes*, or the *histoire fantastique vague*, ideology is present as both "lived relations" and "speculative theoretical systems": the tale weaves considerations of a philosophical nature (Science as an intellectual pursuit linked to Reason, the possible connection between *folie* and wisdom, the validity of hallucination), with those of a social nature (Science as a

⁴ It seems that Nodier turns toward traditional religious themes in his last tales, perhaps due to an intensified *désenchantement* with contemporary society (Castex, "Nodier et l'école du désenchantement," *Colloque du deuxième centenaire*, 9-16).

La légende de Soeur Béatrix (1837) and *La Neuvaine de la Chandeleur* (1838) are mainly concerned with mysticism and miracle, and *Lydie ou la Résurrection* (1839), focusses on heavenly after-life and the role of the three Christian Virtues in getting one there. Even though he sees parallels between the last tale and *La Fée aux Miettes*, Castex concludes that *Lydie* is built mainly on a *spiritualisme* (...) vague (Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France*, 166). Likewise, Marie-Claude Amblard claims that the story of *Lydie* is hidden in an almost fairy-tale genre ("Sources...", 121), and that it is only the presence of dream and day-dream that keep it from being considered entirely as fairy-tale ("Sources...", 136).

medical practice, injustice, money, social position). In refuting Science's containment of *folie*, the social message of the *fou*'s visions can be entertained, as both issues are timely, and therefore probably more pertinent to the contemporary reader than in *Trilby*. The *Histoire d'Hélène Gillet* and *Jean-François les Bas-bleus*, providing examples of the *histoire fantastique vraie*, reveal a shift away from purely social themes. They are directly centred on the paradox of interpretation to which the stories of Hélène and Jean-François give rise. *Inès de Las Sierras*, as a case of the *suraturel expliqué*, only slightly takes issue with social actuality, concentrating far more on determining the philosophical nature and possible epistemological usefulness of the fantastic. It is therefore far more inclined to be ideological in terms of "speculative theoretical systems" than "lived relations." Clearly *La Fée aux Miettes*, as an *histoire fantastique vague*, most perfectly fulfils both ideological roles. It questions philosophical and epistemological as well as social presuppositions, intricately weaving it all together.

Nodier's tale-telling career, then, builds toward *La Fée aux Miettes* as an apogee of his fantastic tales' ideological commentary. It is at this point, a time when he also feels

compelled to theorize on the genre in his essay, *Du Fantastique en littérature*, that Nodier's tales display the greatest self-confidence: they reveal his determination to warn society of worrisome trends, such as a loss of faith in the supernatural, and the rise of capital as the sole social determinant of morality, behaviour, status and occupation. Five years later, and well into the period of the July Monarchy, *Inès de Las Sierras* appears as Nodier's last effort at making his point. However, this time, Nodier extends the olive branch to Reason, conceding to it the primary role it had acquired, and hoping to induce it to find room within its own philosophical paradigms for the admission of its partner in complementarity: unreason. That partner takes the form of religious and superstitious faith, as legend, as dream-vision, as *folie*, as hallucination, as clairvoyance; all of which, Nodier claims, are possible pathways to wisdom and truth. Nevertheless, the fact that these partners are all oriented backwards, to an ideal **past** order, makes acceptance of them by a Bourgeois culture for which progress is sacred, highly unlikely.

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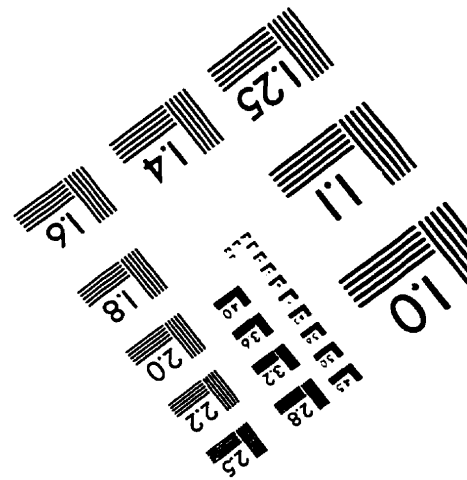
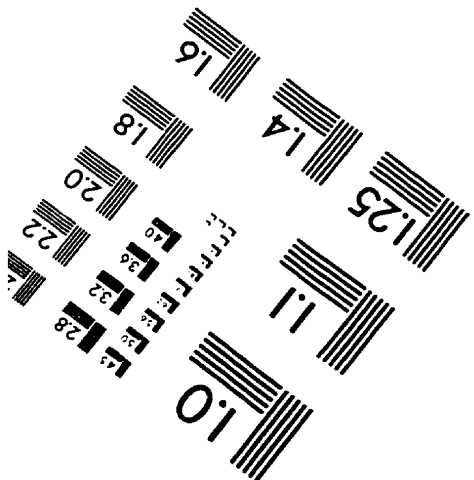
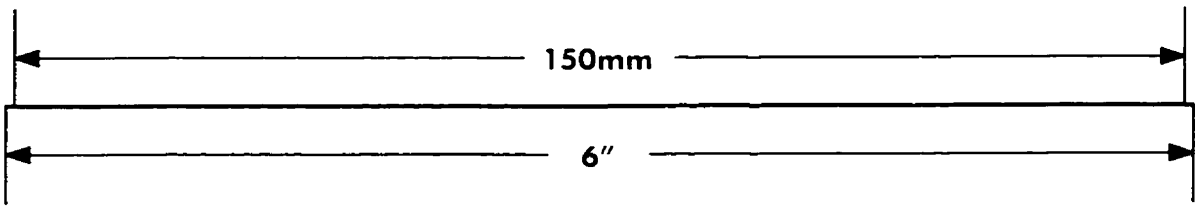
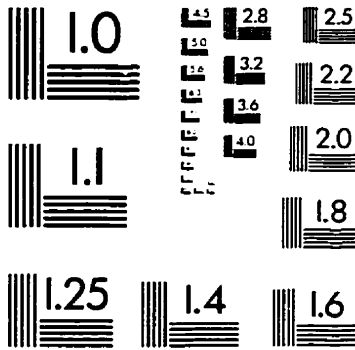
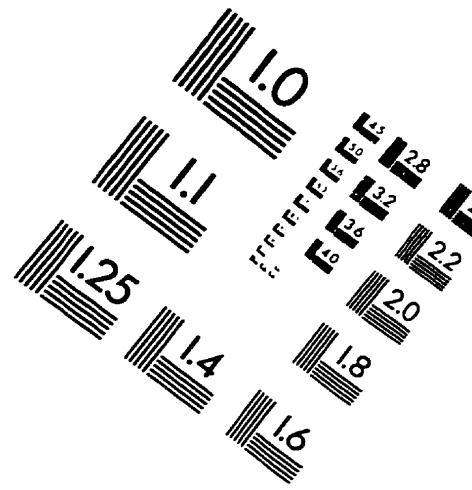
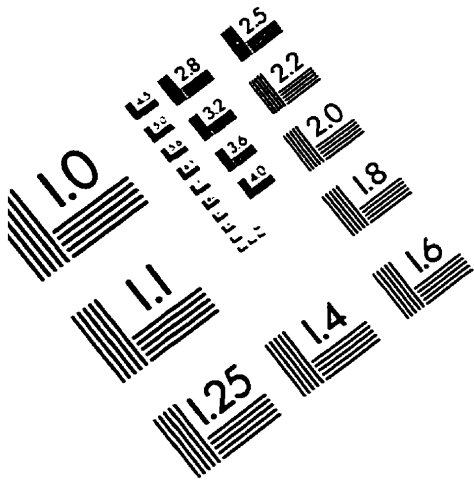
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