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# **Courting Celebrity: Creating the Courtesan on the Popular Parisian Stage and Beyond, 1831–1859**

Emmanuela Wroth

## **Abstract**

*Courting Celebrity* excavates the careers of celebrity women actors on the Parisian popular stage c.1831–1859. Historically, these performers have been neglected by scholarship, which has largely focused on stars from the capital's few privileged stages, or explored later nineteenth-century popular artists, instead of the boulevard performers from the post-restoration decades 1830–1860 when the popular stage became established. I argue that these boulevard performers created fantasies that enabled a new kind of women's celebrity and challenged the binary between the primary and secondary stages. Specifically, their example nuances celebrity theory which considers the most esteemed women actors to evade historical associations with courtesans. While this is true for performers on Paris's primary stages, women actors at the secondary theatres established an alternative model that reappropriated the association with courtesans, which was more prominent on the popular stage.

This thesis draws on contemporary and modern theory, bringing them into conversation with archival sources, and is formed of five chapters. The first contrasts how the rivals Mlle Mars (1779–1847) and Marie Dorval (1798–1849) created historically remote courtesan characters in the battle between Classicism and Romanticism in the 1830s. The second and third chapters explore how subsequent rivals, Adèle Page (1822–1882) and Eugénie Doche (1821–1900), premiered real, contemporary courtesan characters at the dawn of the Second Empire. Chapter 4 studies how Anaïs Fargueil (1819–1896) positioned herself against Doche, through her creation of the heartless, anti-heroine *fille de marbre* type; chapter 5 studies how Rose Chéri (1824–1861), contrasted her courtesan characters with her Christian celebrity image. I conclude by establishing how these actors mobilised their courtesan creations to gain celebrity and rehabilitate the figure of the boulevard star. I argue for the significant influence of Parisian popular theatre women on French cultural history and Western celebrity more broadly.

**Courting Celebrity: Creating the Courtesan on the Popular  
Parisian Stage and Beyond, 1831–1859**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

Department of Music

Durham University

2022

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## **List of Abbreviations**

An – Archives nationales (Paris)

BhvP – Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris (Paris)

BnF – Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris)

TBMA – The Bowes Museum Archive (Barnard Castle)

TBM – The Bowes Museum (Barnard Castle)

## **Author's Note**

Translations are my own unless I have indicated otherwise in the footnotes.

## **Statement of Copyright**

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory and legacy of Joséphine, Marie, Adèle, Eugénie, Anaïs, and Rose without all of whom it simply would not have been possible. It has been my absolute privilege and pleasure to get to know a little bit of each of you over the last four years, and I hope in turn that you would have been pleased to know that two centuries on your starlight continues to shine and inspire.

## Introduction

### How to Solve a Problem Like Joséphine?

In 1869, Joséphine Bowes (née Benoît Coffin-Chevalier, 1825–1874) founded the Joséphine and John Bowes Museum in Country Durham, by laying the foundation stone of a building that resembles a French chateau and houses circa 15,000 objects of European fine and decorative art. By this point in her life Joséphine had acquired the newly created title of Comtesse de Montalbo, bought by her husband John Bowes (1811–1885) in 1868, and was an avid collector.<sup>1</sup> But before becoming a countess and collector, between 1846 and 1851, Joséphine was a performer at the Théâtre des Variétés – a popular Parisian musical theatre. Although her acting career was central to her liaison with John, she rescinded it ahead of their marriage in 1852.<sup>2</sup> This largely overlooked career is the starting point for this thesis, which is a collaborative doctoral project with The Bowes Museum.

The first clue to recovering Joséphine’s little-known acting career is her stage name: Mademoiselle Delorme. In 1846, when she debuted at Paris’s student stage of the *Élèves* (as part of her Conservatoire training) and subsequently at the Théâtre des Variétés, the name Delorme was heavily charged. Firstly, it was the name of one of France’s most famous courtesans, the seventeenth-century celebrity Marion de Lorme (1613–1650). Secondly, another of France’s most celebrated women, the Romantic actor Marie Dorval (1798–1849), had recently thrust the name back into the spotlight through her onstage creation of the eponymous courtesan character in *Marion de Lorme*, a historical drama by Victor Hugo (1802–1885) which premiered at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in 1831.<sup>3</sup> Dorval’s courtesan role was so acclaimed that she performed it again in 1838, this time at the

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<sup>1</sup> On Joséphine as a collector see, for example, Sarah Kane, ‘Turning Bibelots into Museum Pieces: Josephine Coffin-Chevallier and the Creation of the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle’, *Journal of Design History*, 9 (1996), 1–21; James Illingworth, ‘Joséphine Bowes (1825–1874), Shopaholic or Patroness of the Arts?’ in *Plaisirs de Femmes: Women, Pleasure and Transgression in French Literature and Culture*, ed. by Maggie Allison, Elliot Evans, and Carrie Tarr (Oxford: Lang, 2019), pp. 73–87; Lindsay MacNaughton, ‘Beyond the Bowes Museum: The Social and Material Worlds of Alphonsine Bowes de Saint-Amand’ in *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 31 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.3348>.

<sup>2</sup> Lindsay MacNaughton has recently explored the relationship between Joséphine’s collecting and her stage career in Lindsay MacNaughton, ‘Staging and Collecting French History: John and Joséphine Bowes, c.1845–1885’, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/14205/>.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Chapman has already touched on the parallels between Joséphine’s stage name and both the historical figure Marion de Lorme and Hugo’s play of the same name in Caroline Chapman, *John and Joséphine: The Creation of the Bowes Museum* (Durham: The Bowes Museum, 2010), p. 31.

Comédie-Française (Paris's premier theatre). Due to its huge success, the play was subsequently reprised at this same theatre at various intervals, with Paris's illustrious tragic star Rachel (1821–1858) playing Marion in 1846, the year of Mlle Delorme's debut.<sup>4</sup> It seems probable that through her stage name Joséphine knowingly associated herself with these famous women: both the original courtesan Marion de Lorme, and Paris's most acclaimed stars who embodied the onstage courtesan to great success. In doing so, Joséphine played into the historical association between women performers tout court and courtesans, which held much sway over the nineteenth-century Parisian imagination.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond her stage name, many of the roles Joséphine played during her acting career at the Variétés – both onstage and off – support the theory that she mobilised the hybrid figure of the actor/courtesan for her own success. By 'courtesan', I refer to an elite type of sex worker: to what Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon define as 'the social phenomenon whereby women engage in relatively exclusive exchanges of artistic graces [...] and sexual favours with male patrons'.<sup>6</sup> Not only did Joséphine enter a relationship with the Théâtre des Variétés's director John Bowes the year following her debut at the theatre in 1847 but some of her most successful roles at the Variétés were those of celebrated historical performers who doubled as courtesans. At the height of her stage career in 1849, Mlle Delorme created three such roles. The first was in *Les Beautés de la cour* (a vaudeville by Jules-Édouard Alboize de Pujol and Bernard Lopèz) which premiered at the Variétés in April 1849. The role of 'Nelly' or Nell Gwyn (1650–1687), one of Britain's most memorable actors who was renowned for being mistress to Charles II (1630–1685), was written especially for Mlle Delorme. This is evidenced by the playwrights' dedication of 'couplets pour Mlle Delorme' [couplets for Mlle Delorme] on one of Nelly's songs, as visible in a signed copy of the manuscript conserved in The Bowes Museum archives (figures 0.1 and 0.2).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 'Semaine dramatique', *La Tribune dramatique*, 6 September 1846, p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> On the association between actors and sex workers see Laurence Marie, *Inventer l'acteur: émotions et spectacle dans l'Europe des Lumières* (Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2019), pp. 87–97. For the gendering of this association see Sophie Marchand, "Les actrices et l'imaginaire érotique" in *Le Sacre de l'acteur: émergence du vedettariat théâtral de Molière à Sarah Bernhardt*, ed. by Florence Filippi, Sara Harvey, and Sophie Marchand (Paris: Armand Colin, 2017), pp. 191–201.

<sup>6</sup> Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon, *The Courtesan's Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> For more on Joséphine's creation of Nell Gwyn and these couplets see Katherine Hambridge's Exhibition Contribution, for *Joséphine Bowes: A Woman of Taste & Influence*, The Bowes Museum, 2019.

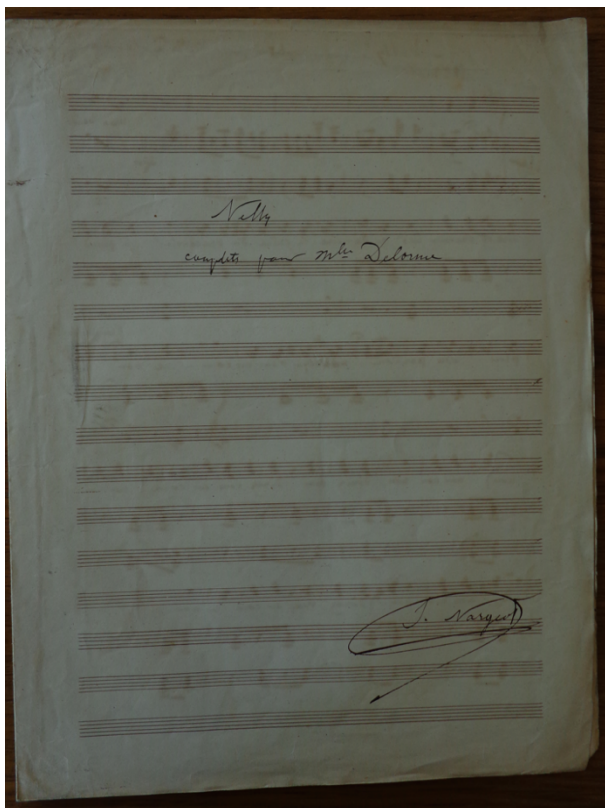


Figure 0.1 – Cover of manuscript music score, ‘Nelly, couplets pour Mlle Delorme’ signed by the composer J. Narjeot. TBMA, JB/8/3/4/1/1

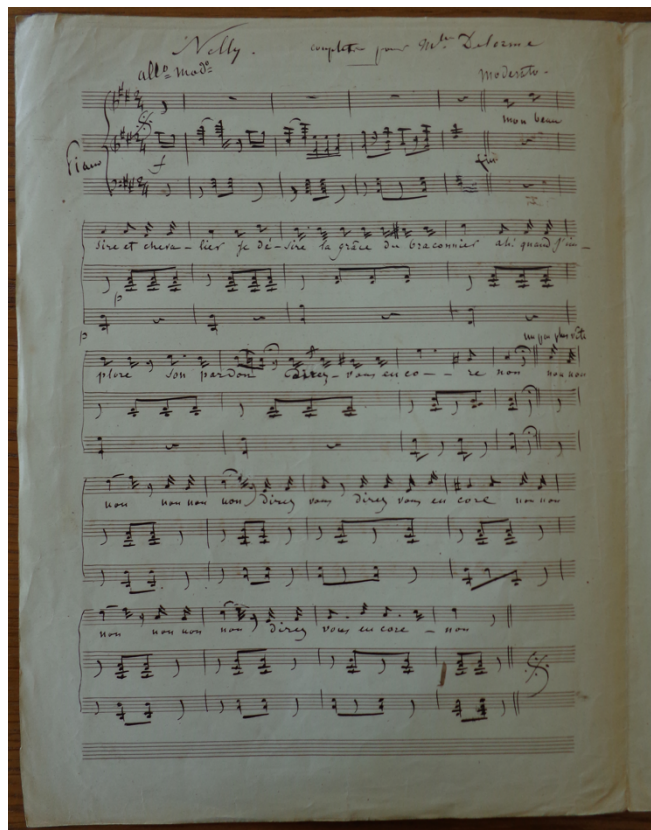


Figure 0.2 – First page of manuscript music score, ‘Nelly, couplets pour Mlle Delorme’ by J. Narjeot. TBMA, JB/8/3/4/1/1.

Following her success as Nelly, Mlle Delorme created another historical performer/courtesan character at the Variétés, later the same year: the dancer Aline ‘dite Camargo’ in *Le Mari d’une camargo* (a new vaudeville by Arsène de Cey and Laurencin). This role was inspired by Marie-Anne de Cupis de Camargo (1710–1770), one of France’s most renowned dancers who famously counted Louis de Bourbon-Condé (1709–1771) among her lovers.<sup>8</sup> Notably, this play is one of the few named playscripts in Joséphine’s only official portrait, by Antoine Dury (1819–c. 1896), commissioned for her by John the year following the play, in 1850 (figure 0.3). The portrait’s reference to *Le Mari d’une camargo* suggests both Mlle Delorme’s success as Camargo and that she continued to associate her public image with eminent performer/courtesans of the past. Indeed, in November 1849, she created yet another notable historical courtesan and stage woman: the character of Madame de Pompadour (1721–1764), in *Pomponette et Pompadour* (a new vaudeville by Molé-Gentilhomme and Constant Guérault). As well as Louis XV’s favourite mistress, Pompadour

<sup>8</sup> Lenard R. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theatre Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 35.

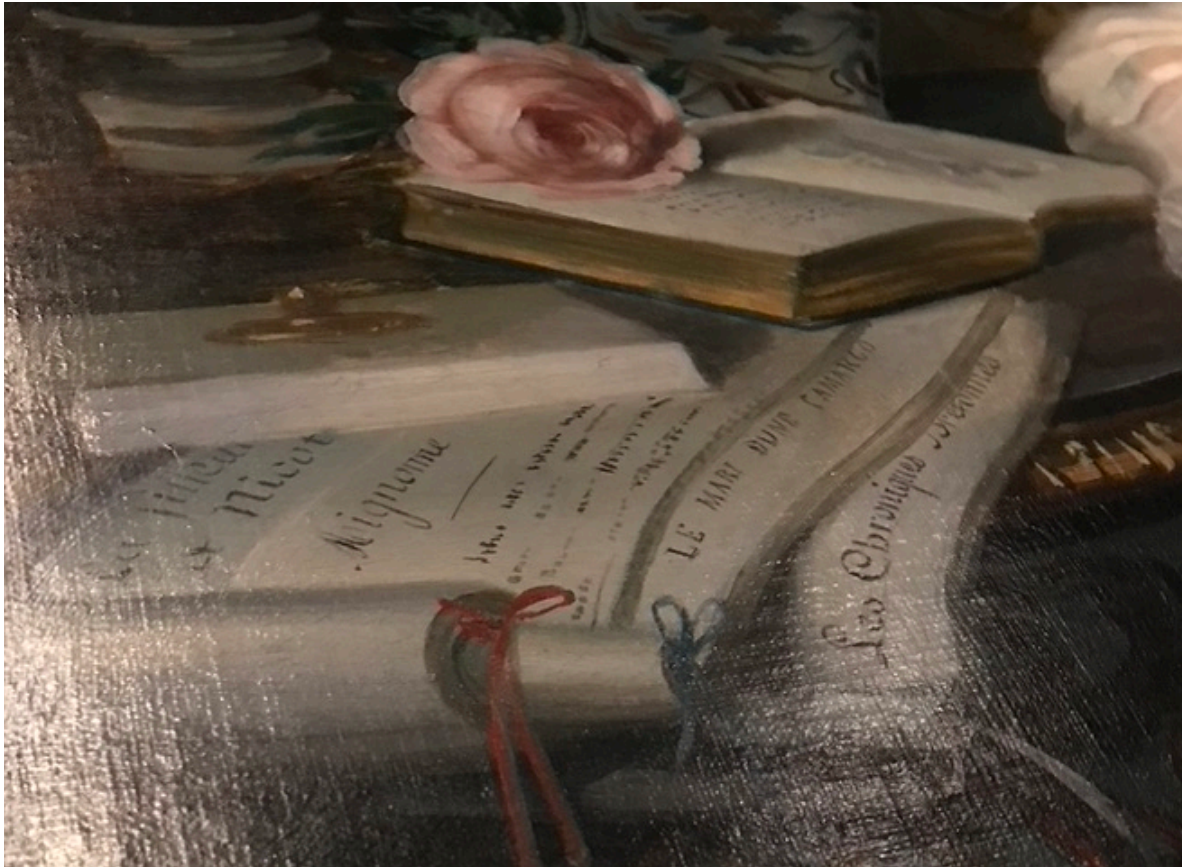


Figure 0.3 – Close up detail of *Joséphine Bowes, Countess of Montalbo* by Antoine Dury, 1850, Oil on canvas, 195.8 x 127.9cm, retouched by Eugène Feyen in 1861. TBM, B.M.297. Founders' bequest.

was a celebrated actor.<sup>9</sup> Mlle Delorme was so successful as Pompadour that the playwrights gifted her a leather-bound copy of the play (also preserved in The Bowes Museum archives) with a handwritten dedication thanking her for her starring role (figures 0.4 and 0.5). Scholars have also demonstrated the equivalence between Joséphine's 1850 portrait – from the year following her creation of Pompadour onstage – with Pompadour's own portraiture, further supporting the fact Joséphine fashioned herself in the image of past actor/courtesans.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On Pompadour's theatrical career see Adolphe Jullien, *Histoire du théâtre de Mme de Pompadour dit Théâtre des Petits Cabinets* (Paris, 1874); Thomas E. Kaiser, 'Madame de Pompadour and the Theatres of Power' in *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Special issue: Biography (Autumn, 1996) pp. 1025–44.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Conran first drew parallels between Joséphine's 1850 Dury portrait and that of *Madame de Pompadour at her Tambour Frame* (1754) by François-Hubert Drouais, at the National Gallery, in a Festschrift celebrating the author Charles Hardy's 85th birthday in the early 1980s. See also Judith Phillips, 'National Identity, Gender, Social Status and Cultural Aspirations in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England and France: Joséphine Bowes (1825–1874), Collector and Museum Creator' (PhD, Teesside University, 2020), pp. 153–4, 172, 186; MacNaughton, 'Staging and Collecting French History', pp. 78–83.

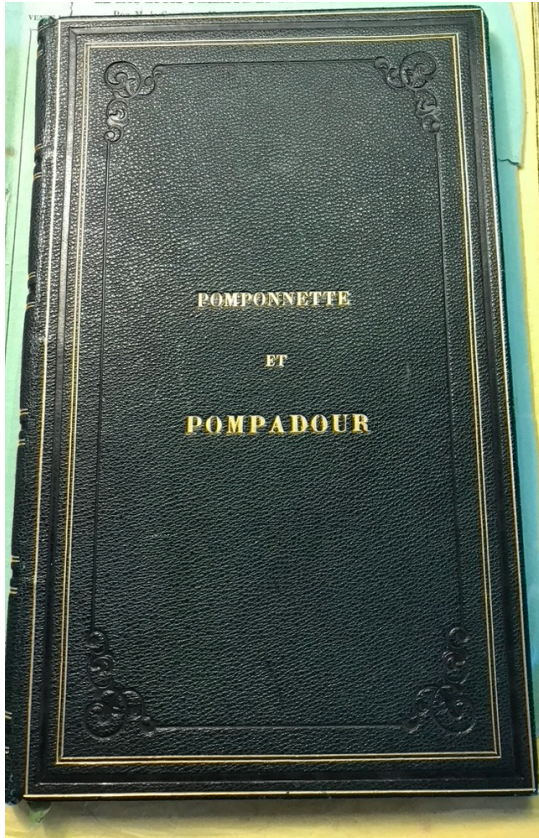


Figure 0.5 – Cover of leather-bound copy of *Pomponnette et Pompadour*, 1850, a vaudeville play by Molé-Gentilhomme and Constant Guérault. TBMA, JB/7/12/1/12/1.

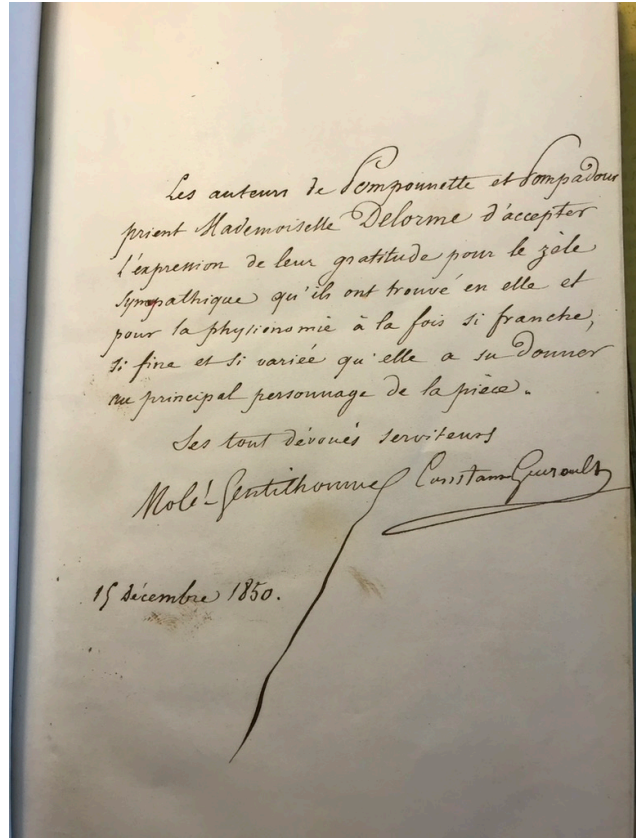


Figure 0.4 – First page of leather-bound copy of *Pomponnette et Pompadour*, 1850, by Molé-Gentilhomme and Constant Guérault, with a message of thanks from the writers to Mademoiselle Delorme. TBMA, JB/7/12/1/12/1.

What is curious about Mlle Delorme’s sustained self-association with famous actor/courtesans, and her success in these roles, is how it relates to the understanding propagated in much acting and celebrity theory that the most celebrated women actors are such on the basis of evading historical associations between their profession and that of a courtesan. Gill Perry claims ‘for the actress to qualify for the ‘honourable’ status which [Sarah] Siddons achieved, she must be freed from the specific associations of whoring’;<sup>11</sup> according to Sharon Marcus ‘the most esteemed female stars were far less likely than supporting players and extras to be seen as courtesans’.<sup>12</sup> Although Mlle Delorme was neither ‘the most esteemed female star’ nor necessarily ‘honourable’, her example nonetheless raises the question of why she so proactively played up to the actor/courtesan association if it was not conventionally a formula for success or renown. While Marcus, Perry, and others have

<sup>11</sup> Gill Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre 1768–1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Sharon Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019) p. 109. Marchand also argues that ‘les grandes actrices sont celles qui voient leurs mœurs totalement ignorées par les notices’ in Marchand, “Les actrices et l’imaginaire érotique”, p. 195.

demonstrated how women stars deployed their sexuality and professional association with courtesans to varying degrees of success,<sup>13</sup> what scholarship has yet to consider is how women actors mobilised the specific role creation of the courtesan onstage – and sometimes beyond it – for celebrity and recognition. By ‘role creation’ I refer to the premiering of a role for the first time, in line with the French term ‘créer un rôle’ [to create a role]. Although it was the example of Joséphine, as Mlle Delorme, that first brought me to consider how the role creation of the onstage courtesan might be an overlooked formula for success on the nineteenth-century Parisian secondary stage, the levels of renown and celebrity Mlle Delorme acquired between 1846–1851 were ultimately limited, not least because she abandoned her stage career after five years, in preparation for her marriage. Yet Mlle Delorme provides a crucial point of entry for examining how some of her most recognised predecessors and contemporaries at Paris’s popular theatres used their onstage courtesan creations as a vehicle for celebrity and renown.

According to scholars such as Marcus and Kirsten Pullen, the courtesan Marguerite Gautier of Alexandre Dumas  *fils*’s *La Dame aux camélias* – which the actor Eugénie Doche (1821–1900) created at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1852 – was one of, if not *the* most important role in Western women’s repertory (in terms of both the play’s theatrical longevity and the number of actors taking on the role) from the 1870s through to the 1930s and beyond.<sup>14</sup> Although scholars have not entirely ignored Doche in the history of *La Dame aux camélias*’s performance, rarely do studies grapple with her role in its creation or her resultant celebrity. Their focus has instead shifted to Verdi’s operatic adaptation, *La Traviata* (1853),<sup>15</sup> which premiered the following year at Venice’s La Fenice, or to Doche’s immediate successor Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), star of the Comédie-Française, who reprised Marguerite to huge success and fame.<sup>16</sup> These shifts reflect a tendency to focus on the high-status theatres and performers of the nineteenth century, to the neglect of the lower-status popular theatres and its actors. At the time of Dorval, Delorme, and Doche’s renowned creations of their onstage courtesans – in 1831, 1849 and 1852 respectively – Parisian theatres were subject to decrees based on genre dating as far back as 1806 and 1807, which divided the theatrical landscape in two. The primary, state-sanctioned and subsidised theatres

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<sup>13</sup> See also Kirsten Pullen, *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 203; Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Emilio Sala, *The Sounds of Paris in Verdi’s ‘La Traviata’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); René Weiss, *The Real Traviata: The Song of Marie Duplessis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Victoria Duckett, *Seeing Sarah Bernhardt: Performance and Silent Film* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), pp. 71–99.

performed what the authorities considered high art, that is to say opera (at the Opéra, the Théâtre-Italien, and the Opéra Comique) and classic French spoken-word theatre (at the Comédie-Française and the Théâtre de l'Odéon). The secondary, lower-status, commercialised theatres – such as the Théâtres de la Porte Saint-Martin, des Variétés, and du Vaudeville where Dorval, Delorme, and Doche starred respectively – covered the popular and hybrid musical theatre genres such as melodrama, vaudeville, light comedies, and farces.<sup>17</sup> Although the changing political regimes throughout the first half of the century updated and expanded these regulations, the official binary division did not cease altogether until 1864, and its hierarchies continue to influence scholarly approaches. Thus, while women stars of Paris's primary stages – such as Rachel and Bernhardt at the Comédie-Française or the ballet dancer Marie Taglioni (1804–1884) at the Opéra – are central to celebrity studies, their contemporaries at Paris's lower-status secondary theatres have been largely overlooked – with Dorval as an exception to this rule, due in large part to her later appearance at the Comédie-Française.<sup>18</sup>

But how might attending more closely to the actors of Paris's popular, boulevard stages – and particularly their creation of onstage courtesans – nuance our current understandings of celebrity and of nineteenth-century Parisian theatrical culture? Scholars such as Mark Everist and Richard Sherr have focused on generic concerns – what Everist calls a 'politics of genre' – in their analysis of how Parisian theatres circumvented the government's hierarchical system during the 1806–1864 period.<sup>19</sup> What I posit is that equally at play in challenging the primary/secondary theatrical binary was a politics of gender and sexuality. Theatre historians often identify the death of the Comédie-Française actor François-Joséph Talma (1763-1826) in 1826 as the catalyst for the declining reputation of France's premier stage, until Rachel's appearance in 1838.<sup>20</sup> What I will explore is how the popularity of women celebrities – and their repertoire – from the Parisian secondary stage equally played a key role in undermining the capital's binary hierarchical system, which came to an official end in 1864.

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<sup>17</sup> John McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Routledge, 1993); Frederick Hemmings, *Theatre and State in France, 1760–1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 160–175; Jean-Claude Yon, *Théâtres parisiens: un patrimoine du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Citadelles et Mazenod, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> For more on the celebrity of Marie Taglioni see Vannina Olivesi, 'Le Vedettariat dans le ballet romantique: l'exemple de Marie Taglioni à l'Opéra (1827–1838)' in *Le Sacre de l'acteur*, pp. 203-212.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Everist, 'The Music of Power: Parisian Opera and the Politics of Genre, 1806–1864' in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67(3), (2014), 685-734; Richard Sherr, "Offenbach, *Pépito* and the Théâtre des Variétés: Politics and Genre in the First Year of the Second Empire" in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 32(2–3), (2021), 154-186.

<sup>20</sup> See for example Agathe Sanjuan and Martial Poirson, *Comédie-Française: une histoire du théâtre* (Paris: Seuil, 2018), p. 134.

## The Looser Morals of Paris's Secondary Stages

Many of Dorval, Delorme, and Doche's most renowned predecessors and contemporaries on Paris's primary stages established their reputations as veritable *artistes* due to their high-status artistic merits replacing commentaries on their social mores, but this privilege was not easily bestowed upon women performers of Paris's secondary theatres, which were largely synonymous with loose morals.<sup>21</sup> This was both due to the secondary theatres being considered less artistically virtuous (and thus less morally so) and because they did not receive state subsidies like the primary stages but were instead private, commercialised venues. These discrepancies only heightened the association between women actors and courtesans on the secondary stage. As Laurence Marie has recently explained, it was Rousseau's famous *Lettre à D'Alembert sur les spectacles* of 1758 that revitalised the historic parallels between actors and courtesans which had pre-existed across centuries and cultures.<sup>22</sup> Rousseau lamented how in contrast to the Comédie-Française's Classical art of static declamation, eighteenth-century performers integrated their body into their oration.<sup>23</sup> His diatribe was dual in focus: firstly, he considered this new, embodied type of performance as immoral – akin to the profession of a sex worker – due to the fact the actor publicly exhibited their body in exchange for money. Secondly, in contrast to an orator who simply recited a script, he denounced the duplicity of actors who – like sex workers – assumed a character they were not. Both these facets heightened the perceived immorality of Paris's nineteenth-century secondary stages, and specifically of its women stars. In the first instance, given secondary theatres were commercial enterprises that depended on ticket sales – on selling themselves publicly – to stay afloat, this increased the mercenary association between popular theatre actors and sex workers. In the second instance, because unlike the Classical, more detached declamatory style of the primary Comédie-Française (and its specialisation in high comedy and tragedy), the more histrionic acting styles and genres of the secondary stages (that performed the hybrid musical theatrical forms such as pantomime, melodrama,

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<sup>21</sup> Florence Filippi and Julia Gros de Gasquet, 'Entre jeu romantique et jeu mélodramatique, Marie Dorval au miroir de ses modèles', *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, 274, 65–76.

<sup>22</sup> Laurence Marie, *Inventer l'acteur: émotions et spectacle dans l'Europe des Lumières* (Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2019), pp. 92–93. On the global, historical parallels between courtesans and actors see Feldman and Gordon, *The Courtesan's Arts*.

<sup>23</sup> See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre à D'Alembert sur les spectacles*, ed. Marc Buffat (Paris: Flammarion, 2003) pp. 132–33.

vaudeville, and Romantic drama) required the more embodied type of performance that Rousseau had decried, and that he again associated with the profession of a sex worker.

The posthumous publication of Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* in 1830, reanimated this Enlightenment debate in nineteenth-century France.<sup>24</sup> Diderot's text – penned in the 1770s – moved away from Rousseau's moralistic argument, developing it instead into one of aesthetics. For Diderot, the Classical, detached, cerebral, art of oration or declamation was aesthetically superior to that of the newly emerging, more embodied, and emotional art of acting.<sup>25</sup> As Patricia Smyth notes, upon publication of the *Paradoxe*, nineteenth-century theatre critics adopted Diderot's dualism but largely reversed it. It was this reversal that was at the crux of the transition from French Classicism to Romanticism that revolutionised the theatrical landscape of the late 1820s and 1830s, and which was played out through Paris's two most celebrated women stars, one from the primary and one from the secondary stage. Through the famed rivalry between the Classical star of the Comédie-Française, Mlle Mars (1779–1847), and the Romantic, boulevard star Dorval, Smyth demonstrates how the former's detached, intellectual 'mastery' was valued, but the latter's embodied, physical 'sincerity' truly captured the public.<sup>26</sup> As well as Diderot's aesthetics, Rousseau's moralistic debate was equally reanimated through these women. However, if Diderot's aesthetics were reversed in Dorval's favour, the same was not true for Rousseau's moralistic denunciation. As Florence Filippi and Julia Gros de Gasquet have noted, Mars's reserved bodily demeanour was perceived as 'décente' [decent] in opposition to Dorval's physicality as an 'artiste bohème' [a bohemian artist].<sup>27</sup> The term 'bohème' [bohemian] – referring to loose sexual morals and artistic freedoms – was frequently used with reference to Dorval's more embodied physicality, originating from the popular, boulevard stage.

### **Creativity, Celebrity, and the Courtesan**

This thesis thus argues that nineteenth-century women stars from the Parisian secondary stages negotiated – and even reappropriated – their dubious moral and artistic status as assumed 'bohemian', courtesan/actors, for their own success, specifically through their

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<sup>24</sup> Denis Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien* in *Œuvres de Diderot*, t. IV, ed. L. Versini, (Paris: Robert Lafont, 1996), p. 1384.

<sup>25</sup> Marie, *Inventer l'acteur*, p. 93.

<sup>26</sup> Patricia Smyth, 'Performers and Spectators: Viewing Delaroche' in *Art, Theatre and Opera in Paris 1750–1850, Exchanges and Tensions*, ed. by Sarah Hibberd and Richard Wrigley (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 159–84 (p. 165).

<sup>27</sup> Filippi and Gros de Gasquet, 'Entre jeu romantique et jeu mélodramatique', 68.

creation of courtesans. I show how the notion of role creation – of premiering a role – relates to the dualism between the Classical form of emotionally detached declamation, what Marie calls ‘l’édifice imitatif forgé par les classiques’ [the imitative edifice forged by the classicists] and ‘l’approche romantique’ [the Romantic approach] which usurped the Classical form, replacing it with a more creative act.<sup>28</sup> As Marie argues, the Romantic approach ‘montre sans filtre, sans s’embarrasser des codes, le sentiment qui étreint ses entrailles [...] l’acteur n’imite rien, mais exprime un sentiment brut’ [shows without filter, without care for codes, the feeling of the gut [...] in this case the actor does not imitate anything, but rather expresses a raw emotion]. For Marie the Romantic approach thus hailed a ‘nouvelle conception de l’imagination, non plus comme imitative, mais comme créatrice’ [new conception of the imagination, no longer as imitative, but as creative] as the actor becomes ‘celui qui crée, qui ouvre des nouvelles voies pour l’art’ [someone who creates, who opens new pathways for art].<sup>29</sup> I posit this is precisely what the women stars from Paris’s secondary stages did through their creation of onstage courtesans: they elevated themselves to the ranks of creators, forging new pathways not only for themselves, their contemporaries, and their successors, but for theatrical art itself.

In his *Lettre à d’Alembert*, Rousseau advocated for a clearer separation between an actor and their role, to avoid the duplicity – like that of a sex worker – of assuming a character that they were not. In my first three chapters I demonstrate how celebrated nineteenth-century women stars from Paris’s secondary stage established themselves as veritable artistic creators by doing the exact opposite of what Rousseau demanded: by blurring the boundaries between their onstage courtesan creations and their own ‘bohemian’ star personas as assumed actor/courtesans. In the final two chapters, by contrast, I show how my last two case studies made a spectacle out of their apparent duplicity – out of a detachment between their own persona and their courtesan role creations – to rival their predecessors, and for their own success. The unifying thread through all my case studies is that the specific role of the onstage courtesan – and the heightened embodied performance the role type required on none other than the mercenary secondary stage – allowed these performers to both negotiate and negate longstanding moralistic and aesthetic condemnations of women actors. I also consider how the notion of creativity is tied to their celebrity: how these boulevard stars, reappropriated the easy association with courtesans that was all the

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<sup>28</sup> Marie, *Inventer l’acteur*, p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419.

more prominent on Paris's secondary stage, performing this association explicitly — both centre stage and beyond the theatre — in pursuit of celebrity and esteem.

### **The Who, the How, and the When**

Starting with the arrival of theatrical Romanticism in the late 1820s and early 1830s, and ending with the official ceasing of the binary division between the primary and secondary stage in 1864, my focus is on Parisian women stars from the popular stage in the second-third of the nineteenth century. The more specific date markers of 1831 and 1859 relate to the first and last courtesan creation I consider. Although my study stretches to the *fin de siècle* – to measure the legacy of these courtesan creations – my focus is primarily on the first creation of these characters. I am aided in my methodology by the recent work of Kimberly White on the careers of women opera singers at the primary Parisian stages between 1830–1848. By focusing on an important period in history that predates the advent of voice and film recording, White is 'keenly aware of the absence of [the singers'] operatic voices that were so integral to their professional identity and art'. This concern is coupled with 'the relative lack of writings by the singers themselves'.<sup>30</sup> I adopt a similar methodology to White by unearthing a wide variety of sources in order both to piece together the lost voices of women stars from the secondary stages (at a similar moment in history), and to attempt to recover the central role of their performer bodies and physicality in their stories. I thus examine my case studies' presence in the commercial press (such as in reviews, interviews, publicity stunts, and public letters), their iconography (lithography, portraiture, caricature, photography, and sculpture), their presence in theatrical memorabilia (for example manuscripts of plays and musical scores, prologues, memoirs, biographies) and other unpublished materials such as personal correspondence and institutional archival papers. At times, in the absence of clear facts, it is necessary to make informed judgements and interpretative or speculative inferences, based on all the available evidence.

Each of the following five chapters takes a performer, in conversation with a facet of current theories of celebrity, to explore how they acquired celebrity and recognition through their courtesan creations. The first chapter begins post-Restoration, with Dorval's pioneering creation of real, historical courtesan roles in the 1830s Romantic *drame* genre. Starting with Dorval's *Marion de Lorme* at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in 1831, I then explore her

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<sup>30</sup> Kimberly White, *Female Singers on the French Stage, 1830–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 3.

subsequent courtesan roles on the primary stages of the Théâtre de l'Odéon and the Comédie-Française, and the centrality of these characters to her famed rivalry with the Classical star Mars. Through Elaine McGirr's understanding of the literal 'fleshing out' of celebrity parts (character roles) through visible body parts onstage,<sup>31</sup> I consider why the historical courtesan role was so central to the Romantic imaginary and to Dorval's final face-to-face with her rival at the Comédie-Française.

Chapter 2 studies Adèle Page's (1822–1882) creation of the courtesan Musette in *La Vie de bohème* (a *pièce en cinq actes en prose* by Henry Murger and Theodore Barrière) which premiered at the Théâtre des Variétés in 1849. Although the play is much better known today as Puccini's operatic adaptation *La Bohème* (1896), this chapter returns to the original creation of Musette as the first example in the *drame* genre of a courtesan character based on a contemporary, living, figure: the artist's model and courtesan Marie Roux (1820–1863). Moving on from the historical courtesans of the previous chapter, the focus here is on the unprecedented modernity of the contemporary 1840s figure known as the *lorette*. Through Susan Waller's contention that in mid-nineteenth-century Paris male artists and *lorettes* established a 'strategy for public celebrity' which capitalized on the growing popular association and professional overlap between *modèles de femme* (women artists' models) and *lorettes*,<sup>32</sup> I explore how this two-way exchange developed into a tripartite strategy on the stage of the Variétés. I demonstrate how the role of Musette resulted in celebrity and success as much for the playwrights, the modèle/*lorette* Marie Roux, and the actor Page, setting the stage for the figure of Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux camélias* in 1852.

The third chapter builds directly on the previous one, exploring the unprecedented celebrity of Doche, who created the quintessential courtesan Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux camélias* (a *drame en cinq actes mêlé de chant* by Alexandre Dumas fils) at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1852, the dawn of the Second Empire. I draw on Antoine Lilti's contention that the celebrity of performers is dependent on public 'confusion' between the actor's public persona and their onstage character.<sup>33</sup> According to Lilti, when an actor's public persona is 'confused' with the roles they play, public interest in the actor's private life grows and this split between their public persona and their private life is the crux of their celebrity. Whereas

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<sup>31</sup> Elaine McGirr, 'Nell Gwyn's Breasts and Colley Cibber's Shirts: Celebrity Actors and Their Famous "Parts"', in *Intimacy and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Literary Culture: Public Interiors*, ed. by Emrys D. Jones and Victoria Joule (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), pp. 13–34.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Waller, *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris, 1830–1870* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2006), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> Antoine Lilti, *Figures publiques: l'invention de la célébrité 1750–1850* (Paris: Fayard, 2014), pp. 48–49.

Lilti's notion of 'confusion' rests ambivalently between the agency of the public, the actor, and the media, I suggest that Doche produced this 'confusion', through an active fusion – on both temporal and spatial levels – between her own persona and her courtesan creation to acquire great esteem.

Chapter 4 explores how Anaïs Fargueil (1819–1896) acquired newfound celebrity and status following her role creation of the courtesan Marco in *Les Filles de marbre* (a *drame en cinq actes, mêlée de chant* by Théodore Barrière and Lambert Thiboust) at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1853. It considers how Fargueil positioned herself against Doche through her creation of the *filles de marbre* type – a heartless, anti-heroine in comparison to the loving Marguerite Gautier. Drawing on Sharon Marcus's contention that nineteenth-century stage actors encouraged audiences to compare performers' individual merits by playing the same roles as each other,<sup>34</sup> I argue that the case of Fargueil's heartless Marco offers an alternative technique for establishing comparative merit: performing a similar character type, but its reverse – what I term a 'reverse repertory'. What is more, Fargueil would do so through another technique Marcus identifies with Fargueil's successor Bernhardt: that of 'actively courting repulsion' both onstage and beyond.

The fifth and final chapter studies Rose Chéri (1824–1861) and her creation of Suzanne 'La Baronne d'Ange' – the *demi-mondaine* par excellence – in *Le Demi-monde* (a *comédie en cinq actes* by Alexandre Dumas fils) at the Théâtre du Gymnase in 1855. I explore how Chéri contrasted her courtesan creation with her Christian celebrity image, thus opposing her rival Rachel on the primary stage, whose celebrity was founded on her racialised Jewish persona.<sup>35</sup> Influenced by Julia H Fawcett's concept of 'spectacular disappearances', I consider how Chéri defied spectators' tendency to read women's performances as 'always confessional and never professional', and how Chéri harnessed the ephemerality of her performance to prevent her commodification.<sup>36</sup> In so doing, Chéri – like her predecessors – acquired unprecedented celebrity and contributed to the dissolution of the division between the primary and secondary stage.

The thesis concludes by establishing how these actors mobilised their courtesan creations to gain celebrity and rehabilitate the figure of the boulevard star. I demonstrate how studying the original creation of these courtesans can further our knowledge both of the formation of

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<sup>34</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 195.

<sup>35</sup> Maurice Samuels, *The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 50–72.

<sup>36</sup> Julia H. Fawcett, *Spectacular Disappearances: Celebrity and Privacy, 1696-1801* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2016), pp. 1–22 and 173–205.

these female myths, and of nineteenth-century celebrity. I argue for the huge influence of Parisian popular theatre women on French cultural history and Western celebrity more broadly, demonstrating the need to expand the field of study beyond Paris's more privileged stages.

## 1 – Making History: Marie Dorval and the Incarnation of Celebrity Courtesans

Le plus lointain souvenir que nous ayons sur madame Dorval, c'est la première représentation de *Marion de Lorme*. Le drame venait de la prendre au mélodrame; la poésie au patois du boulevard. Aussi comme elle était heureuse et fière et rayonnante! Comme elle semblait à son aise dans cette grande passion et dans ce grand style! [...] Nous la voyons encore avec ces longues touffes de cheveux blonds mêlés de perles, sa robe de satin blanc, et se faisant défaire par dame Rose.

[The oldest memory that we have of madame Dorval is from the premiere of *Marion de Lorme*. The drama had just poached her from the melodrama; poetry had prised her from the patois of the boulevards. How happy, how proud, how radiant she was! She seemed so at ease amid great passion and style! [...] We can still see her with her long tufts of blonde hair interlaced with pearls, in her white satin dress, letting herself be undressed by her maid Rose].<sup>37</sup>

When the celebrated Romantic actor Marie Dorval (1798–1849) died on 20 May 1849, Théophile Gautier (1811–1872) dedicated his *feuilleton* – the weekly theatre column in *La Presse* – to her memory. Here, Gautier recalled the earliest collective memory of the actor as being her creation of the titular courtesan of Victor Hugo's Romantic drama *Marion de Lorme* (a *drame en cinq actes*) on 11 August 1831 at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin (an important secondary theatre that specialised in melodrama).<sup>38</sup> He thus dismissed more than a decade of Dorval's melodramatic successes in the French capital – from her debut at the Porte Saint-Martin as the eponymous wife in *Paméla mariée* on 12 May 1818 to her huge break as Amélie, the devoted wife in *Trente ans ou la vie d'un joueur* on 19 June 1827 at the same theatre. Relegating melodrama (a hybrid genre that combined histrionic plot lines with

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<sup>37</sup> Théophile Gautier, 'Théâtres', *La Presse*, 28 May 1849, n.p.

<sup>38</sup> For more on the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, and Victor Hugo's work there, see Barry Daniels, 'Victor Hugo on the Boulevard: "Lucrece Borgia" at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre in 1833' in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Mar., 1980), pp. 17–42

music) to the ‘patois of the boulevards’,<sup>39</sup> Gautier considered Dorval’s true arrival on the Parisian secondary stage to be in the ‘poetry’ of the newly emerging Romantic *drame* – a genre characterised by seemingly ‘real’ emotion’ first attributed to Hugo’s *Hernani*, (a *drame en cinq actes* that premièred at the Comédie-Française on 25 February 1830).<sup>40</sup> While the downplaying of Dorval’s melodramatic years is not particularly notable, given Gautier’s Romantic leanings (this same article was republished in his posthumous *Histoire du romantisme* in 1874),<sup>41</sup> what is striking is that he attributed Dorval’s moment of arrival not to her first but second venture in the Romantic *drame* – as her creation of the historical courtesan Marion de Lorme (1613–1650).

Dorval’s debut in the *drame* was in fact the creation of the adulterous, fictional Adèle Hervey in Alexandre Dumas’s *Antony*, another *drame en cinq actes* that premiered at the same theatre as *Marion de Lorme* a few months prior, on 3 May 1831. It was not that Gautier overlooked or denied the importance of *Antony* to Dorval’s career: previously in the article he spoke directly to the two Romantic heroines Adèle d’Hervey and Marion de Lorme, telling them ‘vous avez vécu pour nous d’une vie réelle’ [for us you lived real lives].<sup>42</sup> Yet although he praised Dorval for the dramatic realism of both role creations, it was the snapshot of her as the courtesan Marion – with her blonde locks, her white dress, and in a state of undress – that (Gautier claimed) was burnt into collective memory as the first iconic moment of her celebrated career in Romantic drama. But what was so pioneering about Dorval’s creation of Marion that went down as her moment of arrival in the history books of Romanticism?

In the last few decades scholars have frequently explored Dorval’s status as a self-styled symbol of Romanticism – a movement which usurped French Classicism and revolutionised the theatrical landscape of the late 1820s and 1830s – in direct contrast to her rival Mlle Mars (1779–1847), herself a self-proclaimed symbol of French Classicism. Whereas Mars represented the elite (she trained at the selective Conservatoire and progressed

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<sup>39</sup> For more on the melodramatic genre see Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790–1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> Florence Naugrette has shown that French theatrical Romanticism was not as novel as its nineteenth-century proponents claimed, tracing its roots through the eighteenth century and even to the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the symbolic importance of the *drame romantique* and of Romanticism as a movement in 1830s French theatre is primary. See Florence Naugrette, *Le Théâtre romantique en France, histoire, écriture, mise en scène* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), pp. 14–16; Florence Naugrette, ‘Le mélange des genres dans le théâtre romantique français: une dramaturgie du désordre historique’, *Revue internationale de philosophie*, 255 (2011), 27–41 (28).

<sup>41</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Histoire du romantisme; suivie de notices romantiques; et d’une étude sur la poésie française, 1830–1868* (Paris: Charpentier et Cie, 1874), pp. 271–277.

<sup>42</sup> Gautier, ‘Théâtres’, 28 May 1849, n.p.

to the Comédie-Française, specialising in ‘high’ comedy), Dorval represented The School of Hard Knocks (born into a travelling troupe, enjoying a less formal theatrical schooling, progressing to the popular Porte Saint-Martin, and gaining a reputation in melodrama and then Romantic drama). Susan McCready has demonstrated the two stars’ agency as contrasting symbols, pointing to the rivals’ use of offstage tactics to boost their own celebrity via the media.<sup>43</sup> As explored in the thesis introduction, Patricia Smyth, Florence Filippi and Julia Gros de Gasquet have focused on the rivals’ contrasting corporeal techniques onstage, with Filippi and Gros de Gasquet comparing perceptions of Mars’s demeanour as ‘décente’ [decent] in opposition to Dorval’s physicality as an ‘artiste bohème’ [a bohemian artist].<sup>44</sup> In this chapter I synthesise these perspectives on Dorval (bohemianism, symbolic rivalry, offstage celebrity, and onstage physicality) to consider the centrality of the courtesan role to both Dorval’s celebrity and her iconicity as the bastion of Romanticism. With a renewed focus on the centrality of her material body, I argue that the onstage courtesan role was a particular site of celebrity creation.

In order to recover the onstage materiality of Dorval’s onstage courtesans, I draw on Elaine McGirr’s theorizations on the ‘fleshing out’ of celebrity and her exploration of the slippage between an actor’s part (their onstage character) and their own bodily parts (their physical presentation). As McGirr urges, ‘rather than stress the importance of [...] the celebrity’s image in lieu of [their] person, I [...] stress the centrality of the physical person in grounding and establishing celebrity’. For McGirr the correlation between the actor’s role and their own bodily incarnation can be seen as a literal ‘fleshing out’ of character, as she explains that ‘the staging of celebrity parts, the merging of flesh and role, makes both body and character real and readable’.<sup>45</sup> I thus consider how Dorval – as a boulevard star – acquired recognition and celebrity in Paris’s strict theatrical hierarchy by her pioneering ‘fleshing out’ of ‘real and readable’ historical courtesan parts (roles) through her own bodily parts onstage, in the new Romantic *drame* of the 1830s. Section one explores Dorval’s first historical courtesan creation in *Marion de Lorme* (1831); section 2 studies her subsequent creation of the royal mistress Madame du Barry in *Jeanne Vaubernier* (1832); section 3

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<sup>43</sup> Susan McCready, ‘Publicité et célébrité: les coulisses de la rivalité entre Mlle Mars et Mme Dorval’, in *Le Miel et le fiel: la critique théâtrale en France au XIXe siècle*, ed. by Marianne Bury and Hélène Laplace-Claverie (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2008), pp. 191–98.

<sup>44</sup> Patricia Smyth, ‘Performers and Spectators’, pp. 159–84; Filippi and de Gasquet, ‘Entre jeu romantique et jeu mélodramatique’, 68.

<sup>45</sup> McGirr, ‘Nell Gwyn’s Breasts and Colley Cibber’s Shirts’, pp. 13–34 (p. 15).

investigates Dorval's final tête-à-tête with her rival Mars at the primary stage of the Comédie-Française in *Angelo* (1835), through the contested courtesan role of Tisbé.

### **Marie Dorval as the Real (I)deal: from Marion de Lorme to Mary Magdalene**

In a review of *Marion de Lorme*'s premiere, *Le Journal des artistes* rhetorically posited:

comment l'auteur a pu se décider à choisir pour héroïne une femme qui n'a d'autre célébrité que celle de la prostitution. Il est vrai que sa Marion [...] il en a fait [...] une Madeleine pécheresse [...]. Les prétentions de la nouvelle école à la fidélité, à la vérité historique, s'accommoderont comme elles pourront de cette invention.

[how could the author choose for his heroine a woman whose celebrity is founded solely on being a prostitute? It is true that he has made his Marion a penitent Magdalene [...]. The pretensions of the new school of fidelity, of historical truth, will have to adapt themselves the best they can to this invention].<sup>46</sup>

The critic's outrage points us to the novelty of this role: as Sidney D. Braun explains, *Marion de Lorme* was 'the first historical play of importance in which the courtesan is the central figure'.<sup>47</sup> Plays had previously centred on courtesan characters, but they had largely been fictional (such as *Manon Lescaut* in 1830) and usually *comédies* (such as *Les Courtisanes, ou l'école des mœurs* in 1775).<sup>48</sup> Although *Le Journal des artistes* conceded that Hugo redeemed Marion by depicting her as a type of Mary Magdalene (the quintessential Christian ideal of a repentant sex worker), in so doing he questioned the veracity of the playwright's ambitions: the 'nouvelle école à la fidélité, à la vérité historique' to which he referred was the Romantic school and its emphasis on historical truth. Notably the critic lays the blame for his outrage at the feet of the author, failing to consider Dorval's own creative role in these decisions. And yet despite himself, this critic has identified three strands central to Dorval's creative agency in this role: 1) women's celebrity, 2) the realistic portrayal of the historical courtesan, 3) the feminine ideal of Mary Magdalene. In other words: Dorval in this role carefully balanced her

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<sup>46</sup> G. D. F., 'Théâtres', *Le Journal des artistes*, 4 September 1831, pp. 180–183, (180–181).

<sup>47</sup> Sidney D. Braun, *The Courtesan in the French Theatre: from Hugo to Becque 1831–1885* (Paris: The John Hopkins Press, 1947), p. 19.

<sup>48</sup> On the dramatisation of *Manon Lescaut* see Sylvain Ledda, "'Manon Lescaut 1830", ou les égarements de la scène romantique', *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, 219 (2003), 245–60. On *Les Courtisanes, ou l'école des mœurs* see Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve*, pp. 72–73; Marchand, 'Les actrices et l'imaginaire érotique', p. 195.

lifelike embodiment of the celebrated historical figure Marion de Lorme onstage with the idealised, symbolism of the historical and mythical figure of Mary Magdalene.

As Lesley Ferris explains, the importance of the harlot-saint figure in Christian hagiography is its accessibility. Whereas the Virgin Mary became ‘more and more remote as an idol due to the Church’s insistence on her total purity’, the ‘penitent whore’ – and above all Mary Magdalene – was eminently human, commonplace even.<sup>49</sup> According to Ferris, what is crucial to Mary Magdalene’s cult is thus her hybridity, as both a real, historical, human figure and a mythical, saintly ideal. Ferris then superimposes this hybridity to the dual, historical association between sex workers and women actors. She explains that ‘when this narrative moves into the theatre, such a doubling resonates’ as the women actor ‘brings with her the age-old theatrical prejudice’ and so ‘behind the dramatic actress stands an imagined prostitute’. Ferris concludes that in so doing, ‘the penitent whore fulfils the patriarchally created belief that acting women are merely being themselves’.<sup>50</sup> While Ferris speaks specifically of the figure of Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux camélias*, which premiered in 1852, her words are equally applicable to Dorval’s creation of Marion twenty years prior, thus situating Dorval’s Marion as an important precursor to Doche’s Marguerite. Indeed, it is precisely this intersection of the human/idol, harlot/saint with the historical association of the courtesan/actor that was central to Dorval’s onstage creation of Marion, as we shall see.

Set in 1638, the play opens in the countryside of Blois, where the famous courtesan Marion de Lorme has retreated from her Parisian lifestyle to be with her new lover Didier, who is ignorant of her past and believes her to be a virgin called Marie. At the close of act I, Didier leaves Marion for the night and her maidservant Rose undresses her for bed. In act II, Didier duels with the Marquis de Saverny and due to Richelieu’s interdict against fencing, he becomes a wanted man. In act III, the lovers go on the run and through a humorous *mise-en-abyme*, they intercept a travelling theatre troupe and disguise themselves as actors. The fugitives are soon recognised; Didier discovers Marion’s true identity and is arrested. In act IV Didier is sentenced to death and Marion visits the King (Louis XIII) to gain his pardon. In the final act, the King’s pardon is meaningless without Richelieu’s exoneration and so Marion orchestrates Didier’s escape in exchange for sexual favours. Upon learning the lengths to which she went to save him, Didier refuses to escape with Marion. However, he

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<sup>49</sup> Lesley Ferris, *Acting Women: Images of Women in Theatre* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1990), pp. 80 and 91.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p 95.

forgives her previous deceit and in turn begs and receives her forgiveness for the suffering his death will cause. As Didier is led to his execution, Marion faints and so the play ends.

Hugo first wrote the play in June 1829, although due to censorship restrictions regarding the fourth act and its portrayal of Louis XIII, it was not until August 1831 – following the 1830 change in political regime and the resultant easing of censorship restrictions – that he staged his *drame*. Hugo originally intended the play for the Comédie-Française, where its Classical star Mars was to play Marion. Due to Hugo’s own aesthetic preferences – given what he perceived as the primary theatre’s excessive artistic conventions – the play eventually premiered at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, with Dorval as the lead.<sup>51</sup> As such, two manuscripts of the play exist – the 1829 original and an updated version from 1831 (figures 1.1 and 1.2 respectively). The two main differences between the versions are the title, which changed from *Un Duel sous Richelieu* to *Marion de Lorme*, and the play’s ending. In the original, Didier does not forgive Marion before his execution; in the updated

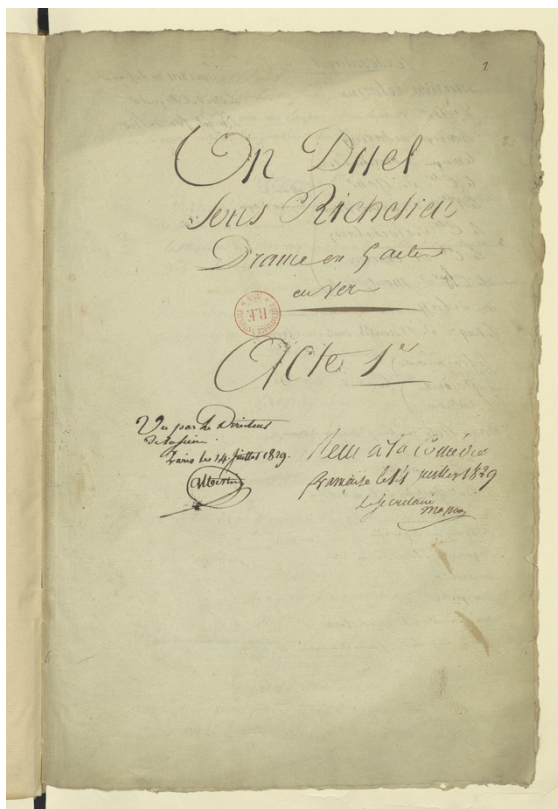


Figure 1.1 - Cover of the censored manuscript *Un Duel sous Richelieu* stating it was received at the Comédie-Française on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1829. BnF, Département des Manuscrits, NAF 13369.

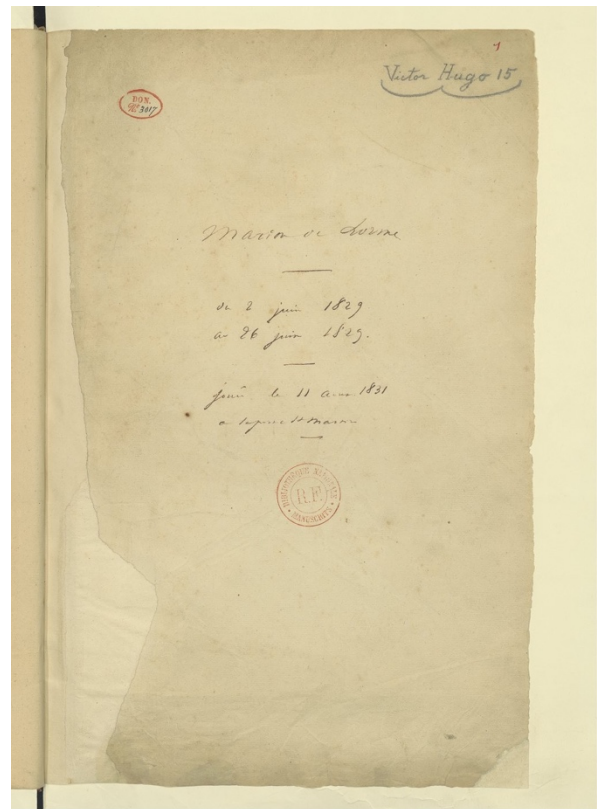


Figure 1.2 - Cover of the manuscript *Marion de Lorme*, stating it was written 2<sup>nd</sup>–26<sup>th</sup> June 1829 and performed the 11<sup>th</sup> August 1831 at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin. BnF, Département des Manuscrits, NAF 13368.

<sup>51</sup> On the play’s censorship and eventual choice of theatre see Hugo’s preface in Victor Hugo, *Marion de Lorme* (Paris: Eugène Renduel, 1831), pp. V–XV; Jules Janin, *Petite critique, œuvres diverses*, Série 2, Tome 4, (Paris: Albert de la Fizelière éd., Librairie des bibliophiles, 1883), pp. 242–250; Françoise Moser, *Marie Dorval* (Paris: Plon, 1947), pp. 70–74.

script Hugo added a final redemption scene in which Didier and Marion embrace ahead of his death. Notably, these two significant modifications are what the critic from *Le Journal des artistes* lamented: both that Hugo centred his play on a courtesan and that he redeemed her – against the historical record – as a ‘Madeleine pécheresse’. Although Marion had already occupied an important place in the original script, the updated play not only elevated her to a title role, but to a redeemed heroine.

A closer look at the original playscript reveals that Dorval, as the courtesan character’s onstage creator, was equally responsible for these changes. Ahead of an 1873 reprise of *Marion de Lorme* at the Comédie-Française, Hugo recorded in his journal on 22 January of that year ‘J’envoie à Paul Meurice [...] un exemplaire unique de *Marion de Lorme* (1831) avec chiffres et marques à l’encre de la main de Mme Dorval, variante de ma main’ [I send Paul Meurice [...] a unique copy of *Marion de Lorme* (1831) with ink notations and marks from Madame Dorval’s hand, a variation of my own hand].<sup>52</sup> Paul Meurice (1818–1905), charged with directing the reprise, had previously written to Hugo for advice. The fact Hugo sent Meurice a version of the script with the late Dorval’s amendments in response – describing it as an ‘exemplaire unique’ – indicates not only the influence the actor had in shaping the original playscript and its subsequent staging, but also the importance *Marion de Lorme* continued to have on Dorval’s celebrated legacy. Although the version of the playscript with Dorval’s handwritten changes appears lost, other sources testify to some of her crucial interventions. The writer Gustave Rivet (1848–1936) recounted his conversation with Hugo, about how the change in the play’s ending came about in 1831, apparently citing Hugo verbatim:

‘les rôles étaient distribués.

Mme Dorval vint me trouver et me dit:

“– Monsieur Victor Hugo, vous avez écrit un autre dénouement.”

[...]

“C’est vrai”, lui dis-je.

“Oh! Je voudrais bien le connaître [...]”

Je lui lus mon second dénouement.

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<sup>52</sup> Victor Hugo, ‘Carnet, 1er janvier–30 juin 1873’. BnF, Département des manuscrits, NAF 25910.

Quand elle l'eut entendu, elle me dit [...] “celui-là, je suis sûre que je le jouerais mieux. Je ne suis pas une héroïne antique: si vous vouliez m'accorder le second dénouement, vous me rendriez bien heureuse.”

“– Je ne tiens pas plus à l'un qu'à l'autre; si celui-là vous plait, jouez celui-là.”

[the roles had been distributed

Mme Dorval came to find me and said:

“Monsieur Victor Hugo, you have written another ending”

[...]

“This is true”, I told her.

“Oh ! I would love to hear it [...].”

I read her my second ending.

When she had heard it, she told me [...] “that one, I'm certain that I will play it better. I am not an old-fashioned heroine: if you would grant me the second ending, you would make me so happy”

“– I do not care more for one or the other ; if you like that one, then play it”].<sup>53</sup>

While Rivet's account attested to Dorval having the final say in Marion's redemption, it suggested the idea originated with Hugo. The memoirs of Adèle Hugo née Foucher (1803–1868), Victor Hugo's wife, provide a slightly differing explanation, citing an 1831 rehearsal of *Marion de Lorme* which she attended. Adèle Hugo wrote: ‘Mme Dorval prit le bras de l'auteur: Monsieur Hugo, dit-elle [...] votre Didier est un méchant [...] il s'en va mourir sans même me dire une bonne parole. Dites-lui donc qu'il a tort de ne pas me pardonner’ [Mme Dorval took the playwright by the arm: Monsieur Hugo, she said [...] your Didier is cruel [...] he goes and dies without uttering a single kind word to me. Tell him that he is wrong not to forgive me].<sup>54</sup> Adèle Hugo explained that the ploy was a success as Hugo ‘se résolut à rompre au dernier moment l'inflexibilité de Didier’ [decided at the very last minute to break Didier's resoluteness]. According to Adèle Hugo, it was Dorval who originally thought up Marion's redemption. Paul and Victor Glachant's study of the play's original 1829 and 1831 manuscripts, at the Bibliothèque nationale, supports her account: ‘la lecture du manuscrit nous permet de conclure que le premier est de 1829, et le second de fin mai 1831. Il n'y a

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<sup>53</sup> Gustave Rivet, *Victor Hugo chez lui* (Paris: Maurice Dreyfous éditeur, 1878) pp. 4–5.

<sup>54</sup> Adèle Hugo, ‘Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie, II’ in *Œuvres Complètes de Victor Hugo*, vol. 47 (Paris: Société d'éditions littéraires et artistiques, 1926), p. 317.

pas, d'ailleurs, en réalité, *deux dénouements*. Il y a seulement une addition à la scène finale, un *duo du pardon* [by reading the manuscript we can conclude that the first is from 1829, and the second from the end of May 1831. There are not, in fact, *two endings*. There is only an addition to the final scene, a *duo of forgiveness*].<sup>55</sup> The 1831 manuscript thus calls into question Rivet's account in which Hugo apparently gave Dorval a choice of two pre-existing endings – and even if Rivet's account were more accurate than Adèle Hugo's, both concurred that Dorval had the final say.

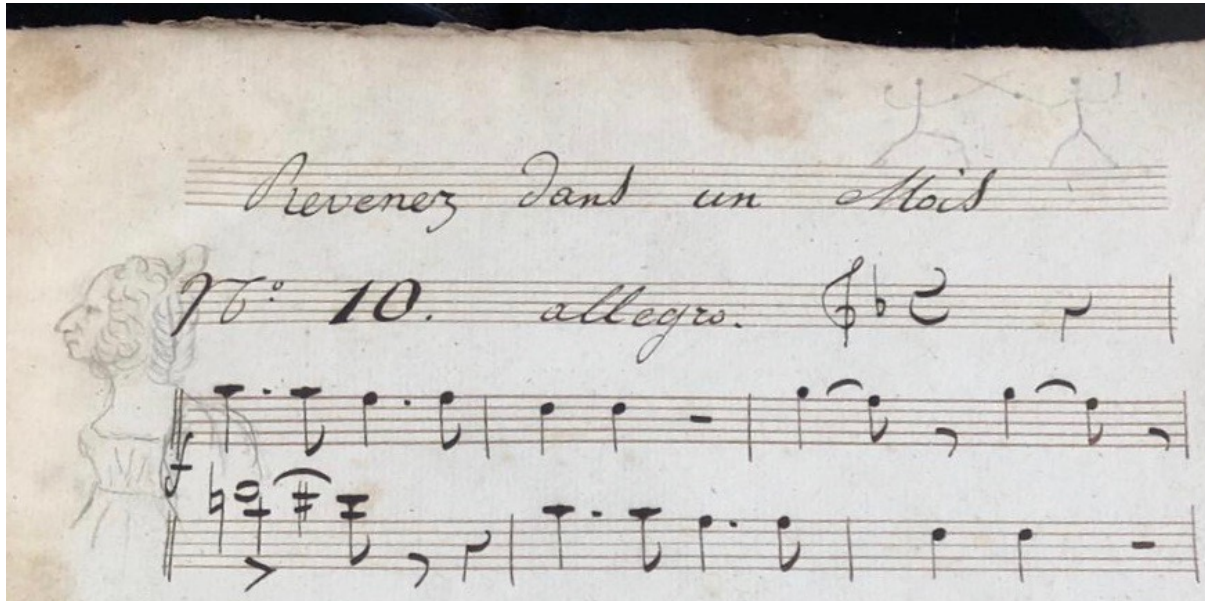


Figure 1.3 – Oboe score for ‘Revenez dans un mois’, in *Marion Delorme* *drame en cinq actes*, BnF, Archives de la Salle de Musique, MAT. TH. 353 (1/2).

Dorval is also understood to have been responsible for the play's change in title, visible between the two manuscripts. The change to *Marion de Lorme* came after the 1831 role distributions mentioned in Rivet's account. As Francis Ambrière notes, it was Dorval who persuaded the author to rename the play after the heroine she incarnated.<sup>56</sup> As well as securing Marion's redemption, Dorval elevated Marion to the titular role, thus both placing the spotlight on the courtesan, and sharing in it herself. This change in emphasis, from the duel to the courtesan narrative, is captured in some pencil sketches (figures 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5) that appear on the original 1831 manuscript of *Marion de Lorme*'s orchestral score, in the oboe part.<sup>57</sup> It is probable the oboist drew these illustrations during a dress rehearsal or

<sup>55</sup> Paul Glachant and Victor Glachant, *Un Laboratoire dramaturgique: essai critique sur le théâtre de Victor Hugo* (Paris: Hachette, 1902) pp. 220–221.

<sup>56</sup> Ambrière, *Mademoiselle Mars et Marie Dorval*, p. 226.

<sup>57</sup> On the role of music in the Romantic *drame*, see Roxane Martin ‘Hernani: un mélodrame? Analyse comparative de la fonction dramatique de la musique de scène dans les dramaturgies mélodramatique et hugolienne’ in *Méthode! Revue de littératures*, 14, (Vallongues, 2008), 217–224.

performance: given how sparse the oboe part is, the player likely had a lot of spare time. On the left of figure 1.3 there is a detailed doodle of Marion's upper body in profile. By contrast, two basic stick figures in duel are etched in the top right corner – a visible marker of the sidelining of the duel storyline in favour of Marion's own. Whereas the stick figures are the sole depiction of the duel, a detailed sketch of Marion's face and neck (figure 1.4) and a continuation of her chest (figure 1.5) appear earlier in the oboe part too.



Figure 1.4 – Oboe score for 'Prudent comme Socrate', in *Marion Delorme drame en cinq actes*. BnF, Archives de la Salle de Musique, MAT. TH. 353 (1/2).

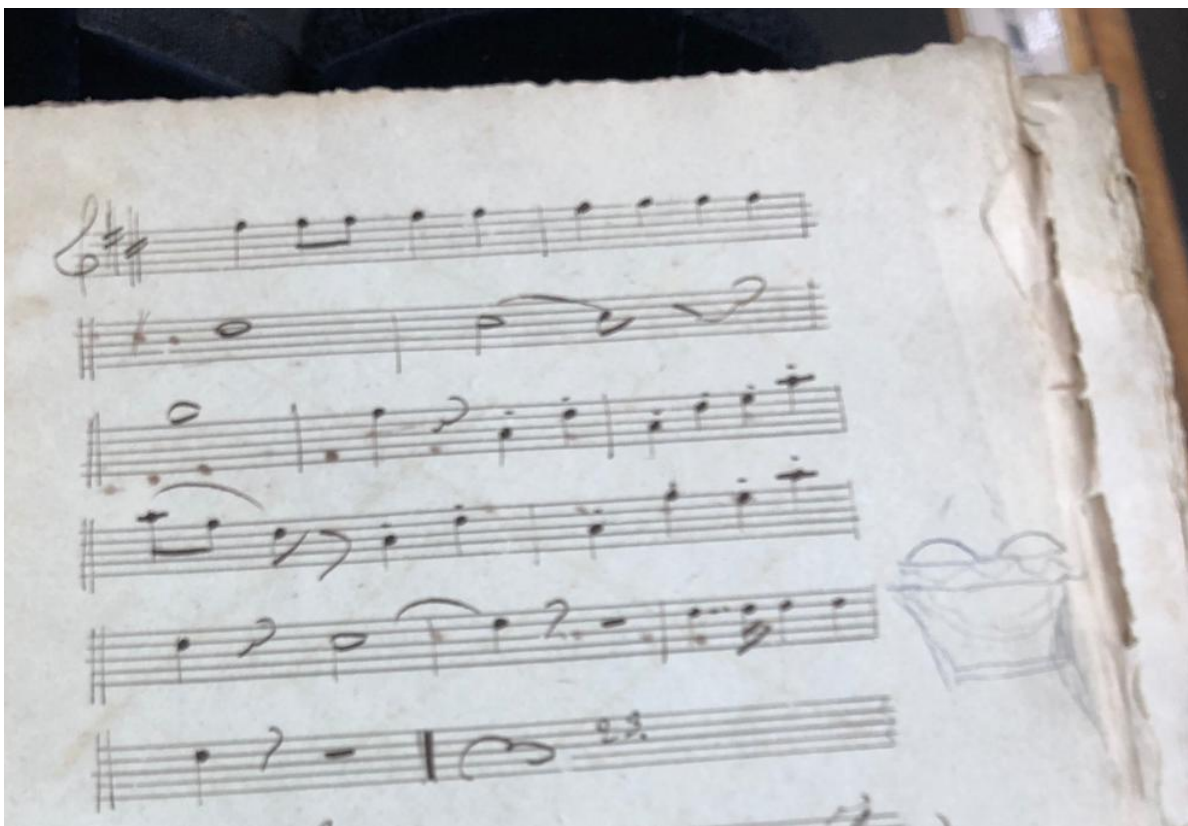
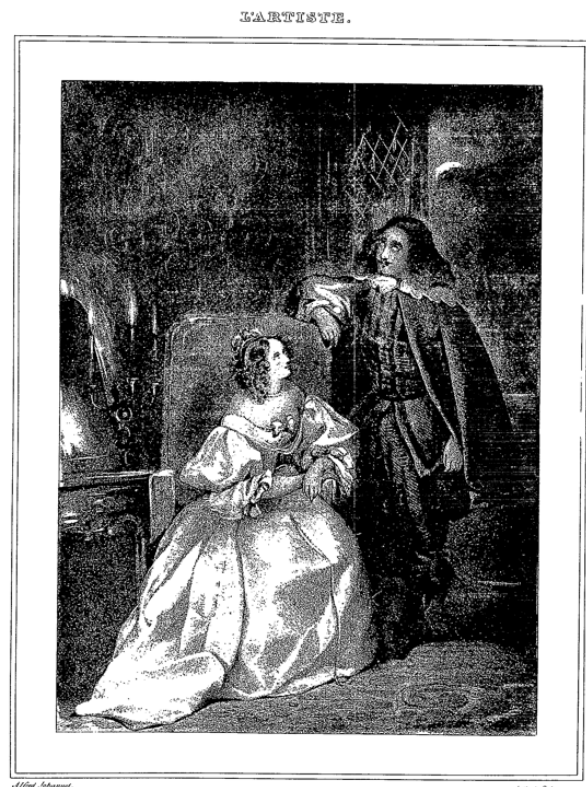


Figure 1.5 – Oboe score for 'Repassons nos rôles', in *Marion Delorme, drame en cinq actes*. BnF, Archives de la Salle de Musique, MAT. TH. 353 (1/2).

We can assume these detailed sketches are of Dorval as Marion, not only because Marion is the only woman in the play other than her maidservant (who appears fleetingly in act I), but because published images of Dorval's costuming from the play's premiere corroborate this. Figure 1.6 is a lithograph published in 1831 in *Costumes historiques de la ville et de théâtre*, depicting Dorval's costume in act III, when Marion is disguised as an actor.<sup>58</sup> If we compare this lithograph with the pair of sketches in figures 1.4 and 1.5 – both of which appear in the oboe part for act III – there are clear parallels. Firstly, in figures 1.4 and 1.6 the hair styles are the same, with ringlets cascading down each side of the face and sporting head gear with feather-like features. Secondly, in figures 1.5 and 1.6, we can observe a very similar depiction of a lacey chest line, corset, belt, and something hanging down across the bodice. This last detail is the golden hanging fabric of the basquine (a rich outer petticoat), more visible in figure 1.6, and referenced in the original playscript in act III, scene VI.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, a lithograph published in *L'Artiste* in 1831 (figure 1.7) depicting Marion's costuming and



Figure 1.6 – Spanish Costume of Madame Dorval in the role of Marion Delorme, lithograph by Achille Devéria, *Costumes historiques de ville et de théâtre* (Paris: Goupil et Vibert, 1831), n.p.



*Marion Delorme, Acte 1<sup>er</sup>*  
Figure 1.7 – Marion Delorme, Acte 1er, lithograph by Delanois, *L'Artiste, première série, tome II*, 1831 (Geneva: Slaktine Reprints, 1972), n.p.

<sup>58</sup> For the historical reliability of this genre of costume illustration see Noëlle Guibert, 'La "Verité du costume de scène": une trajectoire, confrontation des sources et des traces à la réalité scénique,' *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, 249 (2011), 31–48.

<sup>59</sup> Hugo, *Marion de Lorme*, p. 82.

hairdo in act I is not dissimilar to the sketch of Marion's profile in figure 1.3, which appears on the oboe score at the end of act III/start of act IV. At this point in the play, following the revelation of her identity, Marion has done away with her disguise and thus reverts to her previous costuming. In both figures 1.3 and 1.7 Marion has puffed up sleeves, no headpiece, and a less intricate corset than in the other images.

Beyond the visible prioritisation of Marion's storyline, the contrast between the stick figures of the duelling men and the detailed, close-up sketches of Dorval's Marion demonstrates the importance of Dorval's 'fleshing out' of the courtesan part through her own body parts. Of course, the sketch of Dorval's heaving bosom (figure 1.5) can simply be read as an objectification of the actor's body. Yet coupled alongside the other detailed sketches and Gautier's recollection of Dorval as Marion 'se faisant défaire par dame Rose' [letting herself be undressed by her maid Rose], there is perhaps more to be said about this heightened interest in Dorval's flesh. Notably, Gautier highlighted Dorval's own agency in the act of stripping with the reflexive 'se faisant' [letting herself]. This performative agency resonates with McGirr's contention that the act of exposing the body, of stripping is a means to 'humanise the celebrity'. According to McGirr, through the act of stripping we see 'the real performer stripped of her cosmetics and role play' and although the 'artfully undressed woman' is objectified, 'both celebrity and performers are also playing with tropes of seduction in order to subvert them and assert their unique celebrity personae'. For McGirr the performer is thus both object and agent.<sup>60</sup> This understanding of the actor's exposure of their flesh as a means to 'humanise the celebrity' and see the 'real performer' relates directly to the Romantic, historically informed performance style – what *Le Journal des artistes* called 'les prétentions de la nouvelle école [...] à la vérité historique' [the pretensions of the new school [...] for historical truth] – or 'fleshing out' of the historical courtesan's body. As Dorval's character Marion allowed herself to be undressed onstage, she presented herself as an 'artfully undressed woman' – so much so that this moment was included in Gautier's *Histoire du romantisme* as the star's moment of arrival.

As well as Dorval's agency in exposing her flesh, equally important was what she allowed herself to be undressed from: at this time costume provision lay with the artist, and as such the actor's creative control can be considered here too.<sup>61</sup> Gautier's recollection of Dorval as Marion in act I, letting herself be undressed, was preceded with the detail of what

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<sup>60</sup> McGirr, 'Nell Gwyn's Breasts and Colley Cibber's Shirts', p. 16.

<sup>61</sup> Frederick Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 201.

she was wearing – ‘sa robe de satin blanc’ [her white satin dress] as visible in *L’Artiste*’s lithograph of the opening act (figure 1.7). Comparison with contemporary fashions reveals the possible significations of Dorval’s costuming here. The late Restoration period revived women’s Renaissance fashions: the waist returned to its natural position, skirts flared out, the bodice widened, and the décolletage grew to uncover the upper chest and accentuate sloping shoulders, which were deemed essential for beauty. In addition, sleeves increased in volume, as the Duchesse de Berry (1798–1870) launched a vogue for the ‘leg-of-mutton sleeves’ – an adaptation of the sixteenth-century style.<sup>62</sup> These trends are visible in Dorval’s costuming in *L’Artiste*’s lithograph (figure 1.7) of 1831 – a transitional period still influenced by the trends of the preceding political regime. This tells us that Dorval’s large décolletage and her sloping shoulders (as visible in the sketches and lithographs) were in line with beauty standards in this transitional period, while simultaneously they referenced Renaissance fashions which befitted the seventeenth-century historical figure of Marion de Lorme. To borrow again from McGirr, Dorval thus ‘fleshed out’ her character by both the currency and historicity of her costume: she thus ‘merged her flesh and role’, making ‘both body and character real and readable’.

As well as this fleshing out of the real, historical courtesan, Dorval’s costuming here can equally be read as symbolic of the ideal, Mary Magdalene type as described by Ferris and *Le Journal des artistes*. In the same lithograph (figure 1.7), we can observe Marion as almost glowing in her white billowing gown (her ‘robe de satin blanc’), in contrast to the dark background and Didier’s own costume. To a contemporary audience, this white dress – a legible Christian marker of women’s chastity – was symbolic of Marion’s virtue, working against contemporary perceptions of courtesans. This was likely reinforced by the dress design itself: as Boucher explains of Romantic costume styles – which crystallized around 1830 – ‘women seemed to dream of becoming ethereal, of resembling angels or butterflies, lacing themselves more and more tightly and wearing increasingly wide bell skirts and leg-of-mutton sleeves’.<sup>63</sup> This Romantic development is equally applicable to Dorval’s act I costuming. Her white, angelic silhouette – with wing-like arms, a corseted waist, and a wide bell-skirt – thus straddled both the Romantic, historically informed, trend for Renaissance

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<sup>62</sup> François Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1983), p. 366.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

costuming – befitting that of the real Marion de Lorme – and the early Romantic ethereal trend evocative of a ‘Madeleine pécheresse’.

We can observe how this image of the ‘Madeleine pécheresse’ developed throughout the play and climaxed in the final scene, through another image published in *L’Artiste* shortly after *Marion de Lorme*’s premiere (figure 1.8). Praising the final scene as an ‘admirable morceau’ [admirable moment], the critic from *L’Artiste* observed that Marion and Didier ‘tombent dans les bras l’un de l’autre: tout est pardonné’ [fall into each other’s arms: all is forgiven].<sup>64</sup> The critic reproduced the script of the final redemption scene, accompanied with an illustration conveying the visual experience onstage. This sketch – more of an artistic impression than a realistic depiction – portrays the imagined ideal conveyed by the onstage bodies: Marion appears saintly, in her white, flowing robe.



Figure 1.8 – *Marion Delorme, drame en cinq actes & en vers*, lithograph by anon., *L’Artiste, première série, tome II, 1831* (Geneva: Slaktine Reprints, 1972), p. 24.

By redeeming her eponymous courtesan role, Dorval saw to her own ultimate success at the play’s close. Adèle Hugo wrote of the premiere: ‘Didier fit rire et Saverny fit siffler. Mais Dorval [...] eut [...] une telle vérité, que tous les hommes battirent des mains et que toutes les femmes pleurèrent’ [Didier was laughable, and they whistled at Saverny. But Dorval [...] had such truth, that all the men clapped, and all the women cried].<sup>65</sup> While Didier and Saverny were referenced by their character roles, Marion was referred to as Dorval: her incarnation was so real that Marion and Dorval merged on the site of the actor’s body, both winning their audience’s hearts in the end.

Playing up to what Ferris calls the ‘patriarchally created belief that acting women are merely being themselves’, which was only heightened by Dorval’s status as a boulevard star, Dorval as ‘imagined prostitute’ redeemed herself through her own character’s redemption.

Reappropriating the heightened historical association between popular-theatre actors and

<sup>64</sup> Anon, *L’Artiste, première série, tome II, 1831* (Geneva: Slaktine Reprints, 1972), p. 23.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

courtesans Dorval, to borrow from McGirr, ‘played with tropes of seduction in order to subvert them and to assert [her] unique celebrity persona’. She thus subverted the denigrating historical association between actors and courtesan by asserting her ‘unique celebrity persona’ as a penitent Mary Magdalene type both onstage and beyond – as captured in her iconography.

As scholars such as Sharon Marcus demonstrate, the cult of celebrity itself was modelled on the early Christian worship of saints.<sup>66</sup> Precisely by restoring additional layers of celebrity, beyond ‘celle de la prostitution’, to the historical courtesan character – as a saint-like ‘Madeleine pécheresse’ – Dorval symbiotically gained in her own repute and celebrity cult, by association with both Marion de Lorme’s celebrity and the cult of Mary Magdalene. It was through these overlapping dualisms that Dorval seemingly resolved the critic from *Le Journal des artistes*’s contention: how ‘les prétentions de la nouvelle école [...] à la vérité historique, s’accommoderont [...] de cette invention’ [the pretensions of the new school of fidelity, of historical truth, will adapt themselves to this invention], the invention being Marion de Lorme’s transformation into a ‘Madeleine pécheresse’ [penitent Mary Magdalene].

### **The Romantic Comédienne of Jeanne Vaubernier: Marie Dorval as Madame du Barry**

In the year following her successful creation of Marion de Lorme, Dorval created a much more infamous courtesan from more recent history, thus continuing to develop her ‘unique celebrity persona’ as the penitent courtesan type. However, this time it was on the primary stage of the Théâtre de l’Odéon, an annex of the Comédie-Française that had traditionally specialised in ‘high’ comedies but had since 1824 – and the easing of restrictions with the change in regime – also performed music drama.<sup>67</sup> Here, Dorval created the character of Madame du Barry née Jeanne Bécu (1743–1793), Louis XV’s last mistress and a victim of the Terror. *Jeanne Vaubernier* (a *drame en cinq actes* by Rougemont and Laffitte) premiered at the Odéon on 17 January 1832 and traced Jeanne’s life story from her humble origins to her execution. It joined a flurry of du Barry plays that appeared on the Parisian secondary stages after the 1830 revolution’s easing of censorship restrictions. The first of such plays was *Madame du Barry*, a three-act comedy by Jacques-François Ancelot (1794–1854) that premiered on 28 February 1831 at the popular stage of the Théâtre de Vaudeville,

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<sup>66</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 108.

<sup>67</sup> Mark Everist, *Music Drama at the Paris Odéon 1824–1828*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

followed by similar iterations throughout the year at the Théâtres de l’Ambigu, de la Gaîté, du Palais-Royal and de Comte. Although many of these theatres were historically important – particularly the Vaudeville, the Ambigu, and the Gaîté that were authorized secondary theatres from the early 1800s – what was new to Dorval’s rendition was not only that it appeared at one of Paris’s primary stages but that it was in the more reputable historical *drame* genre, rather than the light-hearted, fantastical *comédie-vaudevilles* which had thus far depicted du Barry.

As Jules Janin (1804–1874), a key figure in eighteenth-century revivalism, noted in *L’Artiste*: ‘la première de ces pièces n’est qu’une bluette graveleuse [...] ; la seconde un épisode Romanesque [...] la dernière est une conception dramatique [...] qui embrasse la vie entière d’une courtisane et qui la montre dans toutes ses phases’ [the first of these plays is nothing but a smutty romance [...] the second is a fanciful episode [...] the last is a dramatic conception [...] which embraces the entire life of a courtesan and shows her in all her different phases].<sup>68</sup> *Jeanne Vaubernier* (the latest iteration) differed from its one-dimensional predecessors by presenting the much mythologised du Barry as a more complex, historical figure. Dorval was crucial to this more nuanced characterisation: the *Journal d’artistes* praised ‘le jeu plein de verve et d’expression de madame Dorval-Dubarry’ [the fullness of verve and expression of Dorval-Dubarry’s performance].<sup>69</sup> Passing from Marion de Lorme to the double-barrelled ‘Dorval-Dubarry’, Dorval continued to associate her name with the fame – and infamy – of past courtesans. While she did not go so far as to redeem Jeanne like she had Marion, her ability to restore du Barry’s complexity again went hand in hand with the boulevard star’s own recognition and celebrity, now appearing on the primary stage.

The critic Gustave Planche (1808–1857) wrote in 1840 that *Jeanne Vaubernier* ‘révéla dans madame Dorval une veine de gaîté qu’on ne soupçonnait pas. Ce rôle [...] lui permit de parcourir en une soirée toutes les gammes de son génie dramatique [...] et chacune de ses tentatives fut couronnée d’applaudissements’ [revealed in madame Dorval a vein of gaiety that we did not suspect. This role [...] allowed her to span the entire range of her dramatic genius in one evening [...] and each of her attempts was crowned with applause].<sup>70</sup> Dorval’s human, multi-dimensional portrayal of Jeanne showcased the star’s own multi-

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<sup>68</sup> Jules Janin, ‘Jeanne Vaubernier, drame en cinq actes’, *L’Artiste*, 1831 Tome II, (Geneva: Slaktine Reprints, 1972) p. 263. N.B. This review was included in the 1831 second issue but was written in 1832 following the show’s January premiere.

<sup>69</sup> Anon., ‘Théâtres’, *Journal des artistes*, 22 January 1832, p. 79.

<sup>70</sup> Gustave Planche, ‘Mme Dorval’, *Galerie de la presse, de la littérature et des beaux-arts, deuxième série* (Aubert: Paris, 1840), n.p.

faceted abilities and dramatic depth. Until this point Dorval had performed in more sombre melodramas and Romantic *dramas*: her new courtesan role allowed her to develop a comedic streak, which met with huge applause. The *Journal des artistes* likewise observed that ‘Dorval a révélé dans le rôle de madame Dubarry un talent de comédienne [...] elle a recueilli un double hommage, et comme comédienne et comme tragédienne; c’est un honneur qu’elle ne partage à Paris qu’avec madame Malibran’ [Dorval has revealed through the role of madame du Barry a comic talent [...] she received a double curtain call, both as a comedian and as a tragedian; it is an honour that she and madame Malibran alone share in Paris].<sup>71</sup> Both critics spoke of the revelation of a new aspect of Dorval’s own character through this new characterisation. This last review highlighted how the new courtesan role further developed Dorval’s renown and celebrity, elevating her to the apex of the Parisian theatrical world alongside one of the capital’s most celebrated opera stars: Maria Malibran (1808–1836). As well as associating herself with the celebrity of past courtesans, through Jeanne, Dorval equated herself with other celebrities from Paris’s primary stages. This was the start of what Dorval herself identified the following year in a letter to her lover Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863), from her tour to Rouen on 29 August 1833: ‘j’ai des soirées comme celles de Madame Malibran aux Italiens. Ce sont des fanatiques, c’est un culte’ [some of my evenings are like those of Madame Malibran at the Théâtre des Italiens. They are fanatics, it’s a cult].<sup>72</sup> Dorval’s words demonstrated both the reach of her cult-following – beyond Paris and across the provinces – and the nature of her celebrity being on a par with the star of Paris’s primary operatic stage of the Théâtre des Italiens – an equivalence which stemmed from her comedic courtesan role as Jeanne Vaubernier, on the Odéon stage.

A few months prior to Dorval’s letter, on 9 February 1833, George Sand (1804–1876) wrote in an article entitled ‘Mlle Mars et Mme Dorval’ that the eighteenth-century moralistic debate between Voltaire and Rousseau was replaced by the new dilemmas ‘*Pasta ou Malibran? Mars ou Dorval?*’ [*Pasta or Malibran? Mars or Dorval?*].<sup>73</sup> Sand thus equated the Enlightenment philosophers’ celebrity feud to the current rivalries between Paris’s two most celebrated opera stars, Giuditta Pasta (1797–1865) and Malibran, and between the Classical Mars and Romantic Dorval. Whereas the first set of rivals were from the primary operatic stage, the second set pitted the star of France’s premier stage (Comédie-Française)

<sup>71</sup> Anon, *L’Artiste, première série, tome II, 1831* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972), p. 263.

<sup>72</sup> Ariane Charton, *Lettres pour lire au lit: correspondance amoureuse d’Alfred de Vigny et Marie Dorval 1831–1838* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2009), p. 74.

<sup>73</sup> George Sand, ‘Mlle Mars et Mme Dorval’, *L’Artiste, première série, tome. v, 1833* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972), pp. 33–36 (34).

against a star who originated from Paris's secondary stage. Not only did the comparison to Rousseau and Voltaire's famed dispute demonstrate the sheer celebrity Dorval – and her rivalry with Mars – had reached by early 1833 (following Dorval's successes as Marion de Lorme and Jeanne Vaubernier), but it demonstrated that their feud related to questions of morality. Calling the Enlightenment dispute 'la question qui remuait alors toutes les existences morales' [the question that previously stirred all moral existence], Sand sarcastically cautioned her feminine readership against engaging in the latest iteration of the debate, claiming that women risked compromising their virtue. As explored in the thesis introduction, given it was largely due to Rousseau's diatribes that the dubious morality of acting continued to be equated to that of sex work – due to both professions' exhibition of the body for financial recompense – it followed that part of this historical debate was revitalised through the most celebrated women stars of the time. Especially, in the latter case, the debate was reanimated by a comparison between the stars of France's primary Comédie-Française and the capital's commercialised, secondary theatre.

Crucially, Dorval's courtesan Jeanne Vaubernier was central to the debate. Although Sand penned her article in response to Mars's and Dorval's recent tête-à-tête in an act of Beaumarchais's *Le Mariage de Figaro* (1786) at Mars's home turf of the Comédie-Française (where Dorval appeared for the second time), due to the incongruity between Mars's young Suzanne and Dorval's mature Countess Almaviva, it was necessary instead to compare Suzanne with Jeanne Vaubernier. Sand justified her choice of Jeanne as 'le seul rôle où madame Dorval puisse déployer cette faculté qu'elle possède d'imposer le rire aussi bien que les larmes, et qu'on ne lui connaissait avant qu'elle eût rendu à la scène le personnage tant défiguré de madame Dubarry' [the only role in which madame Dorval could deploy that ability she has of making you laugh as well as cry, and which we did not know she possessed until she brought the much disfigured character of madame Dubarry to the stage].<sup>74</sup> Sand considered Dorval's comic courtesan creation as the sole role capable of contesting Mars's comedic domain as *comédienne* of the Comédie-Française. Notably, Sand directly linked Dorval's ability to compete with Mars to the former's capacity to somewhat salvage the 'personnage tant défiguré de madame Dubarry' [much disfigured character of madame Dubarry]. Sand used the subjunctive 'puisse' [could], implying that it was the only possible role in which Dorval could show her range in both comedy and serious drama. Dorval's

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

ability to compete with Mars as *comédienne* thus depended on her established ‘unique celebrity persona’ as an assumed courtesan, hailing as she did from the boulevard stage.

Beyond the easy equation between Dorval as boulevard star/courtesan – as explained in my introduction – the embodied, materiality of the onstage courtesan was equally integral to the Romantic Dorval’s contestation of the Classical Mars’s comedic dominance and domain. A few years after the premiere, Gautier recalled of Jeanne Vaubernier ‘ce rôle est, en effet, une des meilleures preuves de l’esprit de madame Dorval. Elle le joue en comédienne qui a de l’ironie et du trait dans chaque pli de son éventail’ [this role is, effectively, one of the best proofs of madame Dorval’s wit. She plays it as a *comédienne* who has irony and humour in each fold of her fan].<sup>75</sup> Gautier’s reference to Dorval’s fan was both figurative – capturing her wide-spanning talent – but also literal, recollecting Dorval’s realistic embodiment of the comedic courtesan down to the very last detail of her costuming and accessories. Indeed, when Sand asked in her article ‘Mars a-t-elle toujours compris le *vrai* [...] mieux ou moins bien que madame Dorval?’ [‘has Mars always understood the truth [...] better or worse than [...] Dorval?’], her critique similarly centred on the rivals’ costume and onstage embodiment of their character parts.<sup>76</sup>

Sand went into detail about what she perceived as Mars’s unconvincing costuming as Suzanne, asking her reader:

ne vous est-il pas venu [...] à l’esprit, en voyant cette Suzanne [...] qu’elle était bien plus française qu’espagnole? [...] que son maintien comme sa toilette n’était pas [...] aussi fripon [...] que vous l’aviez rêvé en vous introduisant dans cette famille d’amoureuses intrigues [...] domestiques? [...] nous avons bien peur que [...] Mars ne sacrifie parfois la vérité [...] d’un rôle à des habitudes de bon ton

[did it not occur to you upon seeing this Suzanne [...] that she was more French than Spanish? [...] that her bearing and costume were not [...] as roguish [...] as you had imagined they would be, within the context of the amorous intrigues of a servant? [...] we are concerned that [...] Mars might sometimes sacrifice the truth [...] of a role [...] in the name of good taste].

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<sup>75</sup> Théophile Gautier, ‘Théâtre’, *Le Figaro*, 16 January 1838, n.p.

<sup>76</sup> Sand, ‘Mlle Mars et Mme Dorval’, p. 34.

For Sand, Mars's bearing and outfit were so typical of French Classicism that they failed to capture Suzanne's Spanish character, and her presentation was too polished for that of a servant. As such, Sand questioned whether Mars prioritised the Comédie-Française's elite idealism over theatrical realism. By contrast, she considered Dorval to embody more realistically both Countesses Almaviva and du Barry through her costuming and literal wearing of the cloak of aristocracy: 'il a semblé qu'en revêtant les nobles [...] atours [*sic*] [...] elle se soit sentie investir de l'orgueil du rang' ['it seems that by donning the noble [...] attire [...] she felt infused with the pride of rank'].<sup>77</sup> Again, the old moralistic debate surfaces in Sand's analysis, through Mars's apparent prioritisation of 'good taste' over a realistic embodiment of a maidservant, in contrast to Dorval's more convincing costumed embodiment of the countesses – the latter of which was a courtesan – who were able to acquire a certain 'pride of rank'.

Beyond the costuming, Sand focused on the actors' literal fleshing out of their characters through their visible body parts. She sarcastically quipped that Mars had 'le véritable malheur d'être trop correctement belle [...] peut-être le masque musculaire manque-t-il chez elle de souplesse et de mobilité' [the real misfortune of being too correctly beautiful [...] perhaps her muscular mask lacks suppleness and mobility].<sup>78</sup> Like with her costume, Mars's beauty was so 'correct', so tasteful, that Sand linked her lack of facial elasticity to a lack of moral elasticity: arguing that Mars had 'pas assez d'éclectisme et d'élasticité morale' [not enough eclecticism and moral elasticity]. Again, Rousseau's moral denigration of embodied, corporeal performance transpires, as Mars was considered too detached, too proper, to truly engage the musculature of her face. By contrast, Sand wrote of Dorval's du Barry that 'il n'y a pas dans l'action de ses muscles, dans le soulèvement de sa poitrine, dans la contraction de ses traits, un effort préparatoire [...] Dorval compose son drame elle-même, elle s'en pénètre' [there is no preparation in the action of her muscles, in the lifting of her chest, or in the contraction of her features [...] Dorval composes the drama herself, she penetrates herself into it]. Dorval's moral flexibility was written on the elasticity of her flesh, with the erotically charged metaphor of her own self-penetration. Again, Dorval seemingly played up to the moral dubiousness of her courtesan character part through her own body parts, reappropriating the denigrating historical equation of actor/courtesan for her own success. Returning to Marie's understanding (outlined in my introduction) of the Romantic

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

approach as creative rather than imitative – originating in the performer’s gut rather than heeding to Classical declamation – we can observe how central Dorval’s embodied comedic courtesan creation was to her contestation of her rival’s comedic dominion.

### ***Angelo: Fleshing Out the Rivalry Between Mars and Dorval***

That the role of the onstage courtesan was so integral to Dorval’s ‘unique celebrity persona’ was further evidenced by Mars’s unusual role choice for the rival’s final tête-à-tête at the Comédie-Française in 1835. As reigning star of France’s premier stage, Mars had the choice of the two equally important women lead roles in Hugo’s new Romantic drama *Angelo*. Adèle Hugo noted that the role of the honourable Catarina,<sup>79</sup> Angelo’s wife, was made for the Classical Mars’s ‘talent honnête et décent’ [honest and decent talent], while Angelo’s courtesan Tysbé was ideal for the Romantic, ‘talent bohème et libre’ [free and bohemian talent] of Dorval.<sup>80</sup> However, Mars chose the more alluring role of Tysbé, arguably challenging her rival to play the more virtuous character that was less suited to Dorval’s persona. Figures 1.9 and 1.10 were published the year of *Angelo*’s première in the *Petite galerie dramatique*, an annual publication from 1796 to 1843 that reproduced the costumes of the main Parisian plays and actors of the year.<sup>81</sup> While the circulation of these images played into the actors’ celebrity, my focus is on what these images revealed about the live performance of the rivals’ onstage bodies and their resultant celebrity.

Patricia Smyth has led the way here: with a specific focus on *Angelo* and the rivals’ contrasting body language and posture, she argues that Mars’s ‘mastery’ was appreciated, but Dorval’s ‘sincerity’ truly captured the audience.<sup>82</sup> Smyth concludes by upholding contemporary theatrical theories on the binary nature of performance, arguing that actors such as Mars engaged the viewer’s intelligence through their methodical delivery. By contrast Dorval activated a ‘devastating emotional impact on the spectator’, by rendering her method ‘invisible’. But beyond the opposition between the intellectual and the emotional, and the notion of ‘invisible’ method, questions of onstage visibility – specifically of the visibility of the performer’s flesh – present themselves through the analysis of these costume designs.

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<sup>79</sup> This is spelled Catharina in the lithographs.

<sup>80</sup> Hugo, ‘Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie, II’, p. 364.

<sup>81</sup> Guibert, ‘La “Verité du costume de scène”, p. 44.

<sup>82</sup> Smyth, ‘Performers and Spectators’, pp. 164–69; Smyth uses these lithographs to study the rivals’ contrasting body language, describing Mars’ ‘noble walk’ and ‘upright, conservatoire-learned demeanour’ and Dorval who ‘drags herself’ with her famous ‘hunched, broken posture’.



Figure 1.9 – Costume of Mlle Mars, role of Tysbé in Victor Hugo’s *Angelo*, lithograph by Pierre Maleuvre, illustrated in *Petite galerie dramatique ou recueil des différentes costumes d’acteurs des théâtres de la capitale* (Paris: Martinet, 1835). BnF.



Figure 1.10 – Costume of Mme Dorval in the role of Catharina in Victor Hugo’s *Angelo*, lithograph by Pierre Maleuvre, illustrated in *Petite galerie dramatique ou recueil des différentes costumes d’acteurs des théâtres de la capitale* (Paris: Martinet, 1835). BnF.

Costume became central to debates around onstage visibility, local colour, and theatrical realism in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, particularly under the influence of the Comédie-Française star Mlle Clairon (1723–1803).<sup>83</sup> In the case of *Angelo*, Adèle Hugo recounted how Mars and Victor Hugo clashed regarding the former’s head-dress (figure 1.9), on the grounds of Classicism and Romanticism respectively.<sup>84</sup> Mars reportedly claimed to be replicating her up-do hairstyle in her 1814 portrait by François Gérard (1770–1837), asserting that it made her look young. Victor Hugo allegedly protested that Tysbé, Mars’s character, was Paduan not a Muscovite. Moreover, with reference to Mars’s

<sup>83</sup> Guibert, ‘La “Verité du costume de scène, p. 45; Marie, *Inventer l’acteur*, pp. 159 and 340–42. Clairon’s innovation was that she and her fan base focused on her anatomy and exterior appearance in direct contrast to her Comédie-Française rival Mlle Dumesnil (1713–1803) who, alongside her own supporters, opted for a disavowal of the body, focusing instead on interior expression.

<sup>84</sup> Hugo, ‘Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie, II’, pp. 370–72

headdress, Hugo supposedly referenced a scene in which Tysbé protects Catarina from her suspecting husband, by pretending that an incriminating male coat and hat were in fact hers. For the playwright, Mars's headdress invalidated Tysbé's statement 'qu'elle avait aussi le chapeau' [that she also had a hat]. Mars reportedly retorted 'Bah! [...] est-ce que le public fait attention à ces choses-là?' [Pah! Does the public really pay attention to such things?]. To Mars, it was thus seemingly more important to maintain her public image and adhere to the Classical ideal of beauty when she was onstage than to adhere to the Romantic ideals of historical veracity.

Mars's costume design and portrait concur with Adèle Hugo's account, itself reminiscent of Sand's 1833 review of *Le Mariage de Figaro* in which Mars's disputed nationality was not that of a Paduan or a Muscovite Catarina, but of a Hispanic or French Suzanne. That Mars was more preoccupied with the youthful rather than realist qualities of her coiffure is plausible given the age gap between the rivals – a recurring misogynistic comment by critics. In 1835 Mars was fifty-six: nineteen years Dorval's senior. It is worth remembering this difference when contrasting the rivals' costumes. Whereas Mars's Tysbé wears an undergarment concealing her shoulders, chest, and arms, Dorval's Catarina has no such petticoat and exposes her shoulders, cleavage, and forearms. The different levels of visible flesh are notable, considering that Mars was supposed to be 'fleshing out' the courtesan role and Dorval that of the wife. Costume designs for Mars's roles in other plays demonstrate how she chose more revealing outfit choices, if they befitted the role.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, a possible explanation for Mars's more reserved display of flesh in *Angelo* is that alongside her younger rival she was preoccupied with the comparative ageing of her body. Keen to uphold her Classical ideal of ageless female beauty – like that of the Gérard portrait – Mars was perhaps less concerned with realistically fleshing out the courtesan character onstage.

Sand, by now an avid memoirist and long-term admirer of Dorval, provided another in-depth account of the rivals' embodied performance, this time in *Angelo*. Of Mars she wrote, 'voyez comme elle craint que les ondes de ses cheveux n'inondent ses épaules, que ses joues vermeilles ne pâlisent [...] que ses robes [...] ne se froissent!' [look at how she ensures that her hair does not fall onto her shoulders, that her rosy cheeks do not pale [...] that her

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<sup>85</sup> For example, Mars's costume as Doña Sol in *Hernani* in 1830 and as Céliimène in *Misanthrope* in 1837, both at the Comédie-Française.

dress [...] does not crease].<sup>86</sup> By contrast, of Dorval she noted ‘que lui importe que ses joues soient pâles, sa chevelure dénouée, [...] sa toilette en désordre? La passion bouillonne [...] dans son sein’ [‘what does she care if her cheeks are pale, her hair disheveled [...] her costume unkempt? Her passion boils [...] in her breast’]. Unlike Mars’s idealised incarnation, Dorval’s performance was conveyed through her flesh, overtly visible through her palpitating chest.

Janin’s memorialisation added a patriarchal perspective to Sand and Adèle Hugo’s accounts. Of Dorval, Janin noted:

sa robe est à peine attachée; ses épaules [...] ne tiennent pas à son corset; on voit battre son cœur, et certes elle ne cherche pas à le réprimer [...] elle déchirera ses dentelles en voulant se meurtrir le sein [...] et enfin [...] elle est revenue toute nue sur la scène [...] pendant que la Thisbé (dernier trait de pudeur) arrangeait modestement sa robe de soie pour mourir.

[her dress is barely holding on, her shoulders [...] do not sustain her corset; you can see her heart pounding [...] she certainly does not try to cover it up [...] she will tear her lace in an effort to bruise her breast [...] and by the end [...] she appears totally naked onstage [...] while Tysbé (in a final prudish attempt) modestly rearranges her silk dress ahead of dying].<sup>87</sup>

While somewhat sympathising with Mars’s seemingly failed prudish attempts, Janin chastised Dorval for visually exposing her pounding heart, hyperbolically describing her as naked by the final scene. Janin concluded by opposing the rivals as ‘celle-ci [...] abritée [...] par le manteau royal de Molière; celle-là [...] qui abrite le drame moderne sous les trous de son propre manteau’ [one [...] sheltered by the royal mantle of Molière [...] the other, [who] shelters modern drama under the tatters of her own mantle]. He ironically evoked the metaphorical mantle of Classicism to expose the material differences between the rivals’ literal mantles, or rather their costumes. Mars’s Classical reputation and female honour were protected both by Molière’s metaphorical Classical mantle and by Mars’s literal, conservative

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<sup>86</sup> George Sand, ‘Reprise d’Angelo’ *L’Artiste, première série, tome xi, 1836*, (Geneva: Slaktine Reprints, 1972), pp. 117–18.

<sup>87</sup> Jules Janin, *Œuvres diverses de Jules Janin*, ed. by M. Albert de la Fizelière, série II, tome 4 (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles, 1883), pp. 276–78.

attire which befitted the traditional genre. Dorval's own female reputation and that of Romanticism were in literal tatters: with apparently no long-standing patriarchal tradition to provide Dorval shelter, she was left metaphorically naked, fending for herself. It was for this reason that Janin considered Mars and Dorval's character parts as 'rôles invertis'.

In line with Janin's theorizations, *Le Constitutionnel*'s review of *Angelo*'s premiere criticised 'cette courtisane idéale, personnage que notre imagination comprend à peine' [this idealistic courtesan, a character that our imagination fails to comprehend].<sup>88</sup> Although the critic took issue with Hugo's writing, Mars's overly idealised rendition of the courtesan also left a lot to be desired, as the critic relayed of Mars:

ce talent si simple, si plein de grâce, de tact et de mesure, ne s'est plié que difficilement aux exagérations de la nouvelle école [...] ceux qui l'ont vue à côté de Mme Dorval, se livrant aux mêmes accès de romantisme et cherchant dans un nouveau genre de nouveaux moyens de succès jugeront si Mlle Mars s'élève ou si elle descend.

[this simple talent, full of grace, tact, and measure, yielded with difficulty to the exaggerations of the new school [...] those who saw her next to Mme Dorval, giving herself to the same excesses of Romanticism and trying new means of success in a new genre will judge if Mlle Mars elevates or lowers herself].

Whereas Dorval had previously succeeded by infringing upon Mars's Classical comedic terrain – through the comic courtesan role of Jeanne Vaubernier – it was precisely through another onstage courtesan that Mars's efforts to beat Dorval at her own Romantic game failed. Mars's Tysbé was too Classical and idealised to compete with Dorval's unique balancing of the historical and the ideal that was crucial to the successful 'fleshing out' of Romantic courtesans.

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<sup>88</sup> F., 'Théâtre-Français', *Le Constitutionnel*, 4 June 1835, n.p.

## Romantic Rivals No More: Dorval *Realises* the Ideal Courtesan

Once the initial run of *Angelo* was over, Mars conceded the courtesan role of Tysbé to Dorval in Paris,<sup>89</sup> and for the latter's tour of the provinces in 1836.<sup>90</sup> In conversation with Elisa Acloque (1811–1888), Mars reportedly claimed 'je me sentais froide [...] dans les rôles de courtisanes. Ainsi [...] j'en suis certaine [...] que Victor Hugo préférait Mme Dorval dans le rôle de la Thisbé' [I felt cold [...] in the courtesan roles. I am also sure [...] that Victor Hugo preferred Mme Dorval in the role of Tysbé].<sup>91</sup> Mars seemingly accepted defeat for her somewhat detached, Classical attempt to incorporate the Romantic courtesan figure of Tysbé, in the place of her better suited Romantic rival and resigned from the field. Mars concluded, like her critics, that the courtesan role was better suited to – and intended for – Dorval's 'unique celebrity persona'. The rivals' contrasting use of their onstage bodies was equally integral to Mars's own defence, as she reportedly claimed that in contrast to Dorval 'moi, je ne joue pas la comédie à quatre pattes!' [me, I do not play comedy on all fours].<sup>92</sup> The Classical star was unwilling, or unable, to give herself entirely to the demands of the Romantic school: as Micheline Boudet writes in her biography 'Mars décide en effet d'abandonner robe et coiffure romantiques' [Mars effectively decides to abandon Romantic dress and hairstyles].<sup>93</sup> By forgoing the courtesan role of Tysbé, Mars subsequently relinquished all Romantic *drame* parts – her costuming and onstage embodiment were at the centre of this final change of direction.

By contrast, Gautier memorialised Dorval's Romanticism more generally thus: 'jamais rien [...] de si vrai [...] ne s'était montré sur un théâtre; il semblait qu'on regardait, non sur une scène, mais par un trou, dans une chambre fermée, une femme qui se serait crue seule' [never had anything been presented in the theatre that was so alive, so real [...] rather than a stage, it felt like one was peeping through the keyhole of a locked room, gazing in on a woman who thought she was alone].<sup>94</sup> To borrow once more from McGirr, Gautier admired Dorval's 'real and readable' onstage body, which beckoned a voyeuristic gaze from the audience. Firmly placing Dorval in control of the effect she had on her spectator, Gautier

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<sup>89</sup> Janin, *Petite critique, Œuvres diverses*, pp. 279–298.

<sup>90</sup> Micheline Boudet, *Mademoiselle Mars l'inimitable* (Paris; Perrin, 1987), p. 342.

<sup>91</sup> Elisa Acloque, *Souvenirs anecdotiques sur Mademoiselle Mars* (Paris: Chaumerot, 1847) p. 20.

<sup>92</sup> Boudet, *Mademoiselle Mars l'inimitable*, p. 337.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>94</sup> Gautier, *Histoire du romantisme*, pp. 271–72.

reflected on how ‘il vous semble que c’est pour vous seul [...] qu’elle a [choisi ce rôle], pour vous seul qu’elle a mis cette rose dans ses cheveux [...] réalisant le rêve des poètes, elle devient pour le critique une espèce de maîtresse idéale’ [it seems that it is for you alone [...] that she has chosen this role, for you alone that she has put this rose in her hair [...] realising the dream of the poets, she becomes for the critic a sort of ideal mistress]. Not only was Dorval’s conscious choice of roles and physical embodiment crucial to the captivating effect she had on her audience, but through these she was able to *realise* (in the truest sense of the word) the dreams of the Romantic dramatists, with a careful balancing of idealism, as a ‘maîtresse idéale’. It was for this reason that the image of Dorval as Marion – in her white dress, allowing herself to be undressed – crystallised as the bohemian star’s moment of arrival on the Parisian secondary stage. By explicitly playing the ‘imagined prostitute’, to use Ferris’s term, Dorval was able to create and control her own image, establishing it as central to the hybridity of the historical/idealist Romantic imaginary. Dorval’s subversion of the ‘tropes of seduction [...] to assert [her] unique celebrity persona’ was so successful that she made history, establishing a trend for the lifelike incarnation of celebrity courtesans as a pathway for celebrity and renown from none other than Paris’s boulevard stage.

## 2 – The Retrospective Modernity of Musette in *La Vie de bohème*

[Le] Vaudeville [...] s'est contenté d'emprunter *la Vie de bohème* au théâtre des Variétés. Cette reprise a fait plaisir. Quelques personnes [...] disaient que la pièce avait vieilli; [...] mais est-ce la faute des auteurs [...] si Musette a donné naissance à une foule de mangeuses de pommes [...] vieillit-on parce qu'on devient populaire? *La Vie de bohème*, il faut s'en souvenir, a précédé *la Dame aux Camélias*; c'est la première pièce à mots de cette dimension; elle a aidé à la transformation et à la simplification du théâtre actuel.

[The Vaudeville [...] satisfied itself with borrowing *La Vie de bohème* from the Variétés theatre. The reprise was enjoyable. Some said [...] the play had aged, but is it the fault of the playwrights if Musette engendered a throng of apple-eaters [...] does something age by virtue of becoming popular? *La Vie de bohème*, it is worth remembering, preceded *La Dame aux camélias*; it is the first prose play of such magnitude; it facilitated the transformation and simplification of contemporary theatre].<sup>95</sup>

In a review of the Théâtre du Vaudeville's 1859 reprise of *La Vie de bohème* – a *pièce en cinq actes en prose* by Henry Murger (1822–1861) and Theodore Barrière (1823–1877) that premiered at the Théâtre des Variétés ten years prior on 22 November 1849 – Charles Monselet highlighted the play's original role in transforming and simplifying contemporary theatre. Identifying the play as a precursor to the hugely influential *La Dame aux camélias* (1852), Monselet observed that a crucial novelty of *La Vie de bohème* was its courtesan Musette who set the precedent for 'une foule de mangeuses de pommes' [a throng of apple-eaters]. He was referring to the courtesan roles or 'daughters of Eve' that inundated the Parisian popular stage following Musette,<sup>96</sup> starting with *La Dame aux camélias*'s Marguerite

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<sup>95</sup> Charles Monselet, 'Théâtres', *Le Monde Illustré*, 18 June 1859, p. 398.

<sup>96</sup> On the designation 'daughters of Eve' for courtesans and theatre women see Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve*.

Gautier in 1852, and succeeded by the likes of Marco in *Les Filles de marbre* (1853), Olympe in *Le Mariage d'Olympe* (1855), La Baronne d'Ange in *Le Demi-monde* (1855), and the eponymous courtesan of *Dalila* (1857).

*Le Siècle* similarly reflected on the trendsetting nature of *La Vie de bohème*'s 1849 premiere in its 1859 review, noting that 'de là les lorettes, les dames aux camélias, les filles de marbre, les Dalila [...] ont depuis dix ans occupé presque exclusivement nos théâtres' [from thence *lorettes*, *dames aux camélias*, *filles de marbre*, and *Dalilas* [...] have almost exclusively occupied our theatres for ten years].<sup>97</sup> A *lorette* was a term coined in 1841 to refer to a new type of courtesan that lived in the cheap neighbourhood near Notre Dame de Lorette in the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, also known as the quartier Bréda.<sup>98</sup> The *lorette* had already appeared in the lighter, more frivolous, vaudeville genre (such as *Breda-street ou un ange déchu*, a *comédie-vaudeville en deux actes* that premiered at the Vaudeville on 12 April 1849). However, as Monselet observed, *La Vie de bohème* was 'la première pièce à mots de cette dimension' [the first *prose* play of such magnitude] with a *lorette*. *Le Pays* considered it as 'cette pièce singulière qui a créé tout un genre' [this singular play that created a whole genre].<sup>99</sup> Musette thus established a trend for the contemporary courtesan in heftier, more reputable, prose plays. Whereas the later courtesan creations Musette inspired form the subject of the following three chapters, the focus here is to establish what was so groundbreaking about Musette that paved the way for this 'throng of apple-eaters' and in turn helped reshape contemporary theatre.

In an 1881 biography of Eugénie Doche (1821–1900), the actor who created the *lorette* Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias* in 1852, Paul Mahalin recollected that at the time of *La Dame aux camélias*'s premiere:

toutes les gouttes de notre sang demandaient un théâtre actuel et moderne. Un premier essai avait été fait, qui, dans l'avenir, tiendra une immense place aux meilleurs chapitres de notre histoire littéraire: *La Vie de bohème!* [...] Mais cet essai, d'une portée incalculable, avait lieu au théâtre des Variétés, où rien n'est pris au sérieux, et il arrivait trop tôt pour qu'on en comprit l'importance [...] *Enfin* [...] nous eûmes *la Dame aux Camélias*.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ed. de Biéville, 'Revue des théâtres', *Le Siècle*, 22 June 1859, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Nestor Roqueplan, *Nouvelles à la main*, 4 vols (Paris: Lacombe, 1840–44), II (1841), 70–80.

<sup>99</sup> Edouard Thierry, 'Revue dramatique', *Le Pays*, 21 June 1859, n.p.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Mahalin, *Les Jolies Actrices de Paris*, 4 vols (Paris: Tresse, 1868–84), III (1881), 88.

[every ounce of our blood ached for theatre that was contemporary and modern. A first attempt had been made which, in the future, would occupy a huge place in the best chapters of our literary history: *La Vie de bohème!* [...] But this attempt, of an immeasurable impact, took place at the Variétés theatre, where nothing is taken seriously, and it came too early for us to understand its worth [...] At last [...] we had *La Dame aux camélias*.]

Like Monselet, Mahalin emphasised the theatrical contemporaneity of *La Vie de Bohème* and *La Dame aux camélias*, this time linking this contemporaneity to a sense of modernity: ‘un théâtre actuel et moderne’. In the passage preceding the one cited, Mahalin had traced the development of the historical, Romantic *drame* in the 1830s through plays such as *Marion de Lorme*, which focused on the real-life seventeenth-century courtesan Marion Delorme (1613–1650), as the previous chapter has shown. For Mahalin, the new courtesan prose plays *La Vie de bohème* and *La Dame aux camélias* broke new ground by no longer being historically remote. Instead, they depicted contemporaneity which made them modern. They were the beginnings of what René Doumic later identified as ‘la comédie de mœurs moderne’ [the modern comedy of manners].<sup>101</sup>

Théophile Gautier’s concept of *modernité*, coined in May 1852 a few months after *La Dame aux camélias*’s February premiere, helps contextualize why Mahalin retrospectively perceived the plays as both ‘actuel[s] et modern[s]’. Gautier used the neologism to defend new visual art that creatively captured contemporaneity, arguing that it was wrong to scorn ‘les types purement actuels’ [purely contemporary types] and that there were ‘aspects inattendus dans la représentation intelligente et fidèle de ce que nous nommerons la *modernité*’ [unexpected aspects of the intelligent and faithful portrayal of that which we shall call *modernity*].<sup>102</sup> While Gautier’s defence of actuality in the arts came shortly after *La Dame aux camélias*’s premiere in 1852, it came two and a half years too late for *La Vie de bohème*’s first run on 22 November 1849. It was in this sense that *La Vie de bohème* ‘arrivait trop tôt pour qu’on en comprit l’importance’ [arrived too early for us to fully grasp its worth at the time].

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<sup>101</sup> For more on the modern comedy of manners see René Doumic, *Portraits d’écrivains* (Paris: P. Delaplane, 1892), p. 57–9, previously cited in Edwin Colby Byam, *Théodore Barrière: Dramatist of the Second Empire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> Théophile Gautier, ‘Salon de 1852’, *La Presse*, 27 May 1852, n.p.

Coupling this temporal lapse was a spatial concern: *La Vie de bohème* premiered at the Variétés ‘où rien n'est pris au sérieux’ [where nothing is taken seriously]. Even within Paris’s secondary theatrical division, the Variétés (named for its variety of light, popular, musical entertainment) was less reputable than the Vaudeville (which more strictly specialised in the vaudeville genre) where *La Dame aux camélias* subsequently premiered and where *La Vie de bohème* transferred in 1859. And yet I will argue, with Mahalin and Monselet, that the Variétés and its 1849 *La Vie de bohème* was a necessary steppingstone from which the *lorette* made her way up Paris’s strict theatrical hierarchy. But what was it about the *lorette* that was so integral to the development of this ‘théâtre actuel et moderne’? What about *La Vie de bohème*’s Musette helped set the stage for *La Dame aux camélias*’s Marguerite?

Although scholars have documented the important influence of *La Vie de bohème*’s 1849 playscript on Dumas  *fils*’ 1852 play *La Dame aux camélias*, this has largely been in relation to both plays’ operatic adaptations: *La Bohème* (1896) and *La Traviata* (1853).<sup>103</sup> As such, scholarly debate has focused on the similarities between Mimi and Marguerite – as heroines of *La Vie de bohème* and *La Dame aux camélias* respectively – while leaving Musette almost entirely out of the equation. This is because *La Bohème* focuses much more closely than the original play on Mimi and Rodolphe’s tragic love story.<sup>104</sup> Alexandra Wilson explains that this shift was due to the generic conventions of tragic opera whereby the librettists centred on what they deemed the essential drama. Due to our greater familiarity today with the opera over the play – as well as musicological preoccupation with opera over ‘lower-brow’ musical theatrical forms – this focal shift has resulted in heightened academic attention to Mimi and Rodolphe’s characterisation in the opera, to the detriment of characters such as Musette (or Musetta in the opera) that were crucial to the play’s popular success. Whereas in *La Bohème* Mimi eventually (albeit only briefly) succumbs to Musetta’s courtesan ways when she is forced to take on a rich protector, this is not the case in the original play in which Mimi remains steadfast in her loyalty to Rodolphe and Musette is the only *lorette*.<sup>105</sup> Returning to the play, I thus argue for the crucial role of Musette’s modernity as a *lorette* on the subsequent dramatisation of the *lorette* Marguerite.

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<sup>103</sup> See for example Helen Greenwald ‘Ars moriendi: Reflections on the Death of Mimi’ in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 167–185.

<sup>104</sup> Alexandra Wilson, *Puccini's La Bohème* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 78.

<sup>105</sup> For more on Mimi and Musetta’s differing characterisation in the opera see Wilson, *Puccini's La Bohème*, p. 26. On their characterisation in the original short stories in *Le Corsaire* see Colby Byam, *Théodore Barrière*, pp. 115–16.

One of the consequences of recentring Musette as a pioneering *lorette* in 1849 is that the important influence of both the actor and the artistic muse behind the character emerges alongside that of the playwrights. When reviewing *La Vie de bohème*'s first run, Auguste Luchet observed 'voyez pourtant ce qu'il faut pour réussir et devenir célèbre! Mettre son talent sur ce que l'on sait et le dire comme on le sait, dans la vérité pure' [see what you need to succeed and acquire celebrity? Put your talent into what you know and say it in your own words, in its absolute truth].<sup>106</sup> Although Luchet identified the play's semi-autobiographical nature – based on the playwright Murger's own recent life story – as the key to Murger's newfound celebrity,<sup>107</sup> his focus soon shifted:

le plus curieux [...] n'est point ce que les auteurs y font dire et faire [...] le curieux, c'est l'attitude douteuse, hésitante, effrayée du public [...] c'est l'embarras des comédiens, leur inhabitude [...] à rendre ces situations brusques [...] qui tiennent tout de la vie vraie et rien de la convention théâtrale [...] ce sont des faits trop exacts, trop vivans [sic] pour les fantaisies créatrices de ces messieurs et de ces dames.

[the most interesting part [...] is not what the authors make their characters say or do [...] it is the audience's doubtful, hesitant, shocked attitude [...] it is the actors' embarrassment [...] their lack of experience in performing these blunt situations [...] that are entirely made up of real life and lack all theatrical convention [...] they are too factually exact, too alive for the creative fantasies of these men and women.]

Luchet was fascinated as much by the audience's as the actors' apparent unease in the face of this unconventional theatre, which portrayed 'la vie vraie' [real life] and that were 'faits trop exacts, trop vivans' [too factually exact, too alive]. He considered the actors' usual creative fantasies to be impeded by the reality of the people they depicted. Notably, he equated the audience's initiation into this new type of theatre with the actor Adèle Page (1823–1882) who created the role of Musette: 'le public! Comment s'y prendra-t-il pour accepter la leçon? Averti par les journaux [...] que ces histoires-là sont des histoires et non pas des contes rouges [...] il finira comme Mlle Page, par comprendre de combien de dangers aussi cet étrange monde est plein' [the public! How will it process this new situation? Alerted by the

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<sup>106</sup> Auguste Luchet, 'Revue théâtrale', *La Réforme*, 3 December 1849, p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> On the success and celebrity that Murger's co-playwright Théodore Barrière acquired through *La Vie de bohème* see Colby Byam, *Théodore Barrière*.

newspapers [...] that these stories are real and not erotic fantasy, it will end up like Mlle Page, having to learn how many dangers exist in this strange world]. The critic ironized the parallels between the audience's discovery that the play was not an erotic fantasy ('conte rouge'), with Page having to learn on the job how to navigate this current, real-life *lorette* role in front of the theatre public. *L'Union* later recalled of the 1849 premiere that Musette had been applauded as 'une nouveauté piquante' [an exciting novelty];<sup>108</sup> *Le Siècle* similarly recollected that the role 'excita la curiosité' [piqued the public's interest].<sup>109</sup> Although Luchet spoke of the actors' collective unease ('l'embarras des comédiens'), Page's Musette was the most shocking creation – as much for the audience as for the actor herself – based, as she was, on a *lorette* and artist's model that was alive 'trop vivan[te]': Marie-Christine Leroux (1820–1863), known as Marie Roux.<sup>110</sup> If we return to Monselet's rhetorical question, 'is it the fault of the playwrights if Musette engendered a throng of apple-eaters?', it emerges that equally crucial to Musette's original power of contemporaneity and modernity were the actor Page who first created Musette and the living *lorette* and model Marie Roux, around whom Page had to navigate in conceiving her 'fantaisie créatrice'.

It was not just Murger who acquired celebrity and renown following *La Vie de bohème*. In 1875, a quarter of a century after the play's premiere, the writer Claude Sosthène Grasset d'Orcet wrote an article celebrating Marie Roux as the woman whom 'tout le monde [...] connaît sous le nom de "Musette"' [everyone knows by the name of Musette].<sup>111</sup> Similarly, Étienne Énault (1816–1883) observed in Page's biography that '*La Vie de Bohème, la Dame aux Camélias* [...] prouvaient jusqu'à l'évidence qu'elle avait toute l'ampleur nécessaire pour remplir les grands rôles du drame moderne' [*La Vie de Bohème, La Dame aux camélias* [...] proved beyond any doubt that she had all the necessary breadth to fill the big roles of modern drama].<sup>112</sup> Just as *La Vie de bohème* acquired its artistic worth following *La Dame aux camélias*, Page truly established herself as a star of the *drame moderne* by continuing the *lorette* trend she set: she reprised Marguerite after creating Musette. Although individually Page did not make as much of a splash as those for whom she paved the way – that is to say the actors Doche, Fargueil, and Chéri who form the remaining chapters of this thesis – I argue this is due to the role of Musette taking on its full importance retrospectively

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<sup>108</sup> A. Escande, 'Théâtres', *L'Union*, 28 June 1859, n.p.

<sup>109</sup> Biéville, 'Revue des Théâtres', p.2.

<sup>110</sup> Alexandre Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard* (Paris: Charpentier et cie, 1886), p. 180–86.

<sup>111</sup> G. D'Orcet, 'L'Atalante de Pradier et la Musette de Murger', *Revue britannique, 9e serie, tome iv*, July 1875, 377–391 (p. 384).

<sup>112</sup> Étienne Énault, 'Adèle Page', undated biography, BnF, Rt 9843.

in the lineage of the ‘throng of apple-eaters’. It is because Page had to tread new ground on the less reputable stage of the Variétés (as Mahalin claimed) , thus setting the stage for herself and her contemporaries at Paris’s more reputable theatres. Whereas other chapters of this thesis focus specifically on the celebrity associated with actors who created courtesans, this chapter differs slightly in scope by exploring how the *role* of Musette served as a vehicle for public celebrity and status, as much for Page as for the playwright Murger and his muse, the artist’s model and *lorette* Marie Roux.

To do so, I draw on Susan Waller’s contention that in mid-nineteenth-century Paris male artists and *lorettes* established a ‘strategy for public celebrity’ which capitalized on the growing popular association and professional overlap between *modèles de femme* (women artists’ models) and *lorettes*, within the context of the growing commercialisation of the Salon.<sup>113</sup> According to Waller, artists and *modèles/lorettes* partnered together to produce artworks depicting the nude female figure – who at the time was tantamount to a *lorette* and thus a commodity for sale. By so doing artists increased their work’s monetary value at the Salon, while the paid *modèle/lorette* also acquired in the Salon an additional public space in which to exhibit herself, resulting in success, wealth, and celebrity for both artist and model. Transposing this strategy from the Salon to the equally commercialised secondary stage of the Variétés and its 1849 *La Vie de bohème*, I argue the symbiotic exchange between artist and *modèle/lorette* developed into a pioneering, tripartite strategy of celebrity and success for the playwright Murger, the *modèle/lorette* Marie Roux, and the actor Page who was neither a *modèle* nor a *lorette*. So successful was this formula, that it established a genre of popular, commercialised, modern theatre that centred around the *lorette*. Section one explores how integral Musette’s modernity as a *lorette* was to the play’s success; section two focuses on the resultant tripartite celebrity and renown that Marie Roux, Murger, and Page acquired through Musette, and vice versa.

### **From Muse to Musette: The Lorette’s Modernity**

The playscript of *La Vie de bohème* (1849) was based on Murger’s semi-autobiographical short stories published in *Le Corsaire* from 9 March 1845 to 21 April 1849.<sup>114</sup> Set in 1840s Paris, the play opens with Rodolphe, a young man who lives with his rich uncle Durandin

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<sup>113</sup> Waller, *The Invention of the Model*, p. 68.

<sup>114</sup> From 7 September 1844 until 11 March 1847 the paper was called *Le Corsaire-satan* due to merging with *Satan*.

who plans to marry him off to a wealthy widow: Mme de Rouvres. While Durandin is out, Rodolphe approaches some youths picnicking and singing on the lawn and thus meets the painter, Marcel. Rodolphe asks to be introduced to whomever was just singing, and so Marcel beckons his lover Musette to make a grand entrance, by descending the garden steps and flashing her legs as she lifts her dress. The rest of the group follows: the poet Schaunard, his lover Phémie, and Colline, a philosopher. Together they toast to Bohemia – not the physical place, but a state of being made up of those who choose an artistic vocation, with no means beyond art itself. Rodolphe pledges himself to Bohemia, as a writer, and flees his uncle's home. Act II opens a year later in a hostel in the Latin quarter where the bohemians struggle to pay rent. Musette has just returned to Marcel, following a stint as a *lorette* in the Bréda quarter, where she entertained a Viscount who bought her luxury clothes and jewels. Mimi, a young flower-seller, takes up lodgings at the hostel and is reunited with Rodolphe, with whom she recently had a romance but whose financial hardship forced them to separate. Unphased by poverty, the loyal Mimi returns to Rodolphe and is juxtaposed to the changeable Musette, who regularly goes back to her *lorette* lifestyle.

In act III, Rodolphe fears Mimi's abandonment under Musette's influence but, unbeknown to him, it is his uncle who convinces Mimi to give him up for the sake of his future. In contrast to Mimi's self-sacrifice, Musette abandons Marcel again after they cannot afford to host a party they had planned. Act IV is in the salon of Mme de Rouvres, with whom Rodolphe is now in a relationship. The absent Musette is engaged to a Lord, whereas Mimi arrives to win back Rodolphe but leaves after overhearing him falsely pledging himself to the rich widow. Learning of Mimi's visit, Rodolphe ends his liaison with Mme de Rouvres. Act V opens days later at the hostel where a playful, singing Musette returns to Marcel, tired of her latest protector, followed by a fragile Mimi who has been hospitalised since the salon due to heartbreak and ill-health caused by poor living conditions. In a delirious state in the freezing hostel, Mimi eyes up Musette's latest extravagant attire and requests a muff, which Musette readily provides. The warm, luxury garment does little to revive the glacial Mimi, who dies shortly after.

The show was an overnight success: referring to the new playwright Murger, Gautier wrote in his review of the premiere that '*La Vie de bohème*, immense avantage du théâtre, l'a révélé en une seule soirée' [*La Vie de bohème*, due to the great benefit of the theatre, proved his worth in a single night].<sup>115</sup> Although Murger had published *Scènes de la vie bohème*

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<sup>115</sup> Théophile Gautier, 'Théâtres', *La Presse*, 26 November 1849, n.p.

periodically over the previous years, it was opening night that launched the story's immense popularity. This was due to the much broader reach of the theatre – beyond the readership of *Le Corsaire* – and the immediate dramatic effect of the stage, of which the actors were a crucial component. *Le Charivari* praised the actors 'dont le zèle et l'intelligence se sont associés au succès de la pièce' [whose zeal and intelligence are associated with the play's success]; *Le Constitutionnel* observed that the playwrights 'ont trouvé dans les acteurs [...] des très habiles et très charmans [sic] complices' [found in their actors [...] some very able and charming accomplices].<sup>116</sup> The actors were considered complicit in delivering what *Le Constitutionnel* called 'cette existence par trop décolletée' [this overtly titillating existence] while maintaining 'un goût de style dont le vaudeville courant n'a pas le secret' [a tasteful style to which the current vaudeville is not privy]. *Le Corsaire* similarly praised 'la nouveauté du dialogue [qui] a surtout beaucoup amusé, et a fait passer par-dessus quelques détails un peu plus qu'érotiques' [the novelty of the dialogue that was particularly amusing and which passed over certain openly erotic details].<sup>117</sup> Central to the play's power were its loose, sexual morals expressed through a novel, open, and humorous prose dialogue and delivered by its 'charming accomplices'. Notably, Page's Musette was praised in the same terms as the play's 'existence par trop décolletée' [overtly titillating existence]: *Le Courrier* observed that 'Page est une charmante Musette; elle a toute l'espièglerie nécessaire pour ce rôle un peu décolleté' [Page is a charming Musette; she has all the mischief required for this somewhat titillating role]. Page thus embodied the play's 'titillating' charm, as a primary 'accomplice'.

*L'Illustration* depicted the centrality of Page's brazen embodiment of Musette in its sole illustration (figure 2.1) accompanying its review. The image is of act I, where all bohemians other than Mimi are present. Page's Musette dominates the right foreground of the illustration with her commanding body language, as she toasts to Bohemia. Her pale, billowing dress marks her out from the darkly clothed men behind, who somewhat fade into the background. In the left foreground, the more innocent Phémie is juxtaposed to Musette, in a pale dress which instead highlights her reserved composure, with folded arms.

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<sup>116</sup> R, *Le Constitutionnel*, 26 November 1849.

<sup>117</sup> Ch. Besselièvre, *Le Corsaire*, 26 November 1849.



Figure 2.1 – *La Vie de bohème, 1er acte*, illustration by M.V., *L'Illustration*, 1 December 1849, n.p.

In a review of an 1873 reprise of *La Vie de bohème*, the writer Auguste Vitu (1823–1891) equally stressed the importance of the original women’s role creations – this time of Mimi and Musette – recollecting of the premiere:

il y avait de l’excellent et du très médiocre dans l’interprétation [...] en 1849. Sous le premier [...] je range Mlle Thuillier, qui se plaça au premier rang des actrices de drame par sa création de Mimi; et Mlle Page, qui réalisa la vraie Musette du poète, éclatante comme une fleur et gaie comme un pinson. Par une fâcheuse compensation, Rodolphe et Marcel n’eurent que de représentants fort ternes

[there was both excellence and mediocrity in the 1849 rendition. Under the first category [...] I place Mademoiselle Thuillier, who elevated herself to the top tier of dramatic actresses through her creation of Mimi; and Mademoiselle Page, who brought to life the real Musette of the poet, radiant as a flower and as happy as a lark. In stark contrast, Rodolphe and Marcel’s interpreters were very dull].<sup>118</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Auguste Vitu, ‘Premières représentations’, *Le Figaro*, 12 May 1873, p. 3. This article was republished in Auguste Vitu, *Les Mille et une nuits du théâtre*, 9 vols (Paris: Paul Ollendorff Editeur, 1885), II, 79–85.

For Vitu, the play's original success hinged on the opposing women leads, who outshone the men. Whereas the emerging Marguerite Thuillier (1824–1885) proved herself as a dramatic actor, Vitu praised Page's comedic talent, as an already established star, in highly gendered and sexualised terms: as a blossoming flower and a gay little bird. An 1882 obituary of Page went so far as to recall 'par dessus tout, *La Vie de bohème*. Ceux qui se la rappellent dans le rôle de Musette, se rappellent certainement aussi l'auréole de poésie, de jeunesse et de gaieté dont elle entourait le personnage et qui fut le succès de la pièce' [above all, *La Vie de bohème*. Those who remember her as Musette, will certainly remember the poetic, youthful and joyful aureole with which she surrounded her character and which was the play's greatest success].<sup>119</sup> Encapsulating the play's jovial spirit, Page's Musette was considered both the highlight of the actor's career and the play's runaway success.

Given the play's bleak ending and our greater familiarity today with Puccini's operatic adaptation *La Bohème* (1896), which centres on Mimi and Rodolphe's story, the focus of contemporary sources on the play's humour, sensual playfulness, and the role of Musette is perhaps surprising. In fact, as Alexandra Wilson observes of *La Bohème*'s Parisian premiere in 1898, several critics complained that the opera failed to capture the play's spirit, with one quipping 'il fallait simplement intituler cela *Rodolphe et Mimi*' [it should have simply been called *Rodolphe and Mimi*].<sup>120</sup> And yet much of what Wilson observes of *La Bohème*'s power at the end of the nineteenth century helps elucidate the sway of Musette in the mid-century and its influence on both the play and opera's legacy. According to Wilson, Puccini and his librettists recreated familiar, literary characters on stage who recalled earlier nineteenth-century types but were also realistic figures that you might encounter in 1890s Paris, especially in terms of the women leads.<sup>121</sup> Wilson observes that the *fin-de-siècle* Parisian publishing and tourist industries constructed the 'good-hearted young demimondaine as both symbolic of the city itself and an attraction for visitors', thus feeding male fantasies about the capital's women. For Wilson 'Musetta embodies this archetype most obviously' as opera spectators of 1896 could, if they wished, visit Paris to encounter 'a real-life Musetta'. She therefore concludes that the opera might have 'fuelled a type of contemporary sex tourism, or at least one of the imagination'.<sup>122</sup> The same, I argue, is true for *La Vie de bohème*'s Musette in the mid-nineteenth-century. However, if Musetta recalled earlier literary

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<sup>119</sup> Anon., *La France (Paris)*, 24 January 1882, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> G. Salvayre, 'Premières représentations', *Gil Blas*, 14 June 1898, n.p.; previously cited in Alexandra Wilson, *Puccini's La Bohème* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 78.

<sup>121</sup> Wilson, *Puccini's La Bohème*, p. 46.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

types as much as current, Musette was an entirely contemporary creation, delivering the ‘modern’ (as Gautier would define it in 1852) on stage. It was precisely this modernity of Musette as a *lorette*, I argue, which ‘fuelled a type of contemporary sex tourism, or at least one of the imagination’ on the popular Parisian stage or – as Monselet put it – ‘une foule de mangeuses de pommes’ [a throng of apple-eaters].

As a foil to Musette’s coquetry as a *lorette*, Mimi in *La Vie de bohème* is a *grisette*, as she herself maintains in act IV scene XI when she says to Rodolphe’s rich lover, Mme de Rouvres, ‘nous autres grisettes [...] avons souvent le dessus du panier de vos amours’ [as *grisettes*, we often have the cream of the crop of your lovers].<sup>123</sup> Dating back to the seventeenth century, the term *grisette* described a young, working-class woman, derived from the grey fabric of her uniform, and became popular during the July Monarchy (1830–48) to refer to working class women of the Latin quarter. In 1834, Paul de Kock famously mythologised the *grisette* as a flirtatious but not venal type, who typically took artists, poets, or students as lovers for amorous not mercenary exploits, and the type soon populated plays, literature, and caricature.<sup>124</sup> The *lorette* thus appeared in opposition to the *grisette*, as a work-shy, mercenary type who took on wealthy lovers to support her hedonistic lifestyle and taste for luxury. Although Nestor Roqueplan coined the term in 1841, according to Gautier the *lorette* began to appear from the 1820s in cheap rental accommodation offered by the new developments near Notre Dame de Lorette (to which the type owed its name), in the Bréda quarter, and featured in literature and plays from the 1840s.<sup>125</sup>

The *grisette* and *lorette* therefore differed not only in their respective morality and venality, but in their spatial and temporal specificity. As Waller argues ‘if the *grisette* was an invention of the *ancien régime* which persisted and flourished in the July Monarchy, the *lorette* was a creature of the modern city’.<sup>126</sup> It is Musette’s specificity in time and space, in contrast to the more conventional *grisette* Mimi, which I argue was at the heart of *La Vie de bohème*’s modernity. Indeed, in Gautier’s review he praised the brazen, true to life Musette celebrating her iconic status as ‘cette Manon Lescaut du Mont-Breda’ [this Manon Lescaut from Mont-Breda].<sup>127</sup> Whereas Manon Lescaut was an 18<sup>th</sup>-century fictional icon, Musette

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<sup>123</sup> Théodore Barrière and Henry Murger, *La Vie de Bohème* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1853), p. 26.

<sup>124</sup> Paul de Kock, ‘Les Grisettes’, in *Nouveau tableau de Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 7 vols (Paris: Librairie de Mme Charles-Béchet, 1834–35), 1 (1834), 169–79. For a list of the many plays that featured *grisettes* from 1834 onwards see Sidney D. Braun, *The Courtesan in French Theatre: From Hugo to Becque 1831–1885* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 32.

<sup>125</sup> Roqueplan, *Nouvelles à la main*, 70–80; Théophile Gautier, *Souvenirs de théâtre, d’art et de critique* (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1904), pp. 187–8.

<sup>126</sup> Waller, *The Invention of the Model*, p. 55.

<sup>127</sup> Gautier, ‘Théâtre’, 26 November 1849, n.p.

resembled the real, contemporary *lorettes* of the Bréda quarter. Gautier added that Musette ‘est d’une originalité charmante, et diffère entièrement de toutes ces lorettes de convention dont on a soin, au théâtre, de faire des choristes de l’Opéra pour leur donner un état dans le monde’ [is charmingly original and differs entirely from all the conventional *lorettes* that the theatre tends to depict as opera chorus girls to explain their status in the world]. For Gautier, Musette distinguished herself from other onstage *lorettes* by deviating from tired theatrical tropes that euphemistically equated courtesans and performers. Although the historical association between performers and courtesans persisted, as the professions continued to overlap, Musette presented a new association that had not yet been treated onstage: that of the *modèle de femme* (women artists’ model) and the *lorette*.

In 1840s Paris, the professions of the *lorette* and *modèle de femme* began to intersect. Although nude female models were forbidden in the École des Beaux-Arts until 1863, they regularly started posing in private *ateliers* from the start of the century.<sup>128</sup> As such, as Waller explains, the district near Notre Dame de Lorette became known as ‘Nouvelle Athènes’ [New Athens], attracting artists who used *lorettes* as their models that were equivalent to the Hetaerae of Ancient Greece.<sup>129</sup> Waller points to Alfred Delvau’s 1865 *Histoire anecdotique des barrières de Paris* which maintained it was in ‘le quartier Bréda, où fleurissent les lorettes et les peintres, celles-ci modèles de ceux-là’ [the Breda quarter in which *lorettes* and painters flourished, the former posing for the latter].<sup>130</sup> One such *modèle/lorette* was Marie Roux, upon whom Musette was based. Born to humble origins in Chalon-sur-Saône in 1820, Marie Roux came to Paris in the mid 1840s and found work as a *modèle de femme*, appearing with her sister Antoinette in a daguerreotype by Félix Nadar in c. 1845.<sup>131</sup> Marie was soon in demand and posed for the nude female figures of Jean-Léon Gérôme’s painting *Combat de coqs* (1846) – presented at the 1847 Salon – and James Pradier’s statue *La Toilette d’Atalante* (1850), exhibited in 1850.<sup>132</sup> In the early 1850s the sisters posed together for a nude daguerreotype by J. A. Moulin entitled *Baigneuses*, and in the early 1860s Marie posed for one of only three of Nadar’s nude photographic portraits, *Étude de nu pour J. L. Gérôme*, commissioned by Gérôme to assist with his nude female figure in *Phyrrné devant l’Aréopage*, exhibited at the 1861 Salon.

<sup>128</sup> Waller, *The Invention of the Model*, p. 40–42.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 56. On the association between the modèle/lorette and Ancient Greek Hetaerae see also Sylvie Aubenas, ‘Modèles de peinture, modèles de photograph,’ in *L’Art du nu au XIXe siècle: le photographe et son modèle*, ed. by Sylvie Aubenas (Paris: Hazan/BnF, 1997), p. 42.

<sup>130</sup> Alfred Delvau, *Histoire anecdotique des barrières de Paris* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865), p. 96.

<sup>131</sup> Aubenas, ‘Modèles de peinture, modèles de photograph,’ pp. 46–7.

<sup>132</sup> D’Orcet, ‘L’Atalante de Pradier et la Musette de Murger’, p. 384.

A popular *modèle de femme*, Marie was also a *lorette* and acquired so much wealth through her successful career that she retired aged 43, tragically dying on her departure from Paris on the *Atlas* shipwreck on 4 December 1863. It is arguably due to Marie Roux's early retirement and death that she is not as recognised today as some of her *modèle/lorette* contemporaries who continued to make names for themselves through the second half of the century: namely Apollonie Sabatier (1822–1889), Céleste Mogador (1824–1909), and Alice Ozy (1820–1893) whom it is believed posed, respectively, for the nude female figures of Clésiner's *Woman Bitten by a Serpent* presented at the 1847 Salon, Couture's *Romans of the Decadence*, also exhibited in 1847, and Chassériau's *Bather Sleeping by a Stream* exhibited in 1850.<sup>133</sup> Due to the illicit nature of nude female modelling at the time, no critics publicly named any of the models behind these works, but their identities appear to have been widely known. The same was true for Marie Roux's own work as a *modèle de femme* and as the inspiration for Musette in *La Vie de bohème* in 1849.

As previously observed, *La Reforme* was among several newspapers who alerted its readers to the real and current events behind *La Vie de bohème*. Another such paper was *L'Artiste* who wrote 'les personnages de la Bohême nous étaient connus depuis longtemps [...] Schaunard a promis de faire notre portrait [...] qu'il signera par pudeur du nom d'Alexandre Schann [sic] [...] Musette a-t-elle souvent fait entendre sa chanson à mon oreille' [we had been acquainted with the characters of Bohemia for quite some time [...] Schaunard promised to paint our portrait [...] which he will humbly sign under the name Alexandre Schann [...] Musette has often graced my ear with her song].<sup>134</sup> The critic correctly identified the poet and painter Alexandre Schanne (1823–1887) as the figure behind Schaunard, claiming also to know the real Musette although not naming her. It is possible the critic was simply familiar with the real *lorette* type or that he was extending Marie Roux the same anonymity on paper that art critics granted her and her *modèle de femme* peers. Likewise, when d'Orcet wrote his 1875 article celebrating the woman whom 'tout le monde [...] connaît sous le nom de "Musette"' [everyone knows by the name of Musette], he did not name Marie Roux but provided recognisable biographical details, including her provenance and death. D'Orcet thus captured the oxymoronic nature of Marie Roux's anonymity and knowability: she was widely recognised under the pseudonym of Musette.

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<sup>133</sup> Waller, *The Invention of the Model*, pp. 68–70; Aubenas, 'Modèles de peinture, modèles de photograph', p. 42.

<sup>134</sup> André Thomas, 'Théâtre des Variétés', *L'Artiste*, 1 December 1849, n.p.

Notably, in Schanne's own 1886 memoirs he maintained some of the 'pudeur' *L'Artiste* had ascribed to him in 1849, still refraining from using Marie Roux's full name but simply recalling 'une Mariette bien réelle, que j'ai vue et connue, et dont Murger s'est évidemment servi comme du prototype de Musette' [a real Mariette, whom I saw and knew, and whom Murger clearly used as the prototype of Musette].<sup>135</sup> As well as including identifying details – such as Marie Roux's death and the fact she posed for Pradier's *La Toilette d'Atalante* – Schanne recounted correspondence from a decade prior between himself and the writer Théodore de Banville (1823–1891), proving how well-known Marie Roux's identity as the 'real' Musette had previously been. In response to Banville's review of the play's 1878 reprise at the Théâtre de l'Odéon – which Schanne considered 'très sobre de détails sur Musette' [very lacking in detail about Musette] – the latter took it upon himself to write to the critic, explaining in his memoirs that: 'un tel oubli de sa part m'étonnait, et je ne pus m'empêcher de lui en envoyer par la poste quelques reproches amicaux. "Tu ne sais donc point l'horrible fin de Mariette autrement de Musette (lui-disais-je, ou à peu près)...?"' [such an omission on his part shocked me, and I could not stop myself from sending him by post a friendly reproach. "Do you not know the horrible end of Mariette, also known as Musette? (I asked him, more or less)"].<sup>136</sup> By 'Mariette' and 'Musette' Schanne referred to Marie Roux, and her tragic death ('horrible fin') aboard the *Atlas* in 1863: he went on to lament 'la pauvre Musette de Murger [qui] dort donc à jamais [...] au fond de la Méditerranée!' [Murger's poor Musette who sleeps for evermore [...] at the bottom of the Mediterranean]. Schanne's astonishment at Banville's oversight – to the point of a gentle reproach – attests both to the importance and to the well-known nature of Marie Roux's identity as the real Musette. This is further supported by Banville's response on 3 December 1878, in which he demonstrated his own disbelief at his prior omission: 'comment diable avais-je oublié le modèle de Musette? [how the devil had I forgotten the model for Musette?].<sup>137</sup> Although Banville had neglected to mention the late Marie Roux, who had been dead 15 years, the previous knowability and importance of her identity as the 'real' Musette was evident.

Given the ongoing prohibited nature of female modelling in 1849, the playscript of *La Vie de bohème* playfully and implicitly alludes to Musette's identity as a *modèle de femme*. Not least of all, the name Musette – although a term for a popular French bagpipe of the seventeenth and eighteenth century – is likely a veiled, possibly endearing, *double entendre*

<sup>135</sup> Alexandre Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard* (Paris: G. Charpentier et Cie, 1886), p. 180.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184; see also Théodore Banville, 'Revue dramatique' in *Le National*, 28 October 1878.

<sup>137</sup> Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard*, p. 186

for an artist's muse. And, throughout the play, Musette's joint profession as *modèle/lorette* is humorously implied. For example, at the start of act II, Rodolphe teases her for previously abandoning their bohemian lifestyle of the Latin quarter 'pour aller habiter les hauteurs cythérées du quartier Bréda' [to go and live in the Cytherean heights of the Breda quarter].<sup>138</sup> The 'quartier Bréda' implies Musette's status as a *lorette* and by linking it to Cythera – the birthplace of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and patron goddess of courtesans – the playwrights hinted at the overlapping professions of *modèle/lorette* in 'Nouvelle Athènes'. As previously identified, the Bréda quarter was known as 'Nouvelle Athènes' due to the area attracting artists who used *lorettes* as their models that were considered equivalent to the Hetaerae of Ancient Greece.

Another instance that alludes to Musette's identity as a *modèle de femme* is in act III scene XI, when Marcel and Musette prepare to host a party and the former is shocked by the simplicity of the latter's intended party frock, exclaiming 'comment! Tu vas te présenter devant le critique influent avec un vêtement de cette simplicité?' [What? Are you going to show yourself in front of the influential critic with such a simple outfit?].<sup>139</sup> Marcel is a painter and the likely implication here is that Musette, as his lover, is also his model and it is in their mutual interests for her to present herself favourably in front of the art critic. As well as the symbiotic relation between artist and *modèle* – whereby the *modèle/lorette* as a commodity for sale contributed to the value of works in which she appeared – this moment quite probably alludes to another overlapping popular association: the eroticised relationship between artist and model. As Waller observes, Gautier himself had romanticised the sexualised artist/*modèle* exchange in his 'Feuillets d'album d'un jeune rapin' in 1845.<sup>140</sup> Therefore, when Gautier praised Musette in his review of the 1849 premiere for her 'originalité charmante' [charming originality] by diverting from tired theatrical tropes that euphemistically equated *lorettes* with performers, he was likely celebrating the innovative staging of this new *modèle/lorette* type he himself had idealised in literature only a few years prior.

Another suggestive moment for Musette's double profession is in act II scene VIII, when Rodolphe's manservant Baptiste refers to Musette in her absence as 'une fille d'Eve, une mangeuse de pommes' [a daughter of Eve, an apple eater] and admires her unmade bed,

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<sup>138</sup> Barrière and Murger, *La Vie de Bohême*, p. 8.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>140</sup> Théophile Gautier, 'Feuillets d'album d'un jeune rapin' in *Le Diable à Paris: Paris et les parisiens* vol 1, (Paris: J Hetzel, 1845), pp. 314–20.

remarking ‘c’est là qu’elle a dormi, le lit conserve encore une empreinte voluptueuse dans laquelle on pourrait mouler une Vénus’ [it is there that she slept, the bed still preserves a voluptuous imprint in which one could mould a Venus].<sup>141</sup> As well as linking Musette’s identity as a *lorette* (a ‘daughter of Eve’) to the possibility of being a *modèle*, this was possibly a specific allusion to an incident around the time of *La Vie de bohème*’s premiere, which d’Orcet relayed in 1875. According to d’Orcet, in the late 1840s when Marie Roux posed for Pradier’s nude female sculpture *La Toilette d’Atalante* (1850) she missed several sittings and so the sculptor called on her, finding her in a cataleptic trance in bed. Pradier reportedly decided to take advantage of her comatose state and prepared some plaster to make a cast of her unconscious body, but Marie Roux came to and poured the plaster over Pradier’s head.<sup>142</sup> Whether the troubling anecdote is true or an urban myth, the fact the story originated around the time of *La Vie de bohème*’s premiere may have assisted certain audience members in recognising the specific *lorette* behind Musette, whose prostrate body and imprint were sculpture worthy.

For audience members who did not identify Marie Roux specifically, the actor Page equally conveyed Musette’s contemporaneity and thus modernity, through her own powers of association. Only three years Marie Roux’s junior, Page was considered a natural for the role: *Le Corsaire* wrote that Page ‘a joué avec tant de grâce et de naturel [...] qu’il n’y a eu que des mains pour l’applaudir’ [played with such grace and naturalness [...] that she received nothing but applause].<sup>143</sup> In *La Vraie Bohème de Henri Murger* (1947), drawn from a collection of contemporary letters and written accounts by the real figures behind Murger’s story, André Warnod echoed this sentiment in an exchange he recorded: “— Mlle Page a trouvé, avec celui de Musette, un de ses meilleurs rôles.” “— Elle n’avait qu’à jouer au naturel, ce n’est pas la vertu qui l’embarrasse.” [“— Mademoiselle Page has found, through Musette, one of her best roles” “— All she needed to do was perform naturally, she herself is not embarrassed by virtue].<sup>144</sup> That the risqué role came naturally to the shameless Page was not only a comment on her skillset, but indicative of the contemporary association between *modèles/lorettes* and women actors, especially at Paris’s popular stages. As Waller notes ‘a well-worn route from the *atelier* to the *demi-monde* led through the theatre: women who posed also performed on – or aspired to – the stage’.<sup>145</sup> This was because the stigma of

<sup>141</sup> Barrière and Murger, *La Vie de Bohème*, p. 11.

<sup>142</sup> D’Orcet, ‘L’Atalante de Pradier et la Musette de Murger’, pp. 388–90.

<sup>143</sup> Ch. Besselièvre, ‘Théâtres’, *Le Corsaire*, 26 November 1849, n.p.

<sup>144</sup> André Warnod, *La Vraie Bohème de Henri Murger* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1947), p. 251.

<sup>145</sup> Waller, *The Invention of the model*, p. 65.

performing was comparable to that of posing. Indeed, the historical association between actors and courtesans – who according to Rousseau were linked by selling themselves publicly in exchange for money – was akin to the contemporary, popular association between the *modèle/lorette* who exhibited her body for a fee. As established in my introduction, nowhere was this association more prevalent than on the secondary, commercialised stage which, unlike the state-sanctioned primary theatres, depended on ticket sales – on selling itself publicly – to stay afloat.

What is more, I would argue that the association between women actors and the *modèle/lorette* was most pronounced at the Variétés theatre. Not only had the theatre been founded in 1807 by the ex-courtesan, Mademoiselle Montansier (1730–1820),<sup>146</sup> but two of Page’s Variétés colleagues were none other than the aforementioned Mogador and Ozy – the *modèles/lorettes* who reportedly posed nude in paintings exhibited in 1847 and 1850 respectively, shortly before and after *La Vie de bohème*’s premiere. Page would thus have been associated with her celebrated *modèle/lorette* colleagues at this same theatre, and vice versa: Ozy herself reprised the role of Musette a few years later in 1852, again at the Variétés. While, according to Gautier, Musette’s novelty and actuality depended on her deviation from tired theatrical tropes that euphemistically equated courtesans with performers, the women stars of the Variétés – Page and subsequently Ozy – helped reanimate the tired, generic historical association of the actor/courtesan to the more contemporary *actor/modèle/lorette* type. As well as a temporal specificity, there was a spatial one: the Variétés theatre was not far from the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* and its Bréda quartier, itself located in the neighbouring 2<sup>nd</sup> *arrondissement*. Although, as Monselet maintained, at the Variétés ‘rien n’est pris au sérieux’ [nothing is taken seriously], it was precisely the theatre’s risqué reputation – acquired in large part through its own theatre women – that rendered it the ideal steppingstone for the initiation of the *lorette* figure into the prose play genre.

Beyond the *lorette/modèle/actor* associations of the Variétés theatre, Page herself convincingly embodied the modern figure of the *modèle/lorette* whose bed imprint alone was enough to capture the imagination of sculptors. *Le Charivari des théâtres* reported of the première that:

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<sup>146</sup> Yon, *Théâtres parisiens*, p. 121.

Page est la plus délirante petite lorette que l'on puisse trouver... Elle est si jolie, si jolie que l'on pardonne la faiblesse de ce pauvre Marcel qui reprend à chaque instant son infidèle Musette et lui ouvre ses bras comme l'enfant prodigue. Joué par tout autre, ce rôle dangereux ne serait pas supportable

[Page is the most phenomenal little *lorette* that you can find... she is so pretty, so pretty that one forgives the poor Marcel's weakness, as he takes back his unfaithful Musette every time, opening his arms like to the prodigal son. Played by any other, this dangerous role would be unbearable].<sup>147</sup>

Repeating the term 'si jolie' [so pretty], the critic emphasised the centrality of Page's exceptional beauty in making the highly risqué *modèle/lorette* role ('ce rôle dangereux') palatable to the theatre public. Page's beauty was equally integral to realistically incorporating the real Marie Roux whose own beauty was described in similarly emphatic terms: 'belle, positivement belle' [beautiful, positively beautiful].<sup>148</sup> Other critics likewise commented on Page's looks in realistically embodying Musette: Gautier remarked that Musette 'a pour interprète la jolie Mlle Page' [is played by the pretty Mademoiselle Page];<sup>149</sup> *Le Charivari* called Page 'ravissant[e] comme toujours' [as ravishing as always].<sup>150</sup>

Page's beauty was so central to her successful embodiment of Musette's the *modèle/lorette* that the year following the premiere Dumas  *fils* approached her as his first choice for the *lorette* Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias*. The playwright recollected years later: 'je me présentai chez mademoiselle Page, alors au théâtre des Variétés, dont la beauté, l'élégance et même le talent me paraissaient pouvoir se prêter aux exigences du rôle' [I approached Mademoiselle Page, then at the Variétés theatre, whose beauty, elegance and even talent I thought would lend themselves to the role's requirements].<sup>151</sup> In the wake of Page's success as Musette, Dumas  *fils* considered her beauty first, and then her elegance and talent, as ideal for the *lorette* role of Marguerite. Page's status as a star of the Variétés also played into his considerations: he explained that due to the risqué *lorette* subject matter of *La Dame aux camélias* in the *drame* genre, he tentatively tried to find a theatre via an influential actor, thus approaching Page 'alors au théâtre des Variétés' [then at the Variétés theatre].

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<sup>147</sup> Anon., 'Variétés' *Le Charivari des théâtres*, 28 November 1849, n.p..

<sup>148</sup> Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard*, p. 181.

<sup>149</sup> Gautier, 'Théâtres', 26 November 1849, n.p.

<sup>150</sup> Léopold Panier, 'Revue dramatique', *Le Charivari*, 26 November 1849, n.p.

<sup>151</sup> Alexandre Dumas  *fils*, *Théâtre complet*, 8 vols (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1890–98), VIII (1898), p. 7.

That Page and the Variétés were the first actor/theatre combination Dumas *films* attempted both attests to their winning formula for *La Vie de bohème*'s *lorette* and that the risqué Musette broke new ground on which Marguerite followed, albeit on a different stage. Precisely because Page had been so successful as Musette, she was too in demand to receive the as of yet unestablished Dumas *films*: 'Mademoiselle Page, très à la mode, assaillie tous les jours par des importuns de tous genres, ne me reçut pas' [Mademoiselle Page, very in vogue, pestered every day by all sorts of people, did not meet with me]. It was exactly the renown and success that Musette generated that Dumas *films* aspired to and achieved in his own staging of the *lorette* Marguerite, in Musette's image.

### The Tripartite Celebrity of Musette

A closer look at the celebrity and success Murger, Marie Roux, and Page acquired through the onstage creation of Musette in 1849 further elucidates the foundational influence the *lorette* character had on *La Dame aux camélias* (1852) and on the 'throng of apple-eaters' who followed Musette onto the popular Parisian stage. By approaching Musette as a tripartite iteration of the symbiotic 'vehicle for public celebrity' that Waller identifies in the artworld – between the *modèle/lorette* and artist in the context of the mid-nineteenth-century commercialised Salon – we can grasp the fuller effect of Musette on the popular, commercialised stage of the Variétés. Starting first with Murger's own success as artist, I will then explore that of Marie Roux as *modèle/lorette* and Page as a hybrid of the artist/*modèle/lorette* as performer and creator of the onstage role.

Just as Gautier claimed that *La Vie de bohème* revealed Murger 'en une seule soirée' [in a single night],<sup>152</sup> *L'Artiste* reported the instant celebrity of the playwright 'qui n'était connu jusqu'alors que des littérateurs et d'une minime portion de [sic] public intelligent' [that was previously known only by lettered folk and a minimal portion of the intelligent public].<sup>153</sup> According to *L'Artiste*, by staging the play at the Variétés, Murger gained immediate renown beyond the literate circles that read his *Scènes de la vie bohème* in *Le Corsaire*. The play's immense success drew in huge audiences irrespective of class divides: *La Presse* reported on 'le grand succès du jour: *La Vie de bohème*, qui amènera tout Paris aux Variétés' [the huge triumph of the day: *La Vie de bohème*, which will bring all of Paris to the

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<sup>152</sup> Gautier, 'Théâtres', 26 November 1849, n.p.

<sup>153</sup> Thomas, 'Théâtre des Variétés', 1 December 1849, n.p.

Variétés].<sup>154</sup> Central to the play's appeal was Musette's sex appeal as a 'nouveau piquante' [an exciting novelty],<sup>155</sup> who 'excita la curiosité des gens du monde' [piqued the curiosity of high society].<sup>156</sup> Displacing the *lorette* from the typical lower-brow vaudeville genre to the more reputable prose play, *La Vie de bohème* brought in crowds from all social strata. It is in this sense that Musette, as a *modèle/lorette*, became a commodity for sale on the commercial popular Parisian stage and, in the words of Wilson 'fuelled a type of contemporary sex tourism, or at least one of the imagination' to the Variétés theatre. Tickets were in such demand from across Paris that their cost increased daily. On 28 November *La Presse* reported that *La Vie de bohème* 'est décidément un grand succès d'argent. Chaque jour voit s'accroître le chiffre de la recette. Trois mois ne suffiront pas pour épuiser la vogue assurée maintenant à ce bel ouvrage' [is unequivocally a huge monetary success. Each day sees ticket prices increase. Three months will not suffice to end the vogue that is now secured for this beautiful work].<sup>157</sup> Although the theatre management gained most from the inflated ticket sales, the playwrights also profited from the huge box-office returns due to an established system of royalties.<sup>158</sup> Thus, Murger as artist, gained both in celebrity and financial worth through his staging of the *lorette* Musette.

The play's immense success also resulted in Murger securing a publishing deal, turning the play into a popular novel, *Scènes de la vie bohème* (1851), which further increased the writer's celebrity and financial return. Perhaps the most celebrated addition to the 1851 novel was the song *Mademoiselle Musette* in the epilogue, which attested to Musette's centrality to the play's triumph and the resulting publication: in 1886 Schanne referred to it as 'l'air si connu de *Musette*' [Musette's air that is so well known] with no further explanation required.<sup>159</sup> Around the time of the novel's publication the composer Alfred Vernet (1819–1879) set the lyrics to music and a decade later Murger himself sang the song at a dinner party hosted by his co-playwright Barrière. Vitu recollected 'au mois d'octobre 1860, quelques amis dînaient chez Théodore Barrière [...] on pria Murger de chanter [...] il chanta la chanson de Musette avec une expression qui produisit sur quelques-uns d'entre nous une sorte d'émotion inquiète' [in October 1860, some friends dined at Théodore Barrière's home [...] we begged Murger to sing [...] he sang Musette's song with

<sup>154</sup> Anon., 'Variétés', *La Presse*, 25 November 1849, n.p.

<sup>155</sup> Escande, 'Théâtres', 28 June 1859, n.p.

<sup>156</sup> Ed. de Biéville, 'Revue des Théâtres', *Le Siècle*, 22 June 1859, n.p.

<sup>157</sup> Anon., 'Variétés', *La Presse*, 28 November 1849, n.p.

<sup>158</sup> On the system of royalty payments for playwrights see Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 231.

<sup>159</sup> Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard*, p. 69.

such expression that it stirred a sort of disquiet among some of us].<sup>160</sup> That Murger chose to perform the song at Barrière's soirée demonstrated the song's enduring legacy and its impact on both playwrights, and other party guests, producing a seemingly nostalgic pang.

The song became so popular that Barrière inserted it into an 1873 reprise of the play at the Odéon: Vitu recalled 'par une heureuse inspiration, Barrière a intercalé au cinquième acte, la *Chanson de Musette*, cette délicieuse élégie [...] devenue peu à peu populaire' [by a happy inspiration, Barriere inserted *Musette's song*, that delightful elegy [...] that became more and more popular].<sup>161</sup> Accompanying the reprise, *Le Ménestrel* advertised the sale of the song's sheet music (figure 2.2) – further evidence of Musette's renown and status as a commodity that continued to generate revenue a quarter of a century after the premiere. Vitu posited in his review of the 1873 reprise 'Murger lui-même aurait-il espéré un tel regain de fortune vingt-quatre ans d'échéance? J'en doute; il eut été le premier à dire de sa pièce comme Musette de sa robe de velours: "Croyez-vous donc qu'elle ait été bâtie par les Romains?"' [Would Murger himself have expected such a financial return, twenty-four years later? I doubt it; he would have been the first to say of his play, like Musette said about her velvet dress: 'Do you really think that it was built by the ancient Romans?'].<sup>162</sup> Vitu drew parallels between the late Murger's presumed expectations and Musette's famed lines to emphasise the fortune *La Vie de bohème* had generated. The lines in question originated from act III scene XI, when Marcel criticises the simplicity of Musette's intended party dress and suggests an alternative outfit for impressing the art critic. Musette humorously retorts 'ma robe de velours noir? Ah bien! Elle est loin [...] tu croyais donc qu'elle avait été bâtie par les Romains?' [my black velvet dress? Ha! It is long gone [...] you must have thought that it was built by the Romans?].<sup>163</sup> The catch phrase referenced both Musette's oft changing wardrobe as a *lorette* and her status as a *modèle*, given Marcel's preoccupation with her physical presentation in front of the art critic. Vitu's analogy thus further cemented the iconic centrality of the *modèle/lorette* character to the playwright's success and posthumous legacy, and to the huge financial return the play continued to enjoy.

Just as Marcel and Musette both stood to gain from their artist/*modèle* partnership, so too did Marie Roux as *modèle/lorette* acquire celebrity and wealth, alongside Murger the artist, by association with the iconic Musette. Despite Marie Roux having modelled from the

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<sup>160</sup> Vitu, 'Premières Représentations', 12 May 1873, p. 3.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Barrière and Murger, *La Vie de Bohème*, p. 20.

mid 1840s to the early 1860s for the celebrated likes of Nadar, Gérôme, and Pradier, d’Orcet maintained she was best known as the inspiration behind Musette: ‘tout le monde [la] connaît sous le nom de Musette’ [everyone knows [her] by the name of Musette]. Similarly, in his memoirs, Schanne merged the figure of Musette with Marie Roux’s success as a *modèle/lorette*, recalling that ‘Musette [...] mena avec [...] sérieux la *carrière* qu’elle s’était choisie en ce monde’ [Musette [...] took seriously the career that she had chosen in this world] and that as ‘une vraie fille de Bohême [...] les peintres et les sculpteurs la recherchaient beaucoup et s’inscrivaient longtemps à l’avance pour obtenir d’elle une séance’ [as a true daughter of Bohemia [...] painters and sculptors sought her often and signed up long in advance for a sitting with her].<sup>164</sup> As well as referring to Marie Roux as ‘Musette’ Schanne considered her metaphorical genealogy as a daughter of Bohemia as integral to her successful career, with obvious connotations to the play *La Vie de bohème*. He likewise lamented that ‘la pauvre Musette de Murger dort donc à jamais, avec son trésor, au fond de la Méditerranée!’ [Murger’s poor Musette sleeps evermore, with her treasure, at the bottom of the Mediterranean], linking the huge wealth Marie Roux acquired (‘son trésor’) – and that resulted in her early retirement and subsequent death aboard the *Atlas* – with Murger’s Musette.

En vente: *Au Ménéstrel, 2 bis, rue Vivienne.*

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**MADemoiselle MUsETTE**  
 Chanson  
 CHANTÉE AU THÉÂTRE DE L’ODÉON  
 DANS  
 LA VIE DE BOHÈME

Prix : **2 fr. 50**      POÉSIE      Prix : **2 fr. 50**  
 Sans accompagnement : **1 fr.**      DE      Sans accompagnement : **1 fr.**

**HENRY MURGER**  
 MUSIQUE  
 DE  
**ALFRED VERNET**

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DU MÊME AUTEUR:  
**Souvenirs! — Un Monsieur discret.**

— A. CHAIX ET C<sup>e</sup>, RUE BERGÈRE, 20 A PARIS.

Figure 2.2 – Advertisement for ‘Mademoiselle Musette’ in *Le Ménéstrel*, 29 June 1873, n.p.

It is unlikely that Marie Roux gained directly from the huge wealth Musette generated onstage. However, d’Orcet and Schanne suggested that her renown as the inspiration behind Musette added to her worth as a *modèle/lorette*, acquiring greater visibility through the

<sup>164</sup> Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard*, p. 183.

additional exhibition space of the Variétés stage where her other celebrated *lorette/modèle* colleagues Ozy and Mogador performed. Far from a passive muse for Murger, d’Orcet celebrated Marie Roux as an active creative partner, regretting that ‘on n’a pas assez remarqué l’influence qu’exercent sur l’art de leur époque des modèles comme [...] une simple Musette. Les Grecs [...] les estimaient pour de véritables collaborateurs, ce en quoi je trouve qu’ils avaient parfaitement raison’ [we have not acknowledged the influence that models like [...] a simple Musette have on the arts of their time. The Greeks [...] considered them as true collaborators, by which I find that they were entirely right].<sup>165</sup> Playing on her character’s name in *La Vie de bohème*, d’Orcet maintained that she was much more than a simple muse (‘une simple Musette’). Comparing ‘Musette’ to the Hetaerae, d’Orcet instead celebrated Marie Roux’s hybrid profession as *modèle/lorette* in ‘Nouvelle Athènes’, and the active partnership between *modèle* and artist that resulted in success for both parties, and which greatly influenced the contemporary arts of the time. Schanne equally highlighted her crucial role in elevating the contemporary arts when – as previously noted – he recalled that ‘sa vue n’inspirait que les sentiments [...] qu’on éprouve devant un chef-d’œuvre de la statuaire antique’ [the sight of her inspired the kind of sentiments [...] that one only feels before an ancient sculptural masterpiece].<sup>166</sup> He too recognised Marie Roux as a collaborator, akin to the Hetaerae who inspired Classical sculpture. Just as she heightened the value of the contemporary visual arts, she also added prestige to what Mahalin identified as the ‘théâtre actuel et moderne’ through the elevation of the *lorette* figure from the vaudeville genre to the prose of the *drame moderne*. But, like Musette, Marie Roux’s true artistic worth was only acknowledged with the benefit of hindsight.

If Marie Roux inspired Musette, it was Page’s iconic rendition that inspired *Mademoiselle Musette* – a song so popular that it reshaped the play, the novel, and infiltrated popular culture, as explored through Murger’s legacy. Indeed, when Vernet set Murger’s lyrics to music, he dedicated the song to Page, as shown in figures 2.3 and 2.4. The top left corner of the sheet music’s cover (figure 2.3) reads ‘à Mlle Page’, and the music on the following page (figure 2.4) also has the dedication ‘à Mademoiselle Page’ in between Murger and Vernet’s names, demonstrating her active role in the production of the Musette myth. Not only was Page seemingly the original source of the ‘heureuse inspiration’ [happy inspiration], to quote Vitu vis-à-vis the integration of the song in the 1873 reprise, but the song’s

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<sup>165</sup> D’Orcet, ‘L’Atalante de Pradier et la Musette de Murger’, p. 391.

<sup>166</sup> Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard*, p. 181.

popularity was also testament to Page’s own celebrity as Musette. Indeed, as we have seen, following her creation of *Musette Dumas fils* approached Page as his first choice for Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias* but she was too in vogue to even entertain the proposition.

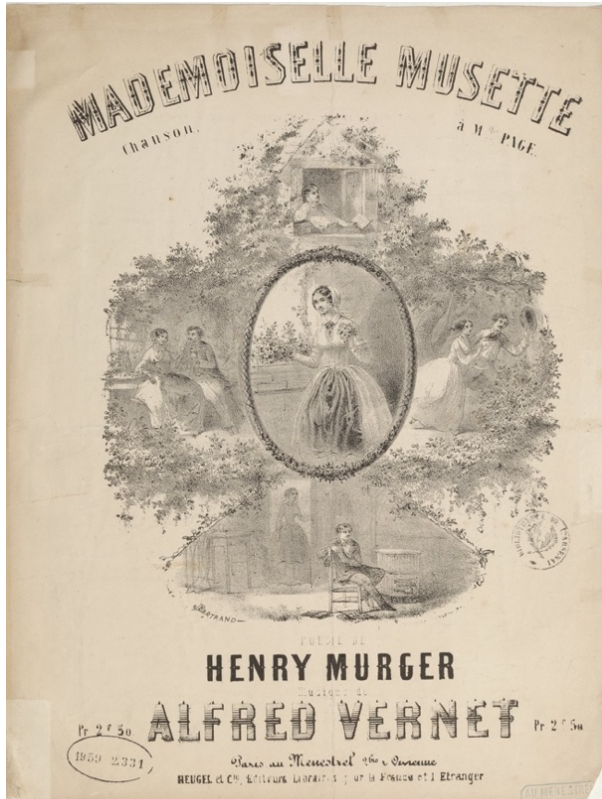


Figure 2.3 – Cover of ‘Mademoiselle Musette’, words by Henry Murger, music by Alfred Vernet (Paris: Heugel & Cie Éditeurs, 1850). BnF, Fol. Z 151.



Figure 2.4 – First page of ‘Mademoiselle Musette’, words by Henry Murger, music by Alfred Vernet (Heugel & Cie Éditeurs: Paris, 1850). BnF, Fol. Z 151.

Yet it was through Page’s reprise of Marguerite, following the trend she set as Musette, that she acquired lasting recognition and secured her eminent career in the *drame moderne*. As Étienne Enault observed:

*La Vie de Bohême, la Dame aux Camélias* devaient logiquement pousser mademoiselle Page hors du cercle théâtral où elle avait dominé jusque-là. Ces scènes hardies prouvaient jusqu’à l’évidence qu’elle avait toute l’ampleur nécessaire pour remplir les grands rôles du drame moderne [...] En 1855, elle entra au théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. [...] Elle quitta donc les théâtres de genre pour les théâtres de drame.

[*La Vie de Bohême, La Dame aux camélias* would logically push Page out of the theatrical circle in which she had previously dominated. These hardy scenes proved beyond any doubt that she had all the necessary breadth to fill the big roles of the

modern drama [...] in 1855, she appeared at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre [...] she thus left the vaudeville theatres for the *drame* theatres].<sup>167</sup>

Enault recollected how Page, who debuted at the Vaudeville in 1843, proved herself as a reputable star of the new *drame moderne* through her combined creation of Musette at the Variétés and reprise of Marguerite at the Vaudeville. It was immediately following her Marguerite in 1855 that she signed a contract with the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, (which, as explored in the previous chapter, was a secondary theatre that specialised in the *drame*). Going forward Page never appeared again in vaudevilles or vaudeville theatres, starring instead in *dramas* across Paris's higher-end secondary stages for two further decades. After two years at the Porte Saint-Martin, in 1857 Page was poached by the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique (another secondary theatre that specialised in the *drame* genre) where she starred for a decade. Page also appeared in *dramas* in the early 1860s at the Théâtre Impérial du Cirque, and in the late 1860s and early 1870s at the Théâtre de la Gaité. In the early 1870s – the final years of Page's career – she even appeared at Théâtre de l'Odéon, the 'Second Théâtre Français' under the Second Empire.

Yet despite the importance of Marguerite to Page's career, it was her creation of Musette that hung behind her career trajectory and star persona, just like it did for Marie Roux. As Paul Mahalin wrote in an 1868 biography of Page:

N'oublions jamais avec quelle insolence de jeunesse et d'esprit, mademoiselle Page s'incarna dans Musette, de *la Vie de Bohème* aux Variétés. Ceci ce passait en novembre 1849. Elle s'en vint jouer à l'Ambigu, dix ans plus tard. Musette, elle, n'avait mis que trois mois à traverser le pont des Arts!

[Let us never forget the insolence and youthfulness of spirit Mademoiselle Page embodied in Musette, in *la Vie de Bohème* at the Variétés. That was in November 1849. She came to play at the Ambigu ten years later. Musette had only taken three months to cross the *Pont des Arts*!].<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Enault, 'Adèle Page', Rt 9843.

<sup>168</sup> Mahalin, *Les Jolies Actrices de Paris*, I, 40.

Recalling the foundational role of Page's Musette, Mahalin compared Page's movements across Paris's theatrical landscape and hierarchies to Musette's movements across the capital in *La Vie de bohème*. Mahalin was referring to Musette's habitual return from her *lorette* lifestyle to her bohemian existence at the play's end, in act V scene III, when Marcel ironically chastises her for her absence: 'cinq jours pour traverser le Pont-Neuf! Vous avez donc pris par les Pyrénées?' [five days to cross the *Pont-Neuf*! You must have gone via the Pyrenees?].<sup>169</sup> Marcel is complaining about the delay it takes Musette to cross the Pont-Neuf, from the *lorette's* Bréda Quarter on the Right Bank to the bohemians' Latin Quarter on the Left Bank. Invoking this humorous line, Mahalin playfully lamented the almost decade-long delay between Page's 1849 creation of Musette at the Variétés, and her appearance at the much more highly regarded Ambigu in 1857. Just as Mahalin claimed that *La Vie de bohème* 'arrivait trop tôt pour qu'on en comprit l'importance' [came too early for us to understand its worth], and that it would only acquire its rightful place in theatrical history following *La Dame aux camélias*, so too did he lament Page's own delayed recognition in Paris's theatrical ranks, following her iconic Musette role. Through this reference Mahalin also highlighted Page's success as Musette as being directly linked to the temporal and spatial modernity of the *lorette* character, who was so radically contemporary that she was, somewhat paradoxically, ahead of her time.

### **Page Joins the 'Throng of Apple Eaters'**

For Mahalin, 'une seule fois, Musette redevint *elle*, – ce fut quand, dans *Fanfan la tulipe*, elle [...] transforma [...] son tabouret de favorite en trépied de dixième muse et son lit de courtisane en autel de déesse' [only once did Musette become herself again – it was when in *Fanfan la tulipe*, she [...] transformed [...] her position as the King's favourite into a tripod, as the tenth muse, and converted her courtesan bed into a goddess's altar].<sup>170</sup> Mahalin recalled Page's creation of Madame de Pompadour in *Fanfan la tulipe*, a *drame en sept actes* by Paul Meurice at the Ambigu-Comique in 1858. Referring to Page as 'Musette' and to rebecoming herself only when playing Louis XV's iconic royal mistress, Mahalin linked Page's iconic character roles as Musette and Pompadour – through their elevation of their professions as courtesans into iconic artist muses – to the heights of being the tenth Muse of Greek mythology. In 1882 Jules Claretie similarly linked Page's two courtesan/muse

<sup>169</sup> Barrière and Murger, *La Vie de Bohème*, p. 28.

<sup>170</sup> Mahalin, *Les Jolies Actrices de Paris*, I, 41.

creations in *La vie à Paris*, recalling that Page ‘avait été la Musette de Murger, elle était la Pompadour du drame’ [had been Murger’s Musette, she was the Pompadour of the *drame*]. Again, Page’s trajectory to becoming a star of the *drame* – a more elevated art form than her previous vaudeville fair – was linked to her foundational role as Musette.

Likewise, writing about the stars of the Ambigu-Comique in *Derrière la toile* in 1868, Albert Vizentini wrote ‘salut à la jolie mademoiselle Page, à l’adorable *Musette* d’autrefois!’ [greetings to the beautiful Mademoiselle Page, to the adorable Musette of one upon a time].<sup>171</sup> As Enault explained, ‘c’est à l’Ambigu-Comique que mademoiselle Page a projeté sa plus vive splendeur [...] elle s’est élancée, astre radieux, au zénith du talent et du succès. Elle contribue largement, pour sa part, à imprimer au drame moderne un cachet d’élégance et de majesté’ [it is at the Ambigu-Comique that Mademoiselle Page had shined most brightly [...] she soared up, like a shining star, to the zenith of talent and success. She does much to imprint a sense of elegance and majesty to the modern drama].<sup>172</sup> The cosmic imagery Mahalin used to describe the peak of Page’s career, at the Ambigu-Comique from the late 1850s to the late 1860s, demonstrated her status as a huge star – a great celebrity – of her time. It was not incidental that the ‘majesty’ she brought to the modern drama was achieved, in large part, through her role as Louis XV’s favourite.

Like Marie Roux, Page – via her character creations of Musette and Pompadour – was also credited with elevating the contemporary arts of her time, through her contribution to the *drame moderne*. She may have reached the summit of her career as Pompadour at the Ambigu-Comique, but it was her pioneering role as Musette that would allow her to join the trend she had set, and follow in the artistic lineage she established onstage of ‘une foule de mangeuses de pommes’. Returning to Marie’s understanding (as explored in my introduction) that through the Romantic approach the actor becomes ‘celui qui crée, qui ouvre des nouvelles voies pour l’art’ [someone who creates, who opens new pathways for art], we can see how through Page’s creation of Musette she opened up new routes for dramatic art: following in Dorval’s pioneering footsteps as the quintessential, historical, onstage courtesan, Page was the first to create the contemporary courtesan in the *drame moderne*, creating a new onstage opening for others to follow.

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<sup>171</sup> Albert Vizentini, *Derrière la toile* (Paris: Achille Faure, 1868), p. 232.

<sup>172</sup> Enault, ‘Adèle Page’, Rt 9843.

### 3 – The Fashioning of *La Dame aux camélias*: Eugénie Doche’s Creation of Marguerite Gautier

La Lia nous dit le beau mot que lui dit Doche après la mort de Rachel: ‘Ça m’ôte le goût de jouer...Il n’y a plus de lutte pour moi!’

[Lia told us the remark Doche made after Rachel’s death: ‘This has robbed me of all the joy of performing... There is no longer anything for me to fight for!].<sup>173</sup>

According to the Goncourt brothers’ journal of 1859, Eugénie Doche (1821–1900) considered the premature death of the celebrated tragic actor Rachel (1821–1858) to have robbed her of her only professional rival. While we need not take Doche at her word, the fact that Rachel’s sister Lia Félix reportedly relayed this claim to the Goncourts, who in turn recorded it without their usual critical commentary, gives Doche’s words some currency.<sup>174</sup> The previous year, the brothers had narrated another such anecdote in which Doche had equated herself to Rachel, without further remark.<sup>175</sup> Certainly, such a pairing encourages a re-evaluation of the scholarly status quo: as established in my introduction, while Rachel’s celebrity lives on and has received much academic attention,<sup>176</sup> Doche’s celebrity has been almost entirely overlooked. As I have argued, this is largely due to Rachel having starred at Paris’s Comédie-Française and Doche having starred at the secondary Théâtre du Vaudeville, which although a popular theatre was nonetheless historically important having been – like France’s premier stage – one of the authorised theatres from the early 1800s.

On 15 April 1852, *L’Artiste* referred to Doche as ‘l’actrice célèbre depuis la *Dame aux Camélias*’ [the actress that acquired celebrity through *La Dame aux camélias*]; in 1878, *Le Figaro* recalled that Doche ‘avant sa création de la *Dame aux Camélias*, n’avait pas [...] l’autorité qu’elle s’est si justement acquise à partir de ce moment’ [before her creation of *La*

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<sup>173</sup> Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal: mémoires de la vie littéraire, 1851–1865*, 3 vols (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 1, 487.

<sup>174</sup> Elsewhere the brothers did not hesitate to criticize Doche. See for example, de Goncourt, *Journal*, 1, 427–428 and 490.

<sup>175</sup> De Goncourt, *Journal*, 1, 429.

<sup>176</sup> Samuels, *The Right to Difference*, pp. 50–72; Lilti, *Figures publiques*; Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*.

*Dame aux camélias*, did not have [...] the authority that she has so justly acquired from that moment forth].<sup>177</sup> Although Doche had performed at Paris's Vaudeville theatre since 1838, she achieved unprecedented celebrity and received newfound esteem following her performance as the courtesan Marguerite Gautier in Dumas *filis*'s play *La Dame aux camélias*, which she premiered on 2 February 1852. Doche's creation was so successful that she played Marguerite a total of 617 times until 1869, over several reprises at the Vaudeville, in the provinces, and in Brussels, and the role – as previously observed – was one of the most performed and desirable roles in Western women's repertoire from the 1870s through the 1930s and beyond.<sup>178</sup> This is in large part due to Doche's immediate successor Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), star of the Comédie-Française, reprising Marguerite to huge success.<sup>179</sup> Like Rachel, Bernhardt benefited from the global prestige of France's primary theatre and gained unparalleled international celebrity by being the first to take *La Dame aux camélias* on tour to North America in 1880 and bring it to film in 1912. The new technologies Bernhardt used are central to academic attention to her celebrity and to celebrity theory itself, and her interpretation of Marguerite has shaped understanding of the role. But before there was Bernhardt, there was Doche. Thus, studying Doche's creation of Marguerite and her own negotiation of celebrity can further our knowledge both of the formation of the myth of *La Dame aux camélias* and of nineteenth-century celebrity more broadly.

To explore the celebrity Doche actively acquired as Marguerite, I draw on Antoine Lilti's contention that the celebrity of performers is dependent on public 'confusion' between the actor's public persona and their onstage character.<sup>180</sup> According to Lilti, when an actor's public persona is 'confused' with the roles they play, public interest in the actor's private life grows and this split between their public persona and their private life is the crux of their celebrity. Whereas Lilti's notion of 'confusion' rests ambivalently between the agency of the public, the actor, and the media, I suggest that Doche produced this 'confusion', through an active fusion – on both temporal and spatial levels – between her own persona and her courtesan creation. After an overview of Doche's life and career prior to 1852, I explore how Doche negotiated her celebrity onstage and off. I argue that Doche explicitly performed the easy association between actors and courtesans – that was more prominent on Paris's secondary stage – both centre stage and beyond the theatre, in pursuit of celebrity and esteem.

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<sup>177</sup> Arnold Mortier, 'Reprise de la Dame aux Camélias', *Le Figaro*, 2 October 1878, p. 6.

<sup>178</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 203; Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*, p. 11.

<sup>179</sup> Duckett, *Seeing Sarah Bernhardt*, pp. 71–99.

<sup>180</sup> Lilti, *Figures publiques*, pp. 48–49.

## Setting the Scene: How Eugénie Became Marguerite

Marie-Charlotte-Eugénie de Plunkett, born in Brussels on 19 November 1821, was the daughter of Marie-Françoise Brans (1800–1856) and Baron de Plunkett (1799–1836). The latter was a descendant of an aristocratic Irish Catholic family who had accompanied James II into exile. Soon after Eugénie’s birth the family moved to Paris. Contemporary biographies claimed that Eugénie wanted to be an actor from a young age and that after her father’s premature death, and the family’s fall in social status, Eugénie’s mother supported her debut in Versailles in October 1837 under the name Eugénie Fleury.<sup>181</sup> Notably, Eugénie dropped her aristocratic name: at the time, to be a stage actor and an aristocrat was scandalous given the dubious morality of the profession.<sup>182</sup> Eugénie’s onstage success soon caught the attention of the director of Paris’s Théâtre du Vaudeville, where she debuted on 8 January 1838. In 1839 she married the Vaudeville’s orchestra conductor Alexandre Doche with whom she had a daughter, and henceforth adopted the name Eugénie Doche, even after their separation in 1842. Doche was so successful by 1845 that Paris’s Théâtre du Gymnase — another secondary theatre — poached her, but by November Doche returned to the Vaudeville. In 1848 she toured to Switzerland, London, Brussels, and Rouen, before returning to the Vaudeville, where she created *La Dame aux camélias* in 1852.

Dumas *filis* wrote the playscript of *La Dame aux camélias* in 1849, following the novel’s publication the previous year. Marguerite’s story was inspired by the recent death from tuberculosis of the celebrity courtesan Marie Duplessis (1824–1847), with whom Dumas *filis* had had a liaison in 1845.<sup>183</sup> Set in present-day Paris, the play opens in Marguerite’s boudoir where she hosts a party at which Armand Duval is a guest. Marguerite dances a polka but is interrupted by her tubercular coughing fit. Armand tends to Marguerite and confesses his love for the famous courtesan. In act II Marguerite and Armand become lovers and plan to escape to the countryside once Marguerite has cleared her debts from her extravagant lifestyle, by auctioning her possessions. In act III the lovers escape Paris but unbeknown to Armand his father visits Marguerite and begs her to give up his son (to save the family honour). Realising that the Duval family’s happiness is at stake over what can only be a short-lived affair, Marguerite sacrifices her love and returns to her courtesan life,

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<sup>181</sup> Mahalin, *Les Jolies Actrices de Paris*, III, 84–85; Dollingen and Disderi, ‘Eugénie Doche’ in *Galerie des contemporains* (Paris: Napoléon Chaix et Co., n.d.), p. 2.

<sup>182</sup> Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 149–171.

<sup>183</sup> Alexandre Dumas *filis*, *Théâtre complet de Al. Dumas fils*, 6 vols (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1868–85), I (1868), 7.

keeping her motivations hidden from Armand. Act IV opens in a Parisian salon, where Armand throws money at Marguerite, asserting that his debt is paid. In act V Armand learns of Marguerite's self-sacrifice, only to find her on her deathbed due to her tuberculosis. Armand arrives in time to gain her forgiveness and bestow his, before Marguerite dies.

A review of the first run in *L'Artiste* read 'c'est une arrière-cousine de Manon Lescaut; mais [...] combien Marguerite [...] est de notre temps' [she is a distant cousin of Manon Lescaut; but [...] Marguerite is very much of our time].<sup>184</sup> While the contemporaneity of Marguerite's character was noteworthy in 1852, as explored in my previous chapter the portrayal of a contemporary, mid-nineteenth-century courtesan – typically known as a *lorette* – was not new to the Parisian stage: in November 1849, at the Théâtre des Variétés, Adèle Page had created the *lorette* Musette in *La Vie de bohème* to huge acclaim. Equally, half a year prior to Page's Musette, Doche herself had created the *lorette* Carlotta in *Breda Street, ou un ange déchu* (a *comédie-vaudeville en deux actes* by Clairville, Moureau, and Siraudin) which premiered at the Vaudeville, on 12 April 1849. What was new to *La Dame aux camélias*, which Doche premiered at this same theatre, was both that it was the first truly sombre prose play – a real *drame* – that starred a contemporary courtesan, and that it was *explicitly* based on a real and named contemporary courtesan – Marie Duplessis.<sup>185</sup> As explored previously, Murger's *La Vie de la Bohème* although classified as a *drame*, was hailed largely as a comedy: as Mahalin had observed, it had not been 'pris au sérieux' [taken seriously].<sup>186</sup> Equally, unlike the implicit and playful allusions to the living *lorette* Marie Roux behind Musette, the link between Marguerite Gautier and the late Marie Duplessis was made explicit, as much by the playwright Dumas  *fils* as by the contemporary press. This was made possible by Duplessis' untimely death a few years prior, in 1847.

Tadeusz Kowzan has commented on the controversy of Marguerite's representation in the *drame* genre, observing (as explored in the first chapter of my thesis) that while Hugo's 1831 *drame*, *Marion de Lorme* was about a real-life courtesan, Marion Delorme (1613–1650) was a seventeenth-century figure.<sup>187</sup> Similarly, the *drame* of *Manon Lescaut* which had premiered at the Gymnase theatre in 1851, was based on the fictional, eighteenth-century heroine. By contrast, Dumas  *fils* 'a eu l'audace de mettre dans conjonction classique une prostituée sortant des salons de l'époque. C'est un fait lourd [...] pour la carrière du nouveau

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<sup>184</sup> Pierre Malitourne, 'Théâtres', *L'Artiste*, 29 February 1852 (Geneva: Slaktine Reprints, 1972), pp. 43–44.

<sup>185</sup> Dumas  *fils*, *Théâtre complet de Al. Dumas fils*, p. 7.

<sup>186</sup> Mahalin, *Les Jolies Actrices*, III, 88.

<sup>187</sup> Tadeusz Kowzan, 'Le Mythe de la Dame aux Camélias: du mélodrame au mélodramatisme', *Revue des sciences humaines*, 162 (1976), 219–30 (p. 225).

mythe' [had the audacity to put into the classic dramatic genre a prostitute who frequented contemporary salons. This is of great consequence [...] to the trajectory of the new myth].<sup>188</sup> In a similar vein to the contemporary critics at the time of Dorval's 1831 creation of Marion de Lorme, Kowzan also overlooks the foundational role of the actor as creator and comments solely on the playwright's audacity. Yet – like her celebrated predecessor Dorval – Doche was equally integral to the creative influence behind this latest onstage courtesan: she was crucial to this transition of the representation of a real, contemporary courtesan from vaudeville to the classic, sombre, *drame*. As well as a turn in the 'carrière du nouveau mythe', to borrow from Kowzan, this creation was a turning point for Doche's own career: it was a 'merveilleux début dans le drame' [marvellous debut in the *drame*].<sup>189</sup> This symbiotic relationship between Doche and Marguerite was central both to the actor and character's success.

In the first place, the play's trajectory was dependent on Doche before she appeared onstage: Dumas *filis* described the play's censorship process as 'l'odyssée la plus extraordinaire' [the most extraordinary odyssey].<sup>190</sup> The first stumbling block was finding a theatre, due to the controversy of the play's illicit contemporary subject matter in the *drame* genre. Given the influence of celebrity actors, Dumas *filis* attempted to find a theatre via a performer and offered the part of Marguerite to Paris's most celebrated stars. As explored in the previous chapter, Dumas *filis* claims to have first approached Page, who was too in demand to receive him. Subsequently, Rachel reportedly agreed to a meeting, only to fail to keep the appointment and Virginie Déjazet (1798–1875) rejected the role by stating 'il vous faudrait transporter votre sujet sous Louis XV, me faire chanter des couplets et me faire épouser mon amoureux' [you would have to change to a Louis XV setting, give me some verses to sing, and let me marry my lover at the end].<sup>191</sup> John Stokes has observed the historical grounds for Déjazet's apparent rejection, as she was famous for her historically remote vaudevilles.<sup>192</sup> Déjazet also seemingly shied away from the lack of sung verse that was characteristic of vaudeville, while the need for Marguerite to marry suggests both generic and moral concerns. This ethical unease is supported by Jules Claretie (1840–1913)

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Dollingen and Disderi, 'Eugénie Doche', p. 4.

<sup>190</sup> Alexandre Dumas *filis*, *Théâtre complet*, 8 vols (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1890–98), VIII (1898), 5. The censorship records are dated 28 April, 1 September, and 1 October 1851, in the BnF, NAF 24643.

<sup>191</sup> Dumas *filis*, *Théâtre complet*, VIII, 7–9. English translation by Marvin Carlson, *The French Stage in the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1972) p. 121.

<sup>192</sup> John Stokes, *The French Actress and Her English Audience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 86–91.

who reported that Dumas *filis* tried to coax Déjazet by reminding her that in 1834 she created Frétilton – a woman with loose sexual morals – but that Déjazet retorted ‘Frétilton se donne et votre Marguerite Gautier se vend’ [Frétilton gives herself, your Marguerite Gautier sells herself].<sup>193</sup> The anecdote suggests that women actors chose their roles carefully in relation to their reputation, especially regarding playing a woman who sold herself. Similarly, when Dumas *filis* finally had the play accepted for rehearsal at the Vaudeville in 1850 (although it would still need to pass censorship to be performed publicly), Anaïs Fargueil (1819–1896) rejected the role, allegedly on moral grounds.<sup>194</sup>

Following Fargueil’s rejection, Dumas *filis* recalled that ‘Doche était alors à Londres, résolue, disait-on, à ne plus remonter sur les planches. Bouffé lui expédia [...] le manuscrit. Madame Doche [...] répétait dès le lendemain’ [Doche was in London, reportedly resolved to never again appear onstage. Bouffé [the Vaudeville’s director] sent [...] her the manuscript. Madame Doche [...] began rehearsals the following day].<sup>195</sup> Unlike her peers, Doche instantly recognised the play’s potential and importance for her own career, which by this point, as Dumas *filis* suggested, was nearly over. In an interview some years later, Doche provided an account of the casting process in which she corroborated Dumas *filis*’s version of events and revealed the reason for her early retirement being due to losing her voice.<sup>196</sup> By this point Doche had performed in more than eighty vaudevilles over thirteen years. Whereas the lack of sung couplets had dissuaded Déjazet, this may have appealed to the vocally fatigued Doche. She appears also to have had no reservations regarding the role’s morality.

Quite the contrary: Doche’s advocacy of Marguerite went beyond that of a mere performer. Throughout 1851 censors rejected the play on three occasions; it was due to the Comte de Morny’s intervention as newly appointed minister under the emergent Second Empire that the play passed censorship on 2 December 1851.<sup>197</sup> However, Dumas *filis* attested to Doche’s role in the process, explaining that the Minister of the Interior, Victor de Persigny, ‘à la sollicitation de madame Doche, s’était déclaré le coprotecteur’ [on Doche’s request, had

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<sup>193</sup> Jules Claretie, *Profils de théâtre* (Paris: Gauthier-Magnier et Cie, 1902), pp. 43–44.

<sup>194</sup> Dumas *filis*, *Théâtre complet*, VIII, 16; Paul Gsell, *Mémoires de Mme Judith de la Comédie-Française et souvenirs sur ses contemporains* (Paris: Jules Tallandier, 1911), p. 231.

<sup>195</sup> Dumas *filis*, *Théâtre complet*, VIII, 16.

<sup>196</sup> Adolphe Brisson, ‘La Créatrice de la “Dame aux Camélias”’, *Le Temps*, 29 September 1896, n.p.

<sup>197</sup> Although the Second Empire was officially recognised as beginning on 14 January 1852, it was following Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte’s successful coup d’état of 2 December 1851 that the change in regime came into effect: the aforementioned Comte de Morny, was appointed as Minister of the Interior the day following the coup d’état and remained in the role for 6 months.

declared himself the co-protector].<sup>198</sup> *Le Passe-temps* similarly reported that Doche ‘se chargea d’applanir [sic] ces difficultés’ [charged herself with ironing out these difficulties], adding that ‘à femme qui sourit [...] on donne tout’ [a smiling woman always gets her way].<sup>199</sup> The journalist picked up on Doche’s gendered diplomacy, suggesting her influence went beyond that of the male playwright. Doche was thus integral to ensuring the play was performed. Her creative input into Marguerite’s huge success became apparent once she appeared onstage.

### **The Choreography of Celebrity: From Duplessis to Doche**

In an 1881 biography, Paul Mahalin wrote of *La Dame aux camélias*’s premiere:

ce succès, les trois quarts en revenaient de droit à l’auteur; mais [...] le reste en appartenait à la comédienne. Pour jouer ce rôle étrange, parisien et moderne [...] poétique par des moyens tout nouveaux, c’est-à-dire à force de réalité poignante, il fallait une nature très particulière, beaucoup d’élégance, de singularité, de célébrité, même: car il fallait [...] que la renommée de l’actrice, que son luxe, que sa personnalité séduisante et bruyante vinssent s’ajouter au type crée par l’écrivain’

[three quarters of its success was due to the author; but [...] the rest belonged to the actress. To play this strange, Parisian and modern role [...] poetic by totally new means – that is to say by the power of its poignant reality – one needed a very particular nature, a lot of elegance, of singularity, of celebrity even, because it was necessary [...] that the renown of the actress, that her glamour, that her seductive and loud personality fused with that of the character].<sup>200</sup>

According to Mahalin, there was both a spatial (‘parisien’) and temporal (‘moderne’) specificity to the unusual role (‘rôle étrange’) that Doche so successfully rendered. Again, as previously explored with relation to *La Vie de bohème*, Gautier’s concept of *modernité*, (coined a few months after *La Dame aux camélias*’s premiere in May 1852) helps

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<sup>198</sup> Dumas  *fils*, *Théâtre complet*, I, 10. This version of events is also relayed in Doche’s interview with Brisson, ‘La Créatrice de la “Dame aux Camélias”’, n.p.; and by Roger de Beauvoir, ‘Mme Eugénie Doche’, *Le Figaro*, 3 September 1886, p. 2.

<sup>199</sup> Le Diable Boiteux, ‘Eugénie Doche’, *Le Passe-temps*, 16 February 1861, n.p.

<sup>200</sup> Mahalin, *Les Jolies Actrices*, III, 89.

contextualise why Mahalin perceived Marguerite as ‘moderne’ at the time of her creation. Gautier used the term to defend new visual art that creatively captured contemporaneity, with reference to Édouard Dubufe’s (1819–1883) women portraits exhibited at the 1852 Salon. He argued it was wrong to scorn ‘les types purement actuels’ [purely contemporary types] and that there were ‘aspects inattendus dans la représentation intelligente et fidèle de ce que nous nommerons la *modernité*’ [unexpected aspects of the intelligent and faithful portrayal of that which we shall call *modernity*].<sup>201</sup> Given the controversy of Marguerite’s contemporaneity in the *drame* genre in February 1852, Gautier’s conception and defence of *modernité* is equally relevant to *La Dame aux camélias*. Indeed, in addition to Marguerite being ‘moderne’, Mahalin commented on the artistic novelty (‘moyens tout nouveaux’) of conveying the tragic reality (‘réalité poignante’) of the late celebrity courtesan Duplessis.

Echoing his own previous remarks about the novelty of Musette’s characterisation in 1849 – as explored in the previous chapter – Gautier’s review of *La Dame aux camélias*’s premiere similarly praised Dumas *fils* for faithfully depicting ‘scènes de la vie moderne’ [scenes from modern life] by avoiding the vaudeville genre and its tired theatrical tropes that euphemistically equated performers with courtesans: ‘un vaudevilliste ordinaire [...] n’aurait pas manqué de faire de Marguerite une danseuse ou une actrice, pour expliquer sa *position*, et [...] l’on aurait eu un tableau de convention’ [an ordinary vaudevillist [...] would have made Marguerite [...] an actor, to explain her *position*, and [...] the result would have been a conventional tableau].<sup>202</sup> It is thus through Doche’s own public persona, through what Mahalin called her ‘singularité’, ‘célébrité’, ‘renommée’, and ‘personnalité séduisante et bruyante’ that we must consider these more nuanced parallels between Marguerite’s success and that of the actor who created her. Mahalin’s observation that the established and unique nature of Doche’s celebrity added to the realistic portrayal of Marguerite suggests Lilti’s notion of ‘confusion’ between an actor’s persona and their theatrical role was integral to Doche’s celebrated creation. Given that this confusion occurred on both temporal (‘moderne’) and spatial (‘parisien’) levels, and it was inspired by reality (réalité), Doche’s power lay in deliberately fusing not only the onstage Marguerite with her own public persona, but also with that of the real Duplessis. Temporally, Doche fused the very recent celebrity of Duplessis – who had died in 1847 – with the current moment of her 1852 creation and her own celebrity persona. Spatially, Doche fused not only the onstage Marguerite with

<sup>201</sup> Théophile Gautier, ‘Salon de 1852’, *La Presse*, 27 May 1852, n.p.

<sup>202</sup> Théophile Gautier, ‘Théâtres’, *La Presse*, 10 February 1852, n.p.

her own offstage Parisian persona, but both of these personas with and in the spaces Duplessis had occupied.

As we have seen, Doche had already created a *lorette* at the Vaudeville. She had also created the conventional, euphemistic performer roles of which Gautier spoke: Sarrazine the dancer in *La Belle Tourneuse* in 1841; Juliette the opera dancer in *La Journée d'une jolie femme* in 1842; Hyppolite the polka dancer in *La Polka en province* in 1844; and the opera singer Colombe in *Les Trois Loges* in 1845. Other than Sarrazine, these metatheatrical roles were contemporary. As Roger de Beauvoir later reminisced, *Polka en province* was a 'pièce toute d'actualité, donnée à l'époque où cette danse venait d'être importée en France' [a very topical play, performed at the time that this dance was imported to France].<sup>203</sup> Doche's celebrity was thus founded on the actuality of her roles *and* their association with courtesans, whether explicitly or more implicitly.

Beyond conventional associations, Emilio Sala has linked the renown of Duplessis and Doche through their synchronous dancing of the polka, prior to Marguerite's creation.<sup>204</sup> Not only were Doche's performances of the Polka at the Vaudeville simultaneous with the dance's arrival in Parisian ballrooms in the winter of 1843 (capturing Gautier's modernity) but they coincided with the moment that Duplessis became a known courtesan, famous particularly for dancing waltzes and polkas at society events like the Bal de l'Opéra. As Sala notes, the Opéra ball was a prime location for *lorettes* who lived nearby within the 9<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. He also emphasises the specific association between the polka and courtesans by 1845 (when Duplessis and Dumas  *fils*'s liaison took place), pointing to the publication of Théodore Staines book *Les Oiseaux de nuit et les polkeuses des scènes publiques* that same year. In addition to the actuality between Duplessis's and Doche's dancing of the polka, there was also the power of proximity. The Vaudeville theatre was on a street adjoining that of the Opéra, in the neighbouring 2<sup>nd</sup> *arrondissement*. As an important secondary theatre, it primarily attracted a middle-class clientele and was also frequented by *lorettes*. There was thus significant temporal and spatial overlap in the choreography of Duplessis and Doche's public figures prior to and in the staging of *La Dame aux camélias*, in which Doche would again dance the polka at the Vaudeville.

But as well as Doche's onstage choreography, her offstage movements equally played into her association with Marguerite and Duplessis. Another contemporary biography

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<sup>203</sup> De Beauvoir, 'Mme Eugénie Doche', p. 2.

<sup>204</sup> Sala, *The Sounds of Paris*, pp. 65–70.

documented that Doche ‘fait souvent danser tout ce que Paris compte de plus connu dans le monde [...] elle écrira à ses invités: “Nous sautons chez moi” [often makes the most famous people of Paris dance [...] she writes to her guests ‘we are dancing at my house’].<sup>205</sup> It was not just Marguerite and Duplessis who, as Kowzan observes, were ‘sortant des salons de l’époque’ [frequenting contemporary salons]. Doche herself was a *salonnière*, as a review in *Le Siècle* observed: Doche ‘était sur la scène à l’aise comme dans son salon’ [was as at ease onstage as in her own salon].<sup>206</sup> While the ease with which Doche hosted her salon might have been indicative of her aristocratic background, the parallel between her offstage and onstage roles recalled Marguerite’s position as a *salonnière* in the opening act. *Le Corsaire* was more explicit: ‘Doche a joué [...] la courtisane avec tant de vérité [...] qu’il y aurait quelque chose d’offensant pour elle, si nous ne modérions pas nos éloges’ [Doche played [...] the courtesan with such truth [...] that it would be an insult to her if we did not modify our praise].<sup>207</sup>

Rather than taking offence, Doche actively produced her equation with Marguerite. Shortly after the premiere, Doche engaged in stunts to spatially fuse her onstage and offstage personas, as relayed in *Le Corsaire*:

Doche, pour célébrer le succès immense et mérité qu’elle a obtenu [...] a offert un souper à quelques amis [...] La maison de Mme Doche était [...] transformée en une serre de *camélias*; il y en avait sous la porte cochère, dans l’escalier, dans l’antichambre, dans toutes les pièces et même dans un certain endroit où l’un des convives, gravement indisposé, fut obligé d’aller, et où le malheureux ne trouva qu’un pot de *camélias*! Le souper fut baptisé [...] Souper des *Camélias*.

[Doche, to celebrate her immense and deserved success [...] hosted a dinner for some friends [...] her house was [...] transformed into a greenhouse of camellias; there were some under the carriage entrance, in the antechamber, in all the rooms and even in a certain location where one of the guests, who was gravely indisposed, needed to go, and where the poor devil found nothing but a pot of camellias! The dinner was baptised [...] Supper of the Camellias.]<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Anonymous and undated biography, BnF, R157556.

<sup>206</sup> Ch. Matharel de Fiennes, ‘Revue des théâtres’, *Le Siècle*, 9 February 1852, n.p.

<sup>207</sup> Ch. de Besselièvre, ‘Théâtres’, *Le Corsaire*, 6 February 1852, n.p.

<sup>208</sup> Ch. de Besselièvre, ‘Chronique théâtrale’, *Le Corsaire*, 22 February 1852, n.p.

Doche used her house as an extended stage for her continued spatial association with Marguerite, with a reported humorous excess of camélias as domestic props. More striking still was an anecdote two months later in *L'Artiste*:

on a vendu ces jours-ci le mobilier d'une actrice célèbre depuis la *Dame aux Camélias*, comme on avait autrefois vendu le mobilier de la dame aux camélias [...] Pourquoi l'actrice célèbre vendait-elle ainsi tout ce [...] qui était encore la joie de ses yeux? [...] Est-ce que la comédienne en question s'est transfigurée comme Madeleine, et veut vivre désormais dans quelque thébaïde avec des pénates?

[recently the actress who acquired celebrity through *La Dame aux camélias*, put her furniture up for sale like the Dame aux Camélias herself had done before [...] why did the celebrity actress sell everything [...] that was still dear to her? [...] has the actress in question transformed like Mary Magdalene, and does she now want to live in a solitary retreat with the household gods?] <sup>209</sup>

While the journalist speculated mockingly about Doche's motivations for selling her furniture, drawing parallels with Marguerite's incentives in the play and equating Doche's actions with those of Mary Magdalene (the repentant sex worker *par excellence*), this is likely another instance of the actor using her home to further fuse her persona with both her heroine and the real Duplessis. As the article implied, following Duplessis's death, an auction took place in her apartment on 24–27 February 1847 that was widely publicised in newspapers of the time, such as *L'Illustration* on 6 March 1847. Gautier's review of the play in *La Presse* on 10 February 1852 opened by relaying this auction, and Dumas *fils*'s novel also began with Marguerite's posthumous auction on 16 March 1847. Doche's stunt in April 1852 thus restaged this sale, once more fusing her public persona — both spatially and temporally — with that of the late Duplessis and the character of Marguerite in her own home.

Three years later, on 3 April 1855, Doche published a letter in Dumas *père*'s newspaper, *Le Mousquetaire*, about her involvement in another auction. A newspaper

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<sup>209</sup> Édouard Houssaye, 'Le Monde parisien', *L'Artiste*, 15 April 1852, p. 92.

subscriber had gifted her a belt for her costuming of Marguerite. Doche wrote publicly to excuse her decision not to auction the belt for charity:

Mon bien cher ami, Vous avez mis ma coquetterie à une bien rude épreuve, la ceinture est trop jolie pour que je refuse de m'en parer. Cependant vos petites incurables ne peuvent être victimes de ma convoitise, et je vous envoie [...] un autre lot [...]. Eugénie Doche.

[My dear friend, You have put my vanity to the test, the belt is simply too beautiful for me to part with it. However, your poor sick girls cannot suffer the consequences of my greed, so I am sending you [...] another donation [...]. Eugénie Doche.]

Her self-proclaimed vanity suggests she enjoyed wearing this belt offstage or at least, by publishing the letter, she encouraged her public to believe this contagion between her costume and own attire. Importantly, Dumas's newspaper referred to the letter's author as Marguerite. Moreover, like the commentary treating Doche's previous auction as mirroring Marguerite's transformation into a Mary Magdalene type, Doche's letter drew attention to her more virtuous deeds. This reflects another aspect of nineteenth-century celebrity culture, as noted particularly of celebrated women performers at Paris's high-status operatic theatres. Hilary Poriss argues that philanthropic tales depicted the prima donna 'as someone who gave back, disconnecting her from those who did not – specifically, courtesans'.<sup>210</sup> Poriss explains that these performers rarely relayed their own virtuous tales, rather, these narratives were also a means of conveying 'a sense of self-effacement' and 'the task of publicizing their virtue [was] left to biographers, journalists, and bystanders'. Doche's charity thus deviated from that of her contemporaries on the primary, operatic stage. Not only did she connect, rather than disconnect, her altruism with her courtesan role but she took it upon herself to publicize these endeavours.

Less explicitly, another facet of Doche's philanthropy accentuated her choreographed association with the dancing Duplessis and Marguerite. She was 'une des dames patronesses qui s'occupent avec le plus d'ardeur des bals au profit de l'Association des Artistes dramatiques' [one of the most dedicated *dame patronesses* who organises charity balls in

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<sup>210</sup> Hilary Poriss 'Prima Donnas and the Performance of Altruism' in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 16–17.

support of the Association for Dramatic Actors].<sup>211</sup> Notably, Doche was referred to as a ‘dame’, implying her higher-class origins. As noted of her position as a *salonnière*, Doche’s unusual aristocratic background as an actor was important to her incarnation of the elegant courtesan and salon hostess Marguerite and of Duplessis herself. In Doche’s obituary, *Le Monde illustré* recalled that ‘l’artiste fêtée était une maîtresse de maison charmante’ [the celebrated artiste was a charming hostess].<sup>212</sup> We thus see how Doche’s status as a celebrated actor went hand in hand with her social position as a salon hostess, which itself mirrored the actions and movements of Marguerite and Duplessis. Returning thus to theories of celebrity that considered the most esteemed women performers as evading associations with courtesans in order to acquire greater social standing, we can observe that the opposite was true of Doche.

### **Dress to Empress: The Temporal Fabric of Doche’s Celebrity as Marguerite**

A closer look at Doche’s costuming reveals further spatial, temporal, and class resonances to her creation of Marguerite. For Mahalin, central to Doche’s Marguerite was the actor’s ‘nature très particulière, beaucoup d’élégance’ [a very particular nature, a lot of elegance] and ‘luxe’ [glamour]. Numerous other critics also set Doche apart for her elegant fashion both onstage and in society throughout her career. *Le Passe-temps* referenced Doche’s reputation in 1845 as ‘une des femmes qui savent le mieux s’habiller’ [one of the best dressed women in Paris]: this was the same year in which Duplessis’s liaison with Dumas  *fils* took place.<sup>213</sup> Years later, in 1874, *Paris-Théâtre* admired Doche for dressing ‘avec un goût parfait’ [with perfect taste];<sup>214</sup> Hippolyte Rolle (1799–1883) praised her for ‘les plus jolies robes du monde’ [the most beautiful dresses in the world];<sup>215</sup> another critic wrote ‘l’élégante comédienne sait s’habiller, choisir ses étoffes [et] distribuer ses dentelles’ [the elegant actress who knows how to dress [...] choose her fabrics and arrange her lace];<sup>216</sup> and her obituary in *Le Monde illustré* described her as ‘l’arbitre de toutes les élégances’ [the arbiter of elegance].<sup>217</sup> A further critic observed that Doche’s exceptional taste was linked to her aristocratic background: ‘sa nature tout à fait aristocratique se plaît dans le luxe [...] elle sait

<sup>211</sup> Anonymous and undated biography, BnF, R157556.

<sup>212</sup> Léon de Montarlot, ‘Courrier de Paris’, *Le Monde illustré*, 21 July 1900, p. 44.

<sup>213</sup> Boiteux, ‘Eugénie Doche’, n.p.

<sup>214</sup> Félix Jahyer, ‘Eugénie Doche’, *Paris-théâtre*, 4 June 1874, n.p.

<sup>215</sup> Hippolyte Rolle, undated biography, BnF, R157556.

<sup>216</sup> Anonymous and undated biography, BnF, R157556.

<sup>217</sup> Montarlot, ‘Courrier de Paris’, p. 44.

s'habiller avec un goût exquis' [her nature is entirely aristocratic: she likes luxury and dresses with exquisite taste].<sup>218</sup> It was perhaps this aristocratic nature to which Mahalin referred when he singled out Doche's 'nature très particulière, beaucoup d'élégance' and 'luxe' in her rendition of Marguerite.

As previously observed, aristocratic lineage was unusual among French nineteenth-century stage actors. Rather, scholars such as Gill Perry and Miranda Gill have suggested that one of the reasons that women actors and courtesans were so powerfully associated was their mutual status as women of fashion, and their resultant disruption of visible class boundaries that were usually delineated by birth.<sup>219</sup> Women in both professions were assumed to have low-class origins, and yet their appearances – whether onstage or in society – often suggested otherwise. Nowhere was this truer than in Paris during the Second Empire (1852–70). As François Boucher explains, in the aftermath of the 'lacklustre, bourgeois Louis-Philippe' and the 1848 Revolution, 'women dreamed of luxury, pleasure and clothes' and fashion 'now depended closely on money' rather than aristocratic status.<sup>220</sup> Accordingly, this period was the 'golden age' of the courtesan, characterised by what Joëlle Chevé calls 'une débauche de luxe, un affichage jamais égalé, des ascensions vertigineuses et des chutes spectaculaires' [a debauchery of luxury, an unprecedented level of display, vertiginous rises and spectacular falls].<sup>221</sup> As Chevé maintains, although Duplessis died in 1847 she is considered one of the forerunners to this 'golden age' due to her own extravagant and highly publicised lifestyle. But while Duplessis had died shortly before the dawn of the Second Empire, it was at the start of this era – on 2 February 1852 – that Doche created Marguerite. Fittingly, Marguerite was created not only by one of the most fashionable women in Paris, but one who blurred class boundaries even more than most of her performer peers, due to her own unusual aristocratic background.

It was of course due to the changing political regime, as well as Doche's influence on its new ministers, that *La Dame aux camélias* play had passed censorship in December 1851. Marguerite's theatrical conception was thus emblematic of the dawn of the Second Empire. Not only did the regime allow the play's performance, but its nascent aesthetics would be crucial to Doche's embodiment of the contemporary courtesan. Having established the parallels between Duplessis and Doche's status as pseudo-aristocratic women of fashion prior

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<sup>218</sup> Anonymous and undated biography, BnF, R157556.

<sup>219</sup> Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations*, pp. 27 and 105–135; Miranda Gill, *Eccentricity and the Cultural Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 102–128.

<sup>220</sup> Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West*, pp. 376 and 380.

<sup>221</sup> Joëlle Chevé, *Les Grandes Courtisanes* (Paris: Éditions First-Gründ, 2012), p. 20.

to *La Dame aux camélias*, examining Doche's costuming as Marguerite reveals an active fusing of her own fashion with her character role, and Duplessis's legacy as a forerunner to the courtesan's golden age. As previously explored, costume provision and design was the performer's responsibility.<sup>222</sup> In an interview with Georges Nanteuil ahead of Bernhardt's 1896 reprise of the play, Doche responded to the question of Dumas *fils*'s involvement in her own costuming with 'non, du tout; il ne m'avait rien dit' [not at all; he gave me no instructions].<sup>223</sup> Her costume is therefore an important source through which to further explore Doche's creative influence on the role's conception.

Gautier had defined *modernité* a few months after Doche's creation of Marguerite in relation to women's fashion: he praised Dubufe's women portraits as 'modernes de poses, d'intentions, de robes et d'accessoires' [modern in pose, in intention, in dress and accessory].<sup>224</sup> His concept of *modernité* is thus equally helpful in understanding the importance of Doche's costuming as the Parisian and modern courtesan. Indeed, Gautier reviewed *La Dame aux camélias*'s premiere in similar terms to Dubufe's women portraits. He began by recollecting the late Duplessis and admiring 'cette aristocratie de formes [...] la fraîcheur de ses bouquets, l'élégance de sa toilette, l'éclat de ses diamans [sic]' [this aristocracy of forms [...] the freshness of her bouquets, the elegance of her toilette, the sparkle of her diamonds].<sup>225</sup> He also touched on the radical actuality of Duplessis's real story and how, unlike the statue of the ancient Greek courtesan Phyrne (born c. 371 BC) whom 'les siècles l'absolvent' [the centuries absolve], with Duplessis 'il a fallu beaucoup d'habileté pour mettre au théâtre [...] des scènes de la vie moderne' [a lot of ability was required to stage [...] scenes from modern life]. He thus praised Doche, who 'prête sa forme charmante' [lends her charming form], for creating Marguerite Gautier 'en actrice supérieure' [as a superior actress] in 'ce rôle, qui tient toute la pièce' [this role on which the whole show hangs].

The bouquets, elegant toilette, and diamonds that Gautier recollected of Duplessis are visible in a lithograph (figure 3.1) depicting Doche's costume as Marguerite in 1852, by Richard Buckner (1812–1883). Doche's autograph on the image testifies both to her celebrity and that she wanted to be associated with the lithograph. Marcus identifies 'the autograph

<sup>222</sup> Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 201.

<sup>223</sup> Georges Nanteuil, 'Les Costumes de Marguerite Gautier', *Le Journal*, 30 September 1896, p. 2. On the importance Dumas *fils* accorded to his women actors for their costuming see Lise Sabourin, 'Dumas fils et ses actrices' in *Correspondance et théâtre*, ed. by Jean-Marc Hovasse (Rennes: Rennes University Press, 2012), pp. 125–47.

<sup>224</sup> Gautier, 'Salon de 1852', 27 May 1852, n.p.

<sup>225</sup> Gautier, 'Théâtres', 10 February 1852, n.p.

craze’ of fans and collectors as originating in the mid-nineteenth century (when sending letters by post became cheap) and explains that it was a way of transforming ‘print into distinctive bodily traces’.<sup>226</sup> Doche’s autograph demonstrates her engagement with emerging facets of celebrity culture, incorporating her own ‘bodily traces’ with this circulating image of her costuming as Marguerite. In a similar vein, she later posed in her Marguerite costume for a *carte de visite* (figure 3.2) photographed by Charles Reutlinger (1816–1888). The *carte de visite*, invented in 1854, was an affordable way to increase diffusion of photographs and soon became central to actors’ celebrity. Again, Doche engaged in this new facet of celebrity culture to publicize her costuming as Marguerite. The image bears great resemblance to Buckner’s lithograph and although the photograph was taken in a studio (as was the practice in the early days of photography), the similarity in the images substantiates them both as representative of Doche’s costuming onstage. Whereas the 1853 lithograph depicts her original 1852 performance, the *carte de visite* was only invented in 1854. Therefore, the undated photograph likely represents a similar costume from a later reprise, and was perhaps consciously modelled on the earlier lithograph.



Figure 3.1 – Eugénie Doche as Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux camélias*, lithograph by Richard Buckner, 1853.



Figure 3.2 – ‘Doche dans “la dame aux camélias” qu’elle a créée le 2 février 1852’, photograph by Charles Reutlinger, c.1870–80. Musée d’Orsay.

<sup>226</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 107

Nanteuil's interview further confirms the representativeness of Doche's onstage costume in these images and, by extension, the interview's own reliability. Nanteuil's interest in Doche's costuming seems at least in part a response to the rumour that for her 1896 reprise Bernhardt insisted that 'les artistes porteront des costumes copies exactement sur ceux que les créateurs revetirent' [the artists' costumes will be exact replicas of those worn by the original role creators].<sup>227</sup> Although much time had passed since the original performance, the interview provided a first-person account of the outfit Doche wore in each of the five acts, of which the fourth matches the costume in Buckner's lithograph and is similar to Reutlinger's photograph:

je portais une robe de moire antique blanche [...] la jupe était toute garnie de volants d'application relevés sur le côté par des agrafes en diamant. J'avais mis dans mes tresses cinq étoiles en diamants [...] Le corsage décolleté, entièrement garni de dentelles, était orné de trois grosse [sic] agrafes en diamant et je portais au cou cinq rangs de perles [...] rubans bleu de ciel entouraient le corsage et retombaient sur la jupe. Au bras, je portais des bracelets en diamant [...] j'avais jeté pour entrer en scène, un grand mantelet de dentelles d'application et à la main je tenais un gros bouquet de camélias blancs.

[I wore a white dress made of shot silk [...] the skirt was decorated with frills held up to the side by diamond clips. I had put five diamond stars in my plats [...] My décolleté corset [...] entirely garnished with lace, was decorated with three large diamond clips and I had five rows of pearls around my neck [...] long sky-blue ribbons framed my corset and fell onto my skirt. I wore diamond bracelets on my arms [...] for my entrance onstage I threw on a lace shawl and in my hand I held a large bouquet of white camelias.]

If we believe that Nanteuil was recording Doche's voice, we can observe that she laid claim to the artistic vision of her intricate toilette, frequently making use of personal pronouns in her actions. The level of detail not only emphasises the thought that went into the costuming but also Doche's ability to vividly recollect it, both of which suggest the importance of costume to the creation.

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<sup>227</sup> Nanteuil, 'Les Costumes de Marguerite Gautier', p. 2.

Having established the reliability of these sources by their mutual reinforcement, comparison with contemporary fashions reveals the modernity of Doche's 1852 costume and thus her continued temporal fusing of her own persona with her courtesan character. For act IV, which takes place in a salon, Doche was dressed in a flounced ball gown, a fashion which began towards 1846, but came into prominence between 1850–54.<sup>228</sup> This style was therefore emerging just after Duplessis's affair with Dumas *fils* in 1845, and in full swing when Doche created Marguerite in 1852. As Boucher explains, French ball gowns at this time had 'deeply cut necklines that expose[d] the shoulders', a shawl 'passing over the shoulders' and hair was 'decorated with flowers, feathers, and ribbons'.<sup>229</sup> This could easily describe Doche's costume. Similarly, with the dawn of the luxurious Second Empire, wealth was displayed through jewellery: large necklaces (*rivières*), locket that hung from chains, and rigid bracelets (*porte-bonheur*) or flexible ones (*jarretières*).<sup>230</sup> Importantly, these are aspects of women's fashion that emerge only after Duplessis's death, and they are all present in Doche's costume. In all three sources, diamonds dot Doche's figure, bracelets adorn her wrists and rings of pearls hang from her neck. In both images Doche wears a chain necklace that suggests a possible locket hanging under her bodice. What is new to the photograph is Doche's long, dangling, earrings which came into vogue in the crinoline period that properly took off from 1856.<sup>231</sup> Their presence in the photograph suggests they could have been an incorporation for subsequent reprises and that Doche may have kept her Second Empire costuming up to date with current trends, keeping Marguerite as modern as possible.

In addition to jewellery, Boucher notes how after 1850, in accordance with the Emperor and Empress's attempts to foster luxury in fashion, the textile industry boomed, heralding a vogue for fabrics such as lace and silk.<sup>232</sup> This development seems also to have been referenced by Doche in her costuming, as described in her interview with Nanteuil: her dress is made of shot silk, her bodice is covered in lace, framed by a lace shawl and blue ribbons. Given Empress Eugénie's important influence on fashion, her outfit in her 1854 portrait (figure 3.3) is a helpful barometer of taste. What is more, the Empress's portrait is by the same Dubufe who inspired Gautier's conception of *modernité* and is strikingly similar to Doche's costume as Marguerite. Both women are in off-the shoulder white flounced ball gowns, with decorations in their smooth updo coiffure and pearls around their neck and wrist.

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<sup>228</sup> Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West*, p. 377–378.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 386–87.



Figure 3.3 – Portrait of the Empress Eugénie, oil on canvas by Edouard Dubufe, 1854. Musée d'Orsay.

Even Doche's blue ribbons are suggestive of the Empress's azure sash, although Doche's lithograph predates the Empress's portrait. In other words: Doche's costume was so elevated, that beyond pseudo-aristocratic levels of dress it was fit for an Empress.

Doche as Marguerite in 1852, like Empress Eugénie in her 1854 portrait, was the epitome of Second Empire fashion. As we have seen, just as Gautier considered Dubufe's portrayal of 'types purement actuels' [purely contemporary types] in May

1852 as 'inattend[u]' [unexpected] and as a 'représentation intelligente et fidèle' [intelligent and faithful portrayal], predicated on modern 'poses [...] robes et [...] accessoires' [poses, dress and accessories] so too did he consider Doche in February of that year as Marguerite Gautier 'en actrice supérieure' [as a superior actress], praising her for the manner in which she 'prête sa forme charmante' [lends her charming form] and emphasising how 'il a fallu beaucoup d'habilité pour mettre au théâtre [...] des scènes de la vie moderne' [a lot of ability was required to stage [...] scenes from modern life]. Through Gautier, we can thus see how Doche's costuming brought her own 1852 fashions to the character role, transporting Duplessis and Marguerite into the present moment. The costuming was thus both suggestive of Duplessis's legacy as a forerunner of the 'golden age' of the courtesan and also established Doche's own imprint on the character in this new era, as one of Paris's most fashionable women.

While Nanteuil interviewed Doche following the rumour that Bernhardt would replicate her 1852 costumes, a subsequent review in *Le Pays* on 2 October 1896 claimed ‘on avait mené grand bruit à l’avance, de la reconstitution des costumes, non de l’époque même de la création (1852), mais de celle où s’est déroulée l’idylle tragique de Marguerite [...] (1845). De ce côté, l’attente des curieux n’a pas été déçue’ [there had been a lot of talk anticipating the reconstruction of the costumes, not from the date of the role creation (1852), but from when the tragic idyll of Marguerite took place [...] (1845). In this sense, expectations were not disappointed]. Bernhardt would base her sartorial reconstruction on 1845 fashions relevant to Duplessis and not Doche’s 1852 creation. In her later interview with Adolphe Brisson, relayed in the third person, Doche is reported to have remarked upon Bernhardt’s costuming here: ‘Bernhardt préfère les modes de 1845 [...] Doche ne comprend pas l’utilité de cette restitution’ [Bernhardt prefers the fashions from 1845 [...] Doche does not understand the point of this reconstruction].<sup>233</sup> A review in *Le Charivari* on 2 October 1896 offered a possible explanation: Bernhardt ‘ne pouvait pas être une Marguerite Gautier ressemblant aux autres’ [could not be a Marguerite Gautier that resembled any others]. This testifies further to the impact of Doche on the role: so fused was she with the 1852 creation that Bernhardt chose to reconstruct 1845 fashions to assert her own influence in a historical piece, and create a distinct visual effect, rather than one characterised by Doche’s *modernité*. Doche’s fashionable 1852 costuming can therefore be understood to accentuate the modernity of Marguerite’s character in the decadent aesthetic of the Second Empire, which emerged shortly after Duplessis’s death in 1847. In so doing, Doche assured a temporal fusing of Marguerite with her own fashionable persona, beyond that of the late Duplessis – and which Bernhardt felt the need to defuse in order to claim the role as her own.

### **The Vamp and the Revamping of Celebrity**

While Doche was on the point of retiring in the early 1850s, her newfound celebrity as Marguerite revamped her career for nearly a quarter of a century. As well as reprising *La Dame aux camélias* nationally and internationally up until April 1869, she was honoured with opening the Vaudeville’s new premises that same month and continued to perform *dramas* there from the 1850s well into the 1870s. Doche also created *dramas* on the secondary stages of the Théâtres de l’Ambigu, de la Gaîté, and de la Porte Saint-Martin between 1857–60, and again at this last theatre in 1874, the final year of her career. Most notably, between 1865–66

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<sup>233</sup> Brisson, ‘La Créatrice de la “Dame aux Camélias”’, n.p.

and 1873–74, she created important roles in *dramas* and *comédies* at the Théâtre de l’Odéon, the ‘Second Théâtre Français’ under the Second Empire. Sources also claimed that following the success of *La Dame aux camélias* Doche was offered a contract at the Comédie-Française — an offer which she rejected.<sup>234</sup> Whether true or not, its iteration both highlights the prestige associated with Doche’s Marguerite and that such prestige transcended the hierarchical binary between the primary and secondary stages. Doche therefore reverses the model presented by theories of women’s celebrity that propose the necessity, for the most esteemed women performers, of largely evading associations with courtesans – and with unprecedented success. Through her active spatial and temporal fusing of her persona with the courtesans Marguerite and Duplessis, she gained newfound celebrity, status, and access across Paris’s many stages, both secondary and primary, in *dramas* and *comédies*, and in a wide variety of roles.

In Doche’s obituary Claretie wrote: ‘quel que fût le talent de celles qui jouèrent Marguerite Gautier après elle, Eugénie Doche était [...] toujours – pour l’auteur comme pour le public — la Marguerite Gautier idéale, celle qui aurait donné la vie, mieux que cela l’immortalité à l’œuvre alors inconnue’ [whatever the talent of those who played Marguerite after her, Eugénie Doche was [...] always – for the author as much as the public – the ideal Marguerite Gautier, the one who had given life – better than that immortality to the until then unknown œuvre].<sup>235</sup> Doche did not just bring Marguerite to life: she turned her into a myth. So fused were Doche’s creation and bodily incarnation of Marguerite, Duplessis, and their (im)mortality, that Doche was buried almost directly opposite Duplessis in the Cimetière de Montmartre. As Claretie noted, Dumas  *fils* called Doche his ‘première complice’ [first accomplice], an indication of the unchartered territory that the playwright and the actor embarked upon together, from tackling the censors to the play’s huge onstage success.<sup>236</sup> Doche’s Marguerite certainly surpassed an interpretation of the novel and playscript, expanding both spatially – beyond the stage into her own home, salon, and final resting place – and temporally – bringing Duplessis’s 1845 story into the radical contemporaneity and modernity of 1852 and beyond.

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<sup>234</sup> Anonymous and undated biography, BnF, R157556.

<sup>235</sup> Jules Claretie, *La Vie à Paris*, 9 vols (Paris: Charpentier, 1896–1914), VI (1901), 181.

<sup>236</sup> Claretie, *La Vie à Paris*, VI, 182.

#### 4 – A Change of Heart: Anaïs Fargueil and *Les Filles de marbre*

Mlle Fargueil, par la façon tout à fait distinguée dont elle a rendu la physionomie de la courtisane, ne nous paraît plus discutable; elle doit avoir maintenant au Vaudeville du droit de la conquête une excellente place.

[To our minds, there should be no more doubt about Mademoiselle Fargueil: the entirely distinguished way she incorporated the physiognomy of the courtesan must, by right of conquest, secure her a privileged position at the Vaudeville].<sup>237</sup>

The boulevard actor Anaïs Fargueil (1819–1896) rose to newfound prominence following her creation of the courtesan Marco in *Les Filles de marbre* (a *drame en cinq actes, mêlée de chant* by Théodore Barrière and Lambert Thiboust) on 17 May 1853, at the Théâtre du Vaudeville. Given that the play premiered at the same theatre where Doche had acquired unprecedented celebrity and renown as Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias* the year before, as shown in the previous chapter, one might assume that Fargueil established herself in a similar manner to her contemporary. However, the above review of *Les Filles de marbre*'s premiere suggests a more nuanced narrative: according to *Le Siècle*, Fargueil gained lasting recognition through the distinguished manner [façon distinguée] in which she incorporated the courtesan. As well as 'illustrious', the word 'distinguée' can be understood to mean 'singular' or 'distinguished from others' and, as *Le Constitutionnel* reported, 'Fargueil joue avec un rare talent de composition le rôle de Marco [...] et c'est un rôle autrement ingrat et autrement difficile que celui de la dame aux camélias' [Fargueil performs the role of Marco with a rare creative talent [...] and the role is significantly more thankless and difficult than that of the Dame aux Camélias].<sup>238</sup> *Le Constitutionnel* highlighted the uniqueness of Fargueil's creativity, and how it differed to that of Doche as Marguerite. The role of Marco would be anything but thankless in terms of Fargueil's reputation. Rather, the thanklessness

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<sup>237</sup> Ch. Matharel de Fiennes, 'Revue des théâtres', *Le Siècle*, 23 May 1853, n.p.

<sup>238</sup> Auguste Lireux, 'Théâtres', *Le Constitutionnel*, 23 May 1853, n.p.

referred to Marco's lack of likeability, compared to the much loved and loving Marguerite. Marco, by contrast, was a *fille de marbre* [a girl made of marble].

Marco's contrast to Marguerite was so apparent that critics were unable to comment on *Les Filles de marbre*'s success without comparing it to *La Dame aux camélias*. *L'Artiste* considered the new play the 'revers de la médaille dorée' [the other side of the coin],<sup>239</sup> Gautier reported: 'le succès a été immense et, chose bizarre, ne peut se comparer qu'à celui de la *Dame aux Camélias*, dont *Les Filles de marbre* sont la contre-partie et l'antidote' [the success was immense and – most bizarre – comparable only to that of the *Dame aux Camélias*, of which *Les Filles de marbre* is both the counterpart and antidote].<sup>240</sup> Even Gautier, the most seasoned of theatre critics, was bemused by the paradox of the play's reception being comparable only to its antithetical precursor. It is this 'chose bizarre' [most bizarre thing] that I unpack in this chapter, in which I explore what it was about Fargueil's 'rare talent de composition' [rare creative talent], to borrow from *Le Constitutionnel*, that resulted in her parallel exaltation to Doche. What was it about the 'physiognomy of the courtesan', as *Le Siècle* put it, that secured Fargueil's undeniable status thereafter? Having previously established the appeal of both the historical and the contemporary loving courtesan, what was it about this new, heartless, contemporary type that was as compelling as her more affable predecessors? And how might this development continue to nuance our understanding of celebrity culture?

To tackle these questions I engage with various facets of celebrity theory, particularly Sharon Marcus's contention that nineteenth-century stage actors encouraged audiences to compare performers' individual merits by playing the same roles as each other. Marcus identifies two main methods of comparison: the performance of 'shadow repertory' – playing the same character as a contemporary – and the 'historical competition' – reprising the role of a reputable predecessor.<sup>241</sup> We have already encountered both these techniques: Page performed Marguerite Gautier as 'shadow repertory' of her contemporary Doche, and Bernhardt later reprised the role in 'historical competition' with her predecessors. The case of Fargueil's Marco – the antiheroine in comparison to Marguerite created a year later and on the same stage – offers an alternative technique for establishing comparative merit. I term this

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<sup>239</sup> Pierre Malitourne, 'Théâtres', *L'Artiste*, 1 June 1853, n.p.

<sup>240</sup> Théophile Gautier, 'Théâtres', *La Presse*, 23 May 1853, n.p.

<sup>241</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 195. Marcus also mentions a third, less common technique, that of 'mirror repertory' whereby actors in the same play switch roles on consecutive nights. For more on mirror repertory see also Patricia Marks, *Sarah Bernhardt's First Theatrical Tour* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), p. 148.

a ‘reverse repertory’, whereby an actor performs the same character type as a contemporary but its reverse, or as a critic put it in 1853, the ‘revers de la médaille dorée’. In this chapter I argue that Fargueil’s Marco was an instance of reverse repertory, which reaffirms my thesis that playing the contemporary courtesan on the secondary stage in mid-century Paris was a pathway to renown and celebrity. What is more, I show how Fargueil built this celebrity through another technique Marcus identifies with Fargueil’s successor Bernhardt: that of ‘actively courting repulsion’ both onstage and beyond, thus demonstrating the former’s important influence on the latter.

In an 1887 biography, Adolphe Racot recollected of *Les Filles de marbre*’s premiere that ‘dès ce jour [ce] ne fut plus Mlle Fargueil qui alla quêter les rôles. On vint les lui offrir. Elle fut célèbre, non pas seulement grâce à la popularité de la foule [...] mais encore grâce aux éloges des maîtres de la critique d’alors, les Janin, les Gautier’ [from that day [it] was no longer Mademoiselle Fargueil who went to request roles. People came to offer them to her. She was celebrated, not only due to her popularity amongst the public [...] but also due to the praise of the master critics of the time, the Janins, the Gautiers].<sup>242</sup> According to Racot, Fargueil’s success as Marco was tripartite, built on winning over playwrights, the public, and the critics. To fully grapple with Fargueil’s celebrity, I take these elements in reverse order. Following a brief overview of her early life and career prior to her signature role, section one explores Fargueil’s critical reception in *Les Filles de marbre* and how her celebrity both resembled and diverged from that of her reputable predecessors. Section two deals with the crowd’s reported reaction (albeit still through the account of the critics, as the only available source) to Fargueil’s Marco, and how her creation influenced her celebrated women contemporaries both in the theatre and in society at large. The third and final section explores Fargueil’s subsequent roles, and how she left her imprint – quite literally – on celebrity culture, setting the scene for her successors.

### **From Marguerite to Marco: How Anaïs Became the *Fille de marbre***

Born in Toulouse on 21 March 1819, Anaïs Fargueil was the daughter of Jenny Faure and the actor Paul Fargueil and first appeared onstage in Bordeaux aged 4. Soon after, the family moved to Paris where Anaïs joined the conservatoire in January 1831 aged only 11. Top of the class, she won first prize for music theory and vocalisation in 1833 and for singing and

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<sup>242</sup> Adolphe Racot, ‘Mademoiselle Fargueil’ in *Portraits d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Henry du Parc, 1887), pp. 127–135.

harmony in 1834.<sup>243</sup> Her successful studies secured her place at the Opéra-Comique – one of Paris’s primary theatres – where she debuted on 28 February 1835, aged just 15. Praised by critics for her dramatic talents, voice, and exceptional beauty, due to over-exerting her vocal cords at such a young age, Fargueil damaged her voice. No longer suited to the lyric stage, Fargueil debuted at the secondary stage of the Vaudeville in May 1836 where she performed for five years, before appearing at two of Paris’s other secondary stages: the Palais Royal from 1842, followed by the Gymnase between 1844–1845. Despite her promising beginnings, Fargueil struggled to establish herself as the star of any given theatre and left Paris to tour the provinces for 5 years, returning in 1850 due to her mother’s ill-health. It was at this time that the Vaudeville offered Fargueil the role of Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias*, which she subsequently renounced after initial rehearsals.

Accounts are conflicting as to why Fargueil withdrew from the role of Marguerite, and I have yet to find a record left by the actor herself. In an 1883 article celebrating the end of Fargueil’s career, Francisque Sarcey wrote about the decision as: ‘cet incident, que l’on a conté de vingt façons, et sur lequel il s’est formé une légende que l’on aura bien de la peine à déraciner’ [that incident that has been recounted in twenty different ways, and has become an urban myth that will be hard to dispel].<sup>244</sup> Claiming to speak on Fargueil’s behalf, Sarcey wrote ‘vous pourrez lire partout que Mlle Fargueil refusa de jouer Marguerite, trouvant la pièce détestable et le rôle indigne d’elle. Je tiens de la bouche même de Mlle Fargueil qu’il n’y a pas un mot de vrai’ [you will read everywhere that Mlle Fargueil refused to play Marguerite, having detested the play and considered the role beneath her. I have it from the horse’s mouth that there is not one word of truth in such claims]. According to Sarcey and others, Fargueil withdrew from the role following her mother’s death and her own resultant ill-health.<sup>245</sup> Sarcey added that it made no sense for Fargueil, who had struggled to establish herself in Paris, to reject the role and that while she could have misjudged the play’s worth it would have been impossible to underestimate the importance of the role ‘qui remplissait le drame tout entier’ [which took up the whole of the *drame*]. Even if we believe that Sarcey was Fargueil’s mouthpiece, there is of course no guarantee that Fargueil relayed the events as

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<sup>243</sup> Louis Huart, ‘Mlle Fargueil’ in *Galerie de la presse, de la littérature et des beaux-arts*, (Paris: Aubert, 1841) n.p. For Fargueil’s biographical details see also Hippolyte Lucas, ‘Mlle Fargueil’ in *Galerie des artistes dramatiques* (Paris: Marchant, 1841) n.p.; Albert Blanquet, ‘Mlle Fargueil’ in *Les Théâtres de Paris* (Paris: Baillieu, 1863) n.p.; Félix Savard, *Les Actrices de Paris* (Paris: Librairie centrale, 1867) pp. 105–10.

<sup>244</sup> Francisque Sarcey, ‘Anaïs Fargueil’, *Le XIXe Siècle*, 17 April 1883, n.p.

<sup>245</sup> This version of events is also relayed by Fernand Xau, ‘Anaïs Fargueil’ in *Gil Blas*, 3 November 1883, n.p.; Racot, ‘Mademoiselle Fargueil’, p. 129; and Roger de Beauvoir, *Les Disparus* (Paris: Dentu et Cie, 1887), p. 215.

they occurred. Jules Claretie (pseudonym G. Souvenance) similarly reported ‘on a dit que Fargueil avait “refusé le rôle”, elle s’en défend avec énergie. “ – J’aurais donc été bien bête!” dit-elle’ [it has been said that Fargueil ‘refused the role’, she emphatically refutes the claim, maintaining ‘I would have been very stupid to do so’].<sup>246</sup> It is of course possible that with the benefit of hindsight Fargueil might have wanted to rewrite a narrative that suggested her lack of artistic foresight.

Despite Sarcey and Claretie’s interventions, the ‘urban myth’ lived on. In Fargueil’s obituary, *Le Gaulois* recalled:

il y avait en ce temps-là, au théâtre, un assez singulier préjugé: les rôles de [...] “femmes légères”, étaient en grand discrédit: il semblait que l’artiste qui se chargeait de l’interprétation d’un rôle de ce genre se rabaissait et Anaïs Fargueil refusa le rôle à cause de sa “qualité” ... – Je ne connais pas ce monde-là, dit-elle, – Et Dumas, de méchante humeur, lui répondit: “Si vous ne connaissez pas ce monde-là maintenant, vous ne le connaîtrez jamais!

[at the time, at the theatre, there was a rather singular prejudice: the roles of [...] ‘loose women’ were greatly discredited: it seemed that the artiste who charged themselves with interpreting a role of this type lowered themselves and Anaïs Fargueil refused the role due to its ‘quality’... – I do not know this world, she claimed, – and Dumas, sarcastically, replied: “if you do not know this world currently, you never will!].<sup>247</sup>

*Le Journal des débats* similarly recollected in its obituary that ‘par un scrupule qui paraîtrait aujourd’hui singulier, Mlle Fargueil refusa de représenter “une femme légère”, disant qu’elle ne connaissait pas ce monde-là’ [due to a scruple which today seems quite odd, Mademoiselle Fargueil refused to represent a ‘loose woman’, claiming that she was unfamiliar with that world].<sup>248</sup> Two years later, the playwright Dumas *fils* himself supported this version of events in his notes to the 1898 edition of the play, claiming that Fargueil ‘dès la première répétition, s’y déclara mal à son aise et préféra y renoncer’ [from the first

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<sup>246</sup> G. Souvenance, ‘Une Actrice parisienne’, *Le Figaro*, 19 October 1883, n.p.

<sup>247</sup> Tout-Paris, ‘Anaïs Fargueil’, *Le Gaulois*, 10 April 1896.

<sup>248</sup> Anon., ‘Lettres, sciences et arts’, *Journal des débats*, 11 April 1896, n.p.

rehearsal claimed to be uncomfortable with the role and preferred to drop out].<sup>249</sup> Notably, Dumas *filis* published these claims after Fargueil's death when she could no longer refute them. The playwright could similarly have had reason to stoke controversy in the interests of the play's legacy, although – as explored in the previous chapter – by this time the play's legacy was indisputable. Mlle Judith (1827–1912), star of the Comédie-Française, who toured the provinces as Marguerite from 1853, recollected in her 1911 memoirs that Fargueil had refused the role 'avec hauteur, disant qu'elle ne s'avilirait pas à paraître sous les traits d'une femme galante' [haughtily, insisting that she would not degrade herself by donning the appearance of a courtesan].<sup>250</sup> Again, Mlle Judith could have had her motives for casting aspersions upon a late rival actor: Fargueil's apparent short-sightedness could have served to reinforce Mlle Judith's own artistic foresight for taking on the role.

While the urban myth cannot be dispelled, the weight given to Fargueil's decision and possible motivations demonstrates its impact on theatrical history and the star's own career. The ambiguity shrouding Fargueil's actions not only gained mythical status and contributed to her mystique, but it came to characterise her celebrity. Equally contradictory reports emerged regarding her willingness to create the subsequent courtesan role of Marco in *Les Filles de marbre*. In an 1857 review of one of Fargueil's subsequent plays Jules Janin recalled 'ce rôle terrible et furieux de Marco la belle, qu'elle ne voulait pas jouer' [that terrible, fierce role of the beautiful Marco, that she did not want to play]. Similarly, around the time of Fargueil's latest theatrical success in 1869, *L'Éclipse* related the following anecdote:

On raconte que, lorsque l'on monta *Les Filles de marbre* [...] Fargueil, à qui le rôle de Marco ne plaisait pas du tout, crut décourager les auteurs en le répétant avec cet air d'ennui qu'il devait conserver toujours.

– D'abord, déclara-t-elle à Hippolyte Worms, tout ce qu'on me dira est inutile: Je le jouerai *comme ça*.

– *Comme ça!* s'écria Hippolyte avec enthousiasme, mais, grands dieux, on ne vous demande pas autre chose!...

En effet, Mlle Fargueil le joua *comme ça*, et elle obtint le triomphe immense que vous savez.

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<sup>249</sup> Dumas *filis*, *Théâtre complet*, VIII (1898), 16.

<sup>250</sup> Gsell, *Mémoires de Mme Judith*, p. 231.

[It has been said that when they staged *Les Filles de marbre* [...] Fargueil, who did not like the role of Marco at all, thought she could discourage the playwrights by rehearsing it with that air of ennui that became characteristic of the role ever since.

– For a start, she declared to the Vaudeville director Hippolyte Worms, every suggestion you make is useless: I will play it *like this*.

– *Like this!* Exclaimed Hippolyte enthusiastically, by god, we ask nothing else of you!...

As it happens, Mlle Fargueil played it *like this*, and obtained the huge success that you already know].<sup>251</sup>

Whether true or not, the anecdote demonstrated the importance of Fargueil's perceived lack of enthusiasm [ennui] and how integral it was to her huge success as the apathetic *fille de marbre*. Unlike the passionate and loving Marguerite, Fargueil was credited with infusing the new courtesan type with the indifference and tedium which became characteristic of the role. This in turn distinguished Fargueil, who had previously withdrawn from the role of Marguerite, from Doche who had taken the role on with enthusiasm – as explored in the previous chapter. Fargueil's elusiveness and apparent apathy, when it came to playing the courtesan roles of both Marguerite and Marco, became part and parcel of her celebrity.

Like *La Dame aux camélias*, *Les Filles de marbre* was a *drame en cinq actes, mêlée de chant* and, just as the former had been for Doche, the latter was Fargueil's first venture in the *drame* genre. As Mahalin later claimed Fargueil 'appartient au Drame. *Les Filles de marbre* ont commencé sa réputation en ce genre' [belongs to the *drame*. *Les Filles de marbre* started her reputation in this genre].<sup>252</sup> The crucial difference with *La Dame aux camélias* was that *Les Filles de marbre* 'cela veut dire *les filles sans cœur*' [means the girls with no heart].<sup>253</sup> Act I, an allegorical prologue, is set in ancient Athens. The famous sculptor Phidias has moulded the courtesans Aspasia, Lais, and Phyrne, and sold them in advance to Gorgias. However, when Gorgias comes to collect his acquisitions, Phidias does not want to part with them. He pleads with his life-like creations to stay with him but the 'filles de marbre' [marble girls] remain unmoved. However, when Gorgias's declares his riches to the statues, they

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<sup>251</sup> Emile Blondet, 'Gazette à la main', *L'Éclipse*, 11 September 1869, n.p.

<sup>252</sup> Paul Mahalin, 'Anaïs Fargueil', undated biography, BnF, 4 ICO PER 9214.

<sup>253</sup> Th. Muret, 'Théâtres', *L'Union*, 23 May 1853, n.p.

become animated and turn their heads to smile at their new proprietor. In act II the Athenians transform into Parisians in the current year of 1853. The statue of Aspasia becomes Marco, a courtesan and singer at the Opéra, who sips champagne at a party in the Bois de Boulogne while a member of the party breaks into a song (an ‘air nouveau’) about her. The song mocks Marco for being interested only in money, accompanied by the percussive chink of gold coins, and the final refrain is sung by Marco herself in a playful act of self-mockery. As the song ends, the sculptor Raphael – the modern-day Phidias – appears and is taken by the beguiling Marco. Although penniless, Raphael’s artistic reputation precedes him; Marco encourages Raphael’s advances while his friend Desgenais warns him against the mercenary courtesan. In act III Raphael returns to his artist studio and attempts to forget Marco to no avail: Marco soon summons him, and he runs to her. Act IV opens in the Parisian suburbs, in a villa that Raphael has rented for himself and Marco – his new mistress. Three weeks have passed, and Marco is already tired of suburbia. A letter from her old protector requests her return to Paris and Marco leaves Raphael for her previous life. Act V returns to the love-sick Raphael’s Parisian studio, where he dies of a broken heart. Marco pays a visit but arrives too late, and so the play ends.

According to Jules Janin, Fargueil was ‘la reine de la soirée’ [the queen of the night], and he specifically singled out her embodiment of Marco in act IV:

Elle s’ennuie [...] elle jette ses ennuis à la face de l’infortuné jeune homme [...] Tout ce passage est d’une énergie incroyable, et Mlle Fargueil [...] s’acquitte en tout honneur de cette tâche immonde! Elle est superbe, elle est effrayante, elle est terrible; c’est bien là le marbre des maisons contagieuses [...] le refrain des chansons perverses.

[She is bored [...] she takes her ennui out on the poor young man [...] this whole passage has such incredible energy, and Mademoiselle Fargueil [...] fulfils this vile task with such honour! She is superb, she is terrifying, she is terrible; that is what the marble of the *maisons closes* is made of [...] such is the chorus of perverse songs].<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Jules Janin, ‘Théâtre du Vaudeville’, *Journal des débats*, 23 May 1853, n.p.

Janin highlighted the power of Fargueil's 'ennui' as Marco during her suburban retreat in act IV, which was a kind of reverse mirroring of the fourth act of *La Dame aux camélias*, where Marguerite takes great pleasure in her rural retreat. Janin particularly admired Fargueil for physically embodying her heroine's 'ennui', praising both her visible, marmoreal quality and the aurality of her self-mocking song about her gold-digging nature.

*Le Pays* similarly commended Fargueil's performance, particularly in act IV:

Mlle Fargueil a fait de la création de Marco un infernal chef-d'œuvre. Qu'elle était belle au quatrième acte, couchée sur son sofa [sic] dans une pose de sphinx, ses yeux *pleins d'adultères*, le sourire de Vénus [...] figé sur les lèvres. Est-elle assez [...] endurcie dans l'impertinence? Oh! [...] la froide succube, le glacial démon! Si l'enfer avait ses grandes dames, je ne me les figurerais autrement.

[Mademoiselle Fargueil made a masterpiece out of her creation of Marco. How beautiful she was in the fourth act, lying on her sofa in a sphinx's pose, her eyes full of adultery, the smile of Venus [...] fixed on her lips. Is she hardened enough by impertinence? Oh [...] the cold succubus, the glacial demon! If hell had its great women, I would not imagine them any differently].<sup>255</sup>

Again, the critic focused on the statuesque quality of Fargueil's creation, which he likened to ancient statues of the Sphinx and Venus. The adjectives 'hardened', 'cold', and 'glacial' highlighted Fargueil's detached, marble-like rendition of the *fille de marbre*, and the enumeration of her facial features and beauty praised her incarnation of the heartless courtesan's physiognomy. Although the critic considered Fargueil's creation of the *fille de marbre* faultless ('je ne me les figurerais autrement' [I would not imagine them any differently]), he lambasted the two playwrights Barrière and Thiboust for their equation of contemporary courtesans with statues of the great Hetaerae: 'vous avez touché d'une main étourdie à des marbres sacrés dont vous ignorez la sainteté plastique et l'inviolable hauteur' [with your giddy hands you have dared touch the sacred marbles of which you ignore the material sanctity and the inviolable heights]. Yet, paradoxically, it was precisely through Fargueil's association with antiquity – through her ability to incorporate the likes of the

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<sup>255</sup> Paul de Saint-Victor, 'Revue dramatique' in *Le Pays*, 23 May 1853, n.p.

Sphinx or Venus – that the star succeeded where the playwrights failed, establishing her own ‘sainteté plastique’ and ‘inviolable hauteur’.

According to Gautier, Fargueil performed Marco ‘en comédienne de premier ordre; elle a figé [...] sa beauté délicate dans une pâte marmoréenne glacée, brillante, polie, sur laquelle glissent tous les sentimens [sic] humains comme des gouttes de pluie sur une surface vernissée: on ne saurait être plus imperméable’ [as a first class actor; she fixed her delicate beauty in a marmoreal, glossy, polished paste, on whose varnished surface all human feelings glide off like drops of rain: you could not be any more impermeable if you tried].<sup>256</sup>

Described as a ‘comédienne de premier ordre’, Fargueil’s courtesan creation at the Vaudeville – like that of Doche at this same theatre – transcended the hierarchical binary between the primary and secondary stage. Like the critic from *Le Pays*, Gautier praised the marmoreal materiality of Fargueil’s embodiment of the *fille de marbre*. He added ‘Marco, l’ancienne Aspasia, semble avoir retenu dans ses traits purs, délicats et froids, l’insensibilité du marbre primitif; sa blanche poitrine ne s’est pas encore réchauffée, et la poupre généreuse de riz scintille comme les micas du paros’ [Marco, the ancient Aspasia, seems to have retained the callousness of the primitive marble in her pure, delicate and cold features; her white bosom has not warmed up, and her generous amount of face powder shines like the mica finish of the Greek island of Paros]. Gautier was typically attentive here to the material – even practical – features of the aesthetic. He commended Fargueil’s artistry for ‘fixing’ her features into the physiognomy as the ‘marble hearted’ courtesan through her careful use of cosmetics, which at the time was the actor’s responsibility.

Five years later, in his famed article *De la mode* [On Fashion], Gautier praised women’s use of this same ‘poudre de riz’ [face powder]. For Gautier, a woman whitening her skin was equivalent to a skilled painter using light glazes to achieve comparisons between flesh tones and fabrics.<sup>257</sup> In the same terms as his review of Fargueil’s Marco, Gautier observed that with this fine powder women made their skin assume ‘un mica de marbre’ [the mica finish of marble] and that they often powdered their neck, shoulders, and chest so that ‘la forme se rapproche ainsi de la statuaire, elle se spiritualise et se purifie’ [their appearance thus resembles that of a statue; it is spiritualized and purified]. Not only did Gautier emphasise women’s artistry through the application of these cosmetics, but he considered its equivalence with Classical beauty to elevate and ‘purify’ their appearance. This was the same

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<sup>256</sup> Gautier, ‘Théâtres’, 23 May 1853, n.p.

<sup>257</sup> Théophile Gautier, ‘De la mode’, *L’Artiste*, 14 March 1858, n.p.; Théophile Gautier, ‘On Fashion’, trans. by Richard George Elliott in *Art in Translation*, 7:2, 205–211, (211).

claim he made of Fargueil's use of face powder and material incarnation of the *fille de marbre* five years prior.

It was precisely the perception of Fargueil's artificiality as the *fille de marbre* which distinguished her from her contemporaries. Edmond Viellot later recalled, 'd'autres, Doche et Rose Chéri, par exemple, prirent [...] le côté réaliste humain ou vivant. Fargueil en fut la personnification complète et pour ainsi dire synthétique, – elle représenta l'attraction réalisée de la fille de marbre' [others, Doche and Rose Chéri, for example, took [...] the realist, the living, human tack. Fargueil was the complete personification of the role, that is to say she was synthetic, – she represented the attraction produced by the *fille de marbre*].<sup>258</sup> The reverse of Doche's humane Marguerite, Fargueil distinguished herself by personifying, somewhat paradoxically, the artificial nature of the *fille de marbre*. Her courtesan creation similarly differed from that of her contemporary Rose Chéri who created the infamous *demimondaine* courtesan type two years later (and who is the subject of the following chapter). Yet given the cold, heartless personality of her courtesan creation, Fargueil's detached Classical style nonetheless embodied the characteristics of her role: she did not internalise her character, because her character was made of marble.

Many decades later, the celebrated actor Jules Truffier (1856–1943) praised Fargueil for the role 'qu'elle a fait *sien* et qu'elle a traduit avec une vérité sculpturale, rôle tout à fait à la taille de Rachel' [that she made *hers* and that she translated with such sculptural truth, a role entirely cut out for the likes of Rachel].<sup>259</sup> Reflecting on the unanimous critical praise for Fargueil's performance in act IV, Truffier added that 'lorsqu'elle manifestait au cours de sa scène de lassitude, son "Ah! que je m'ennuie!" on le compara aux exclamations les plus profondément tragiques de Rachel' [when in her lethargic scene she expressed her "Oh! How bored I am!" it was compared to the most profoundly tragic exclamations of Rachel]. Marked out from her colleagues on the secondary stage, Fargueil was equated to Rachel at Paris's premier stage. It was not just Fargueil's sculptural qualities that were likened to the star of the Comédie-Française, but the exclamatory style that accompanied her detached, statuesque physicality. Once again, we see the centrality of Marco's 'ennui' – the reverse of Doche's Marguerite – which elevated Fargueil to the Classical realms of high art, worthy of Ancient Greek sculpture and Paris's primary stage.

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<sup>258</sup> Edmond Viellot, 'Anaïs Fargueil', undated biography, BnF, 4 ICO PER 9214.

<sup>259</sup> Jules Truffier, 'Dix comédiens célèbres dans leur meilleur rôle', *Conférenci*a, 1 October 1933, n.p.

Beyond the Classical French stage, and although not compared explicitly, Fargueil's statuesque elevation through the *fille de marbre* is also reminiscent of her celebrated predecessor on the British stage: the tragic actor Sarah Siddons (1755–1831). As Marie explains, Siddons explicitly associated her performance style and iconography with sculpture, thus adding value to her artistry through its association with Classical art.<sup>260</sup> By so doing Siddons contributed to what Marie terms a 'métaphysique de l'art' [metaphysics of art] that privileged stasis and the importance of facial expression over movement, elevating the actor to the position of a living statue. Marie claims that through this technique Siddons always appeared picturesque, gracious, and dignified. What is curious about Fargueil's statuesque Marco, and her marmoreal physiognomy, was that it similarly elevated the star to the tragic heights of Siddons, but through the somewhat reverse means. As explored in my introduction, according to Gill Perry, 'for the actress to qualify for the 'honourable' status which Siddons achieved, she must be freed from the specific associations of whoring'.<sup>261</sup> Indeed, Siddons acquired huge celebrity and renown for always playing 'honourable' roles, most frequently the character of the dedicated mother. For Fargueil, it was precisely by creating the *fille de marbre* – an explicit association with 'whoring' – that she elevated herself to a 'comédienne de premier ordre', according to the likes of Gautier. It is in this sense that Fargueil's example can nuance our understanding of celebrity culture. Rather than freeing women actors from the 'specific associations of whoring', Fargueil – like Dorval, Page and Doche before her – creatively played with this association to elevate and establish herself as one of the most reputable stars of her time. While the outcome she achieved was similar to that of Dorval, Page and Doche, the means were quite the reverse.

### **The Reported Public Reaction: From Repentant to Revolting Courtesans**

Beyond the critical reception of Fargueil's Marco, the second element of the star's success according to Racot was the 'popularité de la foule' [admiration of the public]. Following the premiere, *L'Artiste* posited: 'la *Dame aux Camélias* fut une pièce singulièrement surfaite par les engouements de la mode [...] *Les Filles de marbre* [...] revers de la médaille dorée [...] auront-elles cette fortune d'éveiller aussi ardemment la curiosité?' [*La Dame aux camélias* was a play whose overrated success was entirely due to it being fashionable [...] *Les Filles de marbre* [...] the other side of the coin [...] will it have the same good fortune of piquing such

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<sup>260</sup> Marie, *Inventer l'acteur*, p. 360.

<sup>261</sup> Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations*, p. 24.

interest?].<sup>262</sup> Central to *La Dame aux camélias*'s success, as explored in the previous chapter, was the combined topicality of the contemporary courtesan and the modern costumes Doche fashioned. The redemptive nature of the *courtisane amoureuse*, previously established by Dorval (as explored in chapter one), was equally crucial to Doche's Marguerite: *Le Charivari* noted a few months after the play's premiere that it had 'mis en émoi toutes les jolies pécheresses de Paris' [stirred the emotions of all the pretty sinners of Paris] and that 'cette touchante histoire a mis le sentiment à la mode parmi les lorettes' [this touching story has made sentimentality fashionable among the *lorettes*].<sup>263</sup> But, if Doche's Marguerite established a trend for the sentimental courtesan, what – if anything – would Fargueil's reverse repertory as the *fille de marbre* set in motion?

Following *Les Filles de marbre*'s premiere, the same newspaper wrote: 'cette fois les dames ou demoiselles aux camélias qui se trouvaient dans la salle le soir de la première représentation n'ont eu que peu d'agrément, la pièce des *Filles de marbre* est loin d'être faite en leur honneur' [this time the ladies or girls of the Camellias who found themselves in the audience the evening of the premiere took little pleasure in the play, *Les Filles de marbre* is far from being made in their honour].<sup>264</sup> While *Le Charivari* had recorded the sentimental trend among courtesans following Doche's Marguerite in the months following the first performance, the courtesans' reactions to Fargueil's Marco were observed immediately, during the premiere itself. And – much like the differing accounts regarding Fargueil's enthusiasm towards performing the contemporary courtesan – the responses she provoked through this creation were equally mixed, mirroring her own apparent ambivalence.

A critic from *Le Constitutionnel* reported from the premiere: 'la colère comique de deux dames [...] de marbre, très connues dans le monde des camélias [...] l'une s'écriait tout haut qu'on la diffamait directement [...] l'autre s'est précipitée dans les couloirs [...] cette petite scène ne m'a pas moins intéressé que la comédie' [the comic anger of two women [...] of marble, very well known in the world of the camellias [...] one cried out that she was being directly defamed [...] the other stormed out into the aisle [...] this little scene did not interest me any less than the play].<sup>265</sup> Notably, the critic blended terminology from both courtesan plays, calling the courtesans in the audience 'dames de marbre' known in the 'monde des camélias'. Far from the sentimentality sparked by *La Dame aux camélias*, the

<sup>262</sup> Édouard Houssaye, 'Théâtres', *L'Artiste*, 1 June 1853, n.p.

<sup>263</sup> Clement Caraguel, 'Les Marguerites', *Le Charivari*, 8 February 1852, n.p.

<sup>264</sup> Louis Huart, 'Théâtre du Vaudeville', *Le Charivari*, 23 May 1853.

<sup>265</sup> Lireux, 'Théâtres', 23 May 1853, n.p.

critic was amused by the apparent indignant reaction of the two well-known courtesans, whose entertainment value offstage equalled that onstage. Yet, while the critic praised Fargueil's 'rare talent de composition' [rare creative talent] he scorned the two offstage courtesans 'qui se croient des créatures au-dessus du vulgaire parce qu'elles font semblant [...] d'appartenir au théâtre, sous prétexte qu'on les a engagées pour montrer leurs jambes dans les pièces décolletées' [who believe they are creatures above vulgarity because they pretend [...] to belong to the theatre, under the pretext that they were employed to show their legs in décolleté plays]. The critic identified one of these women as the celebrated courtesan, artist's model, and performer Alice Ozy (1820–1893), previously encountered in chapter 2 of this thesis as one of Page's *lorette* Variétés colleagues, who had herself reprised the role of the *lorette* Musette in 1852, only a year prior to the premiere of *Les Filles de marbre*. He concluded the review by stating 'malgré tout, Mlle Ozy [sic] est charmante. Prenez-la comme vous voudrez, pour une femme du monde ou pour une fille de marbre' [despite everything, Mlle Ozy [sic] is charming. Take her as you will, as a woman of high society or as a *fille de marbre*]. By coupling Ozy with Fargueil's onstage creation the critic elevated the latter's theatrical talents over the former's apparent lack of artistry. More importantly still, Ozy's established celebrity as a courtesan became associated with the new *fille de marbre* type, adding to Fargueil's own. But if Page's creation of Musette had gained in reputation by association with the celebrated Ozy's onstage reprise, Fargueil's Marco seemed to acquire repute by the reverse means: by being favourably contrasted to the apparently artless, offstage, Ozy in the audience.

Ozy was not the only celebrity courtesan associated with Fargueil's new creation. Janin recounted in his review of the premiere that a courtesan 'connue par ses noms de guerre et par ses noms de bataille [...] essayait de donner le change au public et d'applaudir ces exécutions qui la frappaient en pleine poitrine' [known by her *nom de guerre*, by her battle name [...] attempted to pull the wool over the audience's eyes by applauding these profanities that hit too close to home].<sup>266</sup> Janin almost certainly referred to another celebrity courtesan and performer – like Ozy – whom we previously encountered in chapter 2: Céleste Mogador (1824–1909), Page's *lorette* colleague at the Variétés, who in 1844 had acquired fame with the stage name Mogador, which referred to a Moroccan fortress that was occupied by French troops.<sup>267</sup> In total contrast to Ozy's reaction to *Les Filles de marbre*, Mogador

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<sup>266</sup> Jules Janin, 'Théâtre du Vaudeville', *Journal des débats*, 23 May 1853, n.p.

<sup>267</sup> Céleste had been the star dancer of the Bal Mabille, where her partner had claimed it was harder to defend her from other men on the dancefloor than for the French to defend the city of Mogador in Morocco.

reportedly attempted to get in on the joke at her own expense, but was equally rebuked ‘aussitôt le public la reconnaissait [...] il la couvrait de huées! [as soon as the audience recognised who was applauding [...] they booed her!]. Janin added ‘vous n’avez jamais vu un spectacle plus vif, plus violent, plus inattendu! [you have never seen a more vivid, more violent, or more unexpected spectacle]. Again, the offstage theatrics only served to enhance the onstage spectacle and the onstage courtesan creation was applauded while the real, offstage courtesans were jeered. Whereas Page’s Musette of chapter 2 had piqued interest for being ‘trop vivant’ [too alive] – by depicting a real, living *lorette* so favourably that Ozy herself reprised the role onstage – Fargueil’s hateful Marco was so provocative that she caused a ‘spectacle vif’ [vivid spectacle or even a *live* spectacle] by stirring these very *lorettes* to action, to perform within the audience.

*Le Siècle* also reported on ‘le scandaleux spectacle qui s’est produit [...] à la première représentation des *Filles de marbre*’ [the scandalous spectacle that took place [...] at the premiere of *Les Filles de marbre*] explaining that ‘des Laïs, des Aspasiés [...] sont sorties ouvertement et violemment de leurs loges au milieu du quatrième acte’ [some courtesans [...] openly and somewhat violently came out of their boxes in the middle of the fourth act].<sup>268</sup> Notably, the reported reaction occurred during act IV, which critics had unanimously singled out as Fargueil’s crowning moment. This suggests it was the strength of Fargueil’s performance, and resultant public response, that in turn provoked such a ‘scandalous spectacle’ offstage. Indeed, *L’Union* wrote that it was ‘pendant ces manifestations du sentiment public’ [during these demonstrations of public sentiment] that ‘il était curieux d’observer certaines femmes bien connues qui se pavanaient dans la salle [...] les unes restaient impassibles, en vraies *filles de marbre* qu’elles sont; d’autres s’associaient aux applaudissemens [sic]; et ce n’étaient pas les moins habiles’ [it was curious to observe certain well-known women who strutted around the auditorium [...] some remained stone-faced, true to their status as *filles de marbre*; others joined in the applause, and they were not among the least renowned].<sup>269</sup> *L’Union* not only confirmed that some of the most celebrated courtesans attempted to associate themselves with Fargueil’s success as Marco – joining in on the applause – but it readily referred to them as *filles de marbre*, once more demonstrating the instant overlapping between the onstage and offstage spectacle.

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<sup>268</sup> Ch. Matharel de Fiennes, ‘Revue des théâtres’, 23 May 1853, n.p.

<sup>269</sup> Th. Muret, ‘Théâtres’, 23 May 1853, n.p.

But Fargueil's onstage courtesan succeeded where the offstage courtesans failed, as Marco was celebrated for the audacity with which she laughed at herself. Gautier merged the character of the singer Marco with her creator when he commented on Fargueil's rendition of the *chanson de l'or*: 'elle répète même le refrain de cette satire dirigée contre elle à bout portant, avec une voix claire, aiguë, stridente, une voix d'acier et de cristal, que ne fait pas vibrer la moindre émotion' [she repeats the very chorus of the song that satirises her, at the song's end, with a clear, penetrating, piercing voice – a metallic, crystal clear voice, that does not stir a single emotion].<sup>270</sup> Whereas the pronoun 'elle' referred to the courtesan character – the 'satire dirigée contre elle' [song that satirises her] was directed at Marco – Gautier praised Fargueil for her 'voix d'acier' [metallic voice]. Similarly, Janin praised the 'admirable chanson avec accompagnement de louis d'or' [admirable song that was accompanied by the jingle of gold coins] and noted that 'la chanson satirique se tourne en louange, uniquement parce que Marco l'a chantée' [the satirical song becomes a song of praise, simply because Marco has sung it]. Whereas Janin had scorned the courtesan Mogador's failed attempts to join in on the joke offstage, he praised the tone Fargueil adopted as a performer onstage for doing just that.

In direct contrast to Marguerite's vogue for sentimentality, Fargueil's Marco established a new trend for the heartless, self-mocking courtesan, characterised by her song that 'ne fait pas vibrer la moindre émotion' [does not stir a single emotion]. *Le Siècle* predicted that 'toutes les grisettes cet été demanderont à grands cris le quadrille des *Pièces d'or* qui n'aura pas moins de succès dans les salons' [this summer, all the *grisettes* will eagerly request the Golden Coin quadrille, which will be just as successful in the salons].<sup>271</sup> The prediction was not wrong: in Fargueil's obituary in 1896, *Le Gaulois* recollected Fargueil's celebrity alongside that of Marco's song: 'c'est de cette création que date sa réputation qui ne fit que grandir par la suite. C'est dans *Les Filles de marbre* que se chantaient des couplets qui furent célèbres' [it is from that creation that her reputation stemmed and continued to grow. It was in *Les Filles de marbre* that those celebrated verses were sung].<sup>272</sup> Similarly, Truffier recollected the power of Marco's shamelessness 'en applaudissant, en terminant elle-même la *Chanson de l'or* dont elle fut l'inspiratrice' [by applauding, by being the one to sing the last verse of the *Chanson de l'or* for which she was the inspiration]. According to Truffier, as a result of this brazenness, 'la *chanson de l'or*, dite

<sup>270</sup> Gautier, 'Théâtres', 23 May 1853, n.p.

<sup>271</sup> Ch. Matharel de Fiennes, 'Revue des théâtres', 23 May 1853, n.p.

<sup>272</sup> Anon., 'Anaïs Fargueil', *Le Gaulois*, 10 April 1896, n.p.

“de Marco”, est peut-être ce qui reste de plus typique dans *Les Filles de marbre*. Tout Paris chanta cette chanson, sous le second Empire’ [the *chanson de l’or*, named ‘Marco’s song’, is perhaps what has remained most typical of *Les Filles de marbre*. All of Paris sang this song under the Second Empire].<sup>273</sup>

In addition to the song itself, the public celebrated Fargueil’s own artistic agency by copying the fashion she created when performing it onstage. Truffier added that:

son amazone [...] avec sa coiffure conquérante, sa cravache au pommeau d’or flagellant les louis qui tintaient dans la bourse à double filet, au refrain de la *Chanson de l’or*, restèrent à la mode pendant longtemps. Tous les détails vestimentaires des “grands faiseurs” s’intitulaient *à la Marco!*

[her riding habit [...] with her conquering hairstyle, and her gold-knobbed riding crop that she used to whip the coins that clinked in her string bag, during the chorus of the *Chanson de l’or*, were fashionable for a long time. All the outfits sold in the fashionable retailers were named *à la Marco!*].<sup>274</sup>

This outfit was so iconic that thirty years after Marco’s 1853 creation it was depicted in a caricature of Fargueil (figure 4.1) accompanying an article about her retirement concert on 8 November 1883. In Fargueil’s right hand we can see the ‘cravache au pommeau d’or’ [gold-knobbed riding crop] that she so famously used to whip her gold coins during her legendary song. In response to *L’Artiste*’s speculation as to whether *Les Filles de marbre* would have the same ability ‘d’éveiller aussi ardemment la curiosité’ [to pique such interest] as *La Dame aux camélias*, whose success had been down to ‘les engouements de la mode’ [it being fashionable], the answer was that it certainly did.

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<sup>273</sup> Truffier, ‘Dix comédiens célèbres dans leur meilleur rôle’, n.p.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.



Figure 4.1 – Fargueil in the role of Marco, caricature by Constantin de Grimm, *Le Triboulet*, 11 November 1883, n.p.

## Couture, Caricature, and the Role Specialisation of the ‘Fargueil’

Unlike the passing vogue of sentimentality that accompanied Doche’s Marguerite, the trend of the *fille de marbre* was not just a passing fad. Rather, through Marco, Fargueil established a long-lasting onstage type, which she continued to exploit and develop throughout her career. The final measure of Fargueil’s success in *Les Filles de marbre*, according to Racot, was the many roles for which she was subsequently approached. In an 1875 article celebrating Fargueil’s eminent and ongoing career, Félix Jahyer recollected of Fargueil’s Marco that ‘à partir de ce jour les auteurs voulurent écrire spécialement pour elle; l’emploi des *Fargueil* fut créé ce soir-là’ [from that day on playwrights wrote specifically for her; the role specialisation of the *Fargueil* was created that night].<sup>275</sup> Two years after the play’s premiere, *L’Artiste* claimed that Fargueil ‘a décidément créé un emploi au théâtre, – les *Marco* [has

decidedly created a role specialisation at the theatre: the *Marco*].<sup>276</sup> This was in reference to Fargueil’s titular creation in *Le Mariage d’Olympe* – a *drame en trois actes* by Émile Augier which premiered on 17 July 1855 at the Vaudeville. Jahyer called the type the *Fargueil*; *L’Artiste* called it the *Marco*. The two names were interchangeable, as the creator and her onstage courtesan merged in the new *filles de marbre* type. Fargueil’s Olympe was another heartless contemporary courtesan, the main plot development, as the play’s title denotes, was that Olympe married or, as Janin quipped, ‘Marco est mariée’ [Marco is married].<sup>277</sup> Another crucial difference was that unlike Marco who survived her heartbroken lover, Olympe was shot dead by her new father-in-law to protect the family honour. Focusing on such plot developments – while overlooking the role of the actors who created the courtesan roles – scholars like Pierre Danger and Sos Eltis have referred to *Le Mariage d’Olympe*, in passing, as a further counter-narrative to *La Dame aux camélias* and the rehabilitation of the

<sup>275</sup> Félix Jahyer, ‘Anaïs Fargueil’ in *Paris-théâtre*, 22 April 1875, n.p.

<sup>276</sup> Albéric Second, ‘Théâtres’, *L’Artiste*, 22 July 1855, n.p.

<sup>277</sup> Jules Janin, ‘Théâtre du Vaudeville’, *Journal des débats*, 23 July 1855.

*courtisane amoureuse*.<sup>278</sup> However, by returning to the creative role of the actor – and thus centering Fargueil and her career trajectory – a new tradition emerges: the role specialisation of *la fille de marbre*, the *Fargueil*, or the *Marco*, entirely separate to Doche's Marguerite.

Critics previously made sense of *Les Filles de marbre* by comparison to its antithetical predecessor, but reviews of *Le Mariage d'Olympe* largely focused on the parallels between Fargueil's two courtesan creations. Although Janin was critical of Fargueil, lamenting that 'elle n'a rien changé' [she has not changed anything], most others praised her successful reiteration of the *fille de marbre* type. *L'Union*, for example, observed 'Marco et Olympe, c'est tout un [...] doublé d'un renfort de perversité' [Marco and Olympe are one entity [...] doubling and reinforcing each other in their perversity] and commended the star for having 'soutenu le poids avec un talent de composition qui lui fait un véritable honneur' [measured up to the type with a compositional talent that does her honour].<sup>279</sup> Notably, the creation of a type was as admired as that of individualised roles. Again, we can observe how Fargueil was deemed as honourable directly through her creation of an onstage courtesan, once again reversing Perry's claim that 'for the actress to qualify for the 'honourable' status which Siddons achieved, she must be freed from the specific associations of whoring'.<sup>280</sup>

Two years later, in similar terms to its review of *Le Mariage d'Olympe*, *L'Union* reviewed Fargueil's latest eponymous courtesan creation of Léonora (also known as Dalila) in *Dalila – a drame en trois actes et six tableaux* by Octave Feuillet which premiered at the Vaudeville on 29 May 1857. The critic considered *Dalila* to be 'calqué sur' [modelled on] *Les Filles de marbre* and that 'comme Marco, Léonora tue froidement l'avenir d'un artiste' [like Marco, Léonora ruins the future of an artist].<sup>281</sup> The critic considered Fargueil 'magnifique de passion et d'insolence dans le rôle de Leonora' [magnificent in passion and insolence in the role of Léonora] and concluded that 'c'est une grande comédienne' [she's a great actress]. Likewise, *Le Charivari* identified Dalila as 'toujours la même femme sans cœur' [always the same heartless woman] whom Fargueil had 'joué en véritablement grande actrice' [performed as a truly grand actress].<sup>282</sup> In this latest iteration, the slight readjustment to the *Marco* was that Dalila was an aristocrat: as *L'Artiste* remarked, she was a '*grande Dame de marbre* [c]'est, suivant une expression vulgaire qui a cours, la *Marco des salons*' [a

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<sup>278</sup> Pierre Danger, *Émile Augier ou le théâtre de l'ambiguïté: éléments pour une archéologie morale de la bourgeoisie sous le Second Empire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), pp. 117–135; Sos Eltis, *Acts of Desire: Women and Sex on Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 91.

<sup>279</sup> Th. Muret, 'Théâtres', *L'Union*, 23 July 1855, n.p.

<sup>280</sup> Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations*, p. 24.

<sup>281</sup> A. Escande, 'Théâtres', *L'Union*, 8 June 1857, n.p.

<sup>282</sup> Arnould Fremy, 'Théâtre du Vaudeville', *Le Charivari*, 31 May 1857, n.p.

great *Lady of marble*, following a vulgar expression that is making the rounds, the *Marco of the salons*].<sup>283</sup> The latest *fille de marbre*, like the original, was a hot topic of conversation. Whereas Janin had been critical of Olympe's likeness to Marco, he considered Fargueil's Dalila to be as successful as her first *fille de marbre*: 'Il a fallu [...] le rôle de la fille de marbre, ce rôle terrible et furieux de Marco [...] et ce rôle de Dalila [...] pour [...] arriver au succès de toute espèce d'art et de poésie' [the role of the *fille de marbre*, that terrible and furious role of Marco [...] and that role of Dalila, were necessary to reach the greatest heights of art and poetry].<sup>284</sup> But what was it about Fargueil's *fille de marbre* that elevated her to such newfound artistic and poetic heights, and which continued to captivate audiences time and again?

Years later, in 1867, Savard wrote that Fargueil 'c'est bien, à la scène, l'incarnation de cette séduisante Marco – la statue faite femme – et de ce vampire fascinateur [...] Dalila. Ses défauts [...] deviennent des qualités' [onstage, is very much the incarnation of that seductive Marco – the statue that turns into a woman – and of that fascinating vampire [...] Dalila].<sup>285</sup> Beyond the previously explored statuesque qualities of the *fille de marbre* ('la statue faite femme' [the statue that turns into a woman]) there was a paradoxical quality to Fargueil's courtesans that compelled the public: she was a 'vampire fascinateur' [fascinating vampire] capable of turning moral vice into artistic virtue. Similarly, in 1855 *Le Pays* wrote of *Le Mariage d'Olympe*'s premiere that 'le rôle d'Olympe était impossible à jouer, impossible à faire accepter. Mlle Fargueil y a obtenu un vrai triomphe; c'est le miracle de l'art. Il faut donc accepter [...] ce monstre charmant' [the role of Olympe was impossible to play, impossible to make acceptable. Mademoiselle Fargueil has truly triumphed; it is the miracle of art. One must thus accept [...] this charming monster].<sup>286</sup> Dalila was a fascinating vampire; Olympe was a charming monster. The 'miracle' of Fargueil's art lay in making repulsive characters attractive.

In a similar vein, *La Presse* remarked in its review of Fargueil's Dalila 'on ne saurait rendre plus grandement la poésie du mal' [it is impossible to more powerfully convey the poetry of evil]; *Le Figaro* spoke of Dalila as a 'personnage odieux [...] racheté, sous un autre côté, par tant d'esprit et d'élégance, que, façonné au talent et aux manières d'une actrice [...] le rôle gardera jusqu'au bout cet attrait d'irrésistible séduction' [odious character [...]

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<sup>283</sup> Xavier Aubryet, 'Revue parisienne', *L'Artiste*, 7 June 1857, n.p.

<sup>284</sup> Jules Janin, 'La Semaine dramatique', *Journal des débats*, 9 June 1857, n.p.

<sup>285</sup> Savard, *Les Actrices de Paris* (1867), p. 109.

<sup>286</sup> Méry, 'Revue dramatique', *Le Pays*, 23 July 1855, n.p.

redeemed, on the other hand, by so much spirit and elegance, that, fashioned by the talent and style of an actress [...] the role will maintain until the bitter end this attraction of irresistible seduction].<sup>287</sup> Whereas Fargueil's predecessors Dorval, Page, and Doche had redeemed their onstage courtesans through a combined amiability of onstage character and their own dramatic prowess, Fargueil's redemption of her courtesan creations relied, conversely, on the cruelty of her characterisation, which showcased her talent and individual imprint on the onstage courtesan type – on her role specialisation. The art and poetry Janin identified in Fargueil's Marco and Dalila was this 'poésie du mal' [poetry of evil], which held an irresistible power of seduction over her spectators. For *Le Siècle*, Dalila had 'une beauté venimeuse; sa parole est d'acier; chaque mot ouvre une plaie' [a venomous beauty; her speech is cut from metal; each word opens a wound];<sup>288</sup> *Le Constitutionnel* reported 'elle a des inflexions de voix caressantes [...] et des sifflemens [sic] de vipère [...] qui tuent comme un coup de poignard' [some of her vocal inflections caress you [...] some of her viperous hisses cut you like a dagger].<sup>289</sup> Both reviewers used this same poisonous and cutting imagery to convey Fargueil's competing powers of attraction and repulsion; *Le Constitutionnel* went so far as to praise Fargueil for having 'soulevé un mouvement d'indicible répulsion' [aroused an unspeakable wave of repulsion].



Figure 4.2 – Fargueil as Rose Michel, caricature by Paul Hadol, *L'Éclipse*, 7 February 1875, n.p.



Figure 4.3 – *Dalila*, caricature by Émile Marcelin, *L'Illustration*, 10 October 1857, n.p.



Figure 4.4 – Fargueil as Dalila, caricature by Émile Marcelin, *L'Illustration*, 10 October 1857, n.p.

<sup>287</sup> B. Jouvin, 'Théâtres', *Le Figaro*, 7 June 1857, p. 6.

<sup>288</sup> E. D. De Biéville, 'Revue des théâtres', *Le Siècle*, 1 June 1857, n.p.

<sup>289</sup> P-A. Fiorentino, 'Théâtres', *Le Constitutionnel*, 3 June 1857, n.p.

It was this wave of repulsion that came to characterise Fargueil's celebrity. In 1853, Gautier remarked that Fargueil's Marco 'charme comme la vipère' [charms like a viper]; in 1875 *L'Éclipse* published a caricature of Fargueil in her latest titular creation in *Rose Michel* (a *drame en cinq actes*) as a snake, carrying a dagger (figure 4.2). Following *Dalila*, caricatures of Fargueil began to proliferate, capturing the 'unspeakable repulsion' of the *Fargueil* type visually. In figure 4.3, the cartoonist depicted Dalila with gargoyle-like features, and an accompanying caption citing the lyrics to Marco's celebrated *chanson de l'or* from *Les Filles de marbre*. The caricature thus satirised the reiteration of the grotesque *filles de marbre* type, calling what was 'nouveau' [new] in the original play, 'trop connu' [too familiar] in Fargueil's latest rendition. An accompanying caricature (figure 4.4) depicted Fargueil's Dalila in profile, accentuating her distorted 'physionomie de la courtisane' [courtesan physiognomy], as Matharel had called it in his review, with razor-sharp cheek bones, a prominent nose, and a pointed chin. While her features are not dissimilar to the male character Roswein (the musician whom Dalila seduces) depicted in figure 4.3, the difference is that Fargueil herself is named alongside her character, and her distorted features are coupled with a seductive posture, as she locks eyes with the spectator over her exposed shoulder and bare arm.<sup>290</sup> The caption both mocks and commends Fargueil for having 'even more talent than crinoline, which is saying a lot!'. The satirising of Fargueil's crinoline can itself be read as another facet of the star's competing powers of attraction and repulsion.

The crinoline was a large, caged skirt which first appeared in the 1850s and came into unprecedented vogue the year before *Dalila*'s premiere, in 1856.<sup>291</sup> Due to its excessive size and abundance of costly fabrics it quickly became a highly satirised item of modern women's fashion, emblematic of the excesses and decadence of the nascent Second Empire. As explored in the previous chapter, the golden age of the courtesan – who was also known as a *femme de mode* – coincided precisely with the dawn of the Second Empire and its aesthetics of excess. Doche's ballgown as Marguerite in 1852 predated the crinoline vogue of 1856 and was thus simply a flounced skirt, not a crinoline. Yet, even in 1861, *Le Passe-temps* celebrated Doche as 'une des femmes qui savent le mieux s'habiller' [one of the best dressed women of Paris] using the proof that 'Doche a du goût: elle n'a jamais porté de crinoline' [Doche has taste: she has never worn a crinoline].<sup>292</sup> In contrast to the tasteful Doche and her

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<sup>290</sup> Gautier explains that these were particularly erotically charged areas of the body in Théophile Gautier, 'De la mode', *L'Artiste*, 14 March 1858, n.p.

<sup>291</sup> Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West*, pp. 380–2.

<sup>292</sup> Boiteux, 'Eugénie Doche', n.p.

affable *courtisane amoureuse*, Fargueil readily donned the extravagant garment as fashion dictated for her latest *fille de marbre* Dalila in 1857, adding yet another layer to the type's paradoxical powers of attraction and repulsion. After all, it was not all negative press when it came to the crinoline: like Fargueil's *fille de marbre*, the skirt was fraught with contradiction. Indeed, in Gautier's aforementioned *De la mode* (1858), published a year after *Dalila*'s premiere and a few months after the *Dalila* caricatures, Gautier came to the defence of women who retained the crinoline 'malgré les plaisanteries, les caricatures, les vaudevilles et les avanies de toute sorte' [despite all the jokes, caricatures, vaudeville turns, and humiliations of all kinds].<sup>293</sup> He celebrated crinoline's aesthetics as 'largement étalées à l'œil' [generously laid out before the eye] and admired how it made a woman's waist appear 'élégante et mince' [elegant and slender]. He considered a woman's body to be 'gracieuse' [graceful] under the crinoline which 'fait comme un piédestal au buste et à la tête' [forms a kind of pedestal for the bust and head]. Coupling the crinoline with face powder – as explored previously in the context of Fargueil's Marco – Gautier argued that crinoline elevated women's appearance, especially their physiognomy, functioning as both a symbolic and literal pedestal for the face and chest. And Fargueil certainly fell into the category of women Gautier defended, as she continued to don the crinoline 'despite the caricatures' aimed directly at her.

Fargueil even joined in on the 'vaudeville turns' that satirised the garment. The following decade, an 1865 caricature (figure 4.5) parodied the fact that 'les Fargueil' [the Fargueil type] had become tantamount to wearing crinoline. The cartoonist depicted Fargueil and her male counterpart Pierre Félix (1807–1871) in their latest play *La Famille Benoiton*, a *comédie en cinq actes* which premiered at the Vaudeville on 4 November 1865. Félix had previously shot to fame alongside Fargueil in *Les Filles de marbre*, as the moralising Desgenais who warned Raphael against Marco. The caricaturist thus mocked Fargueil for deviating from her normative type in *La Famille Benoiton*, in a role reversal with Félix's signature role of Desgenais. As Sarcey later observed, Fargueil's new character Clotilde was 'une moraliste en jupons, un Desgenais femelle' [a moraliser in a skirt, a female Desgenais].<sup>294</sup> The image caption read 'Fargueil throws herself into the *Félix* type; why won't Félix take on the *Fargueil*?'. The cartoonist responded by illustrating that for Félix to

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<sup>293</sup> Gautier, 'De la mode', 14 March 1858; Théophile Gautier, 'On Fashion', translated by Richard George Elliott in *Art in Translation*, 7:2, 205-211, (211). DOI:10.1080/17561310.2015.1038901. DOA: 22 December 2021.

<sup>294</sup> Sarcey, 'Anaïs Fargueil', *Le XIXe Siècle*, 17 April 1883, n.p.

play a *Fargueil* role he had to don the requisite crinoline. Despite Fargueil’s depiction in male clothing, she was of course in her usual ‘jupons’ [skirts], as visible in a subsequent caricature (figure 4.6) which parodied the fact that even when deviating from her *fille de marbre* type, she continued to don her characteristically extravagant attire. The caption misnamed Clotilde as Glotilde, likely a reference to the character’s gluttony or greed, followed by a citation of her satirical ‘prière de la sainte mousseline’ [prayer of Saint Muslin] which she recited in the play. The prayer reads ‘Oh Saint Muslin, patron saint of virgins, save our daughters who are drowning in floods of lace’. The caption ironically concluded that ‘the prayer only works if, like Mlle Fargueil, you are wearing three hundred thousand francs worth of lace’, highlighting the monetary extravagance of her costuming. Sarcey reminisced that Fargueil ‘disait avec tant d’esprit la fameuse tirade de la sainte mousseline’ [recited with such wit the famous soliloquy of Saint Muslin].<sup>295</sup>

PORTRAITS DE LA FAMILLE BENOITON, — par A. GRÉVIN (suite).



Figure 4.5 – ‘Portraits de La Famille Benoiton’, caricature by Alfred Grévin, *Le Journal Amusant*, 2 December 1865, p. 3.



Figure 4.6 – ‘Glotilde, Mme Fargueil’, caricature by anon., *La Vie parisienne*, 7 January 1866, n.p.

Like Marco’s song – which became famous due to Fargueil’s humorous, self-mocking, delivery and which lingered behind *Dalila* – Fargueil’s tongue-in-cheek ‘prière de la sainte mousseline’ [prayer of Saint Muslin] became another celebrated aspect of her self-deprecating, mercenary, and sartorially debauched repertoire, this time in an antithetical role. The *Fargueil* thus took on a life of its own, beyond the individual characters, as the competing powers of attraction/repulsion lay intrinsically with the star. As *Paris-caprice* remarked in an 1869 article on Fargueil: ‘les toilettes tiennent aujourd’hui une grande place

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

dans la vie d'une comédienne [...] Fargueil les exagère; elle se livre à une débauche [...] qui dépasse l'imagination. Je ne sais plus dans quelle pièce elle avait un portique en bas de sa robe et un escalier au-dessus' [in this day and age, an actress's toilette is of great importance to her career [...] Fargueil exaggerates hers; she gives herself to a debauchery [...] that exceeds all imagination. I no longer recall in which play it was that she had a portico at the bottom of her dress, and a staircase on the top].<sup>296</sup> The hyperbolic description of Fargueil's skirts, incorporating architectural features, was no longer attached to a specific role – 'je ne sais plus dans quelle pièce' [I no longer recall in which play] – but to the star herself. Her delight in excess thus became her calling card.

But rather than Fargueil simply donning the crinoline 'despite the caricatures', it is almost certain that Fargueil was complicit in her own caricaturisation in print, much like her willing participation in her self-mocking 'vaudeville turns' onstage. This is because from 1852 to 1881, French law required those publishing caricatures to secure the permission of any individual they depicted.<sup>297</sup> According to Marcus, following the law's relaxation in 1881 there was a markable shift from caricatures 'heavy on allegorical figures and abstract social types to lampoons of living individuals [...] rendering the latest star attractions as objects of repugnance'.<sup>298</sup> However, Fargueil was frequently depicted in caricature precisely during the 1852–1881 period, and often as an 'object of repugnance' (see also figures 4.7–4.10). With reference to Fargueil's immediate successor Bernhardt, Marcus argues that 'caricature was an essentially reactive, parasitic form' and that 'making Bernhardt repulsive only inverted her very real powers of attraction' as 'cartoonists could spoof the star precisely because she commanded so much recognition'. The same could be said of Fargueil, whose huge recognition was built precisely on her competing powers of attraction and repulsion. Marcus adds that Bernhardt developed an 'unusual method' for 'resisting the loss of agency that came with being an erotic attraction' by 'actively courting repulsion', and that offstage Bernhardt 'balanced attraction and repulsion with paintings and sculptures that fascinated the public by embracing the grotesque'.<sup>299</sup> However, Fargueil's example suggests that Bernhardt's method of 'actively courting repulsion' was not so unusual, but rather another facet of celebrity culture which Bernhardt adopted and adapted from her celebrated predecessors.

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<sup>296</sup> Duc Job, 'Grandes dames de théâtre' in *Paris-caprice*, 3 April 1869, p. 259–60.

<sup>297</sup> Robert Justin Goldstein, 'Censorship of Caricature in France, 1815–1914', in *French History* 3, 1 (1989): 74.

<sup>298</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 92.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17.



Figure 4.7 – ‘Mme Fargueil’, caricature by A. Lévy, *Le Bouffon*, 28 February 1867, p. 4.

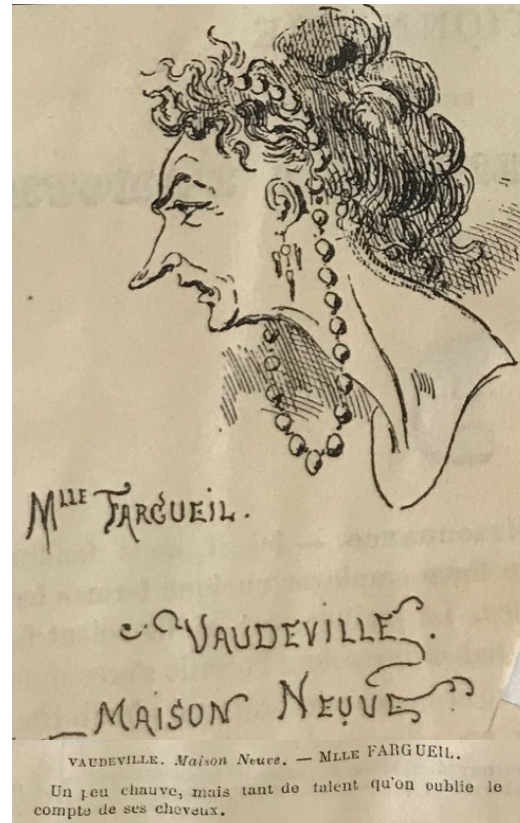


Figure 4.8 – ‘Mlle Fargueil, Vaudeville, Maison Neuve’, caricature by anon., *La Vie parisienne*, 1867, n.p.



Figure 4.9 – ‘Mlle Fargueil, role of Fernande in *Miss Multon*, at the Vaudeville’, caricature by Blaze, *L'Éclipse*, 6 December 1868, n.p.



Figure 4.10 – ‘Fargueil! The great actress Fargueil in *La Comtesse de Lérins*, (Théâtre-Historique), caricature, *L'Éclipse*, 19 November 1876, p. 164.

Important differences certainly exist between Fargueil and Bernhardt's caricaturisation. Firstly, the caricatures of Bernhardt in Marcus's study date from after the 1881 law, and were thus not necessarily published with the star's consent. Secondly, Marcus highlights their antisemitic nature as, following the example of her Jewish predecessor Rachel, Bernhardt actively incorporated her own Jewishness into her celebrity. As such, Marcus compares Bernhardt's caricatured image 'in profile, with a prominent nose, and comically unruly hair' to illustrations of fictional Jewish villains such as Fagin (from 1834) and Svengali (from 1894) who 'embodied the greed and excessive ambition that Europeans had long associated with Jews'.<sup>300</sup> Although Fargueil was not Jewish, her caricatures equally resemble these images. Like the above caricatures, figures 4.7–4.10 also mainly show Fargueil in profile, always with a prominent nose and sometimes with unruly hair. While not antisemitic, Fargueil's caricatures can be read as symbolic of the 'greed and excessive ambition' that Marcus identifies with the stereotyped depiction of Jewish figures, and which was also inherent to the debauched, gold-digging, *Fargueil* or *fille de marbre*. Figure 4.7, in particular, is an 1867 caricature depicting Fargueil leaving Paris to go on tour. The caption reads 'Eil' s'en va-t-en province' [off she goes to the provinces]. The bejewelled Fargueil is carrying a man in formal dress over her shoulder, a bottle of opium, and dragging a mobile home which is labelled as belonging to 'la vieille cocarde' [the old, debauched hag] and the 'boufon [sic] d'or' [fool of gold]. Fargueil is the 'debauched hag', whereas the masculine 'fool of gold' refers to the anonymous man who likely represents a tour director of sorts. Like the crinoline in previous caricatures, the opium and jewellery are symbols of Fargueil's debauchery and the reference to gold ['or'] implies the mercenary motivations behind the tour. While the gold is attributed to the male figure – the 'boufon d'or' – the fact Fargueil carries him over her shoulder, and is twice his size, suggests it is the star that is calling the shots. What is more, the man is nameless unlike Fargueil, who likely had some say in her depiction given the caricature laws of the time.

Like the fame associated with Marco's mercenary *chanson de l'or* and the moralising Clotilde's satirical 'prière de la sainte mouselline' [prayer of Saint Muslin], Fargueil's own financial worth became another characteristic of her success and celebrity. In 1863 Blanquet claimed that Marco had 'refait à mademoiselle Fargueil une réputation européenne, et si elle avait, par hasard, des préférences marquées pour les génovines et les roubles, à l'exemple de sa terrible incarnation, elle n'aurait que l'embarras du choix entre les capitales' [re-launched

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

Fargueil with a European reputation, and if she happened to have a preference for the Genoese gold coin and the rouble, in fitting with her terrible incarnation, she would be spoilt for choice between the two capitals].<sup>301</sup> The following year, *Le Passe-temps* similarly recollected Fargueil's return to Paris prior to *Les Filles de marbre* that 'l'or même qu'elle amassait dans ses pérégrinations artistiques à travers la France, lui semblait n'avoir point le même son vibrant, la même couleur éclatante, que l'or de Paris' [the gold that she accumulated on her tours across France, did not seem to have the same vibrancy, the same shine, as the gold of Paris].<sup>302</sup> Referring to money as 'or' [gold] rather than the more normative 'argent' [silver] was likely another nod to Marco's famous *chanson de l'or*.

*Le Passe-temps* added: 'c'est bien certainement une des premières comédiennes, si ce n'est la première de notre temps. Alors, pourquoi n'est-elle pas au Théâtre-Français? [...] parce qu'elle préfère gagner beaucoup d'argent et de gloire au Vaudeville, que de gagner beaucoup de gloire... et peu d'argent au Français' [she is certainly one of, if not the best actress of our time. So why is she not at the Théâtre-Français? [...] because she prefers to earn lots of money and glory at the Vaudeville, rather than earn lots of glory... and little money at the Théâtre-Français]. Again, we can observe how being recognised as a first-class actor did not depend on appearing at France's primary stage: Fargueil's success – which stemmed from her courtesan creations – negated the binary categorisation of Paris's theatres. Fargueil challenged the assumption, implied by the critic, that all successful stars should ultimately aspire to end up at the Comédie-Française, in a similar vein to Doche's alleged rejection of a contract at this same theatre following her creation of Marguerite. *Le Passe-temps* identified Fargueil's earning power as her reason to remain at Paris's secondary stage of the Vaudeville – as a commercial theatre – rather than take up her rightful place at the state-sanctioned, primary Théâtre-Français.<sup>303</sup> Notably *Le Passe-temps* held both theatres in equal esteem. The *Mecuvre de France* expressed a much more damning view in Fargueil's obituary, claiming that she 'prostitua son talent et sa beauté' [prostituted her talent and beauty] and distinguishing between 'deux genres de théâtres: le théâtre lucratif et l'autre' [two types of theatre: the lucrative one and the other].<sup>304</sup> As well as a reference to Fargueil's *filles de marbre*, on which her illustrious career was built, the verb 'prostitua' harked back to the mercenary association between courtesans and actors who, according to Rousseau, relied

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<sup>301</sup> Blanquet, 'Mlle Fargueil', n.p.

<sup>302</sup> Le Diable Boiteux, 'Anaïs Fargueil', *Le Passe-temps*, 2 September 1864, n.p.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Anon., 'Épilogues', *Mecuvre de France*, May 1896, n.p.

on exhibiting oneself in exchange for money. The obituarist thus heightened the association between women actors and courtesans at the commercial theatre, in contrast to the noble artistry of the state-sanctioned primary stage. However, like the self-mocking Marco, Fargueil succeeded precisely by readily assuming her mercenary nature as a facet of her attractive/repulsive star persona, whether onstage or in print: as *La Presse* claimed, she was ‘one of the best, if not the best actress of her time’.

Fargueil’s probable participation in her own caricaturisation may have been an attempt, like her successor Bernhardt, at ‘resisting the loss of agency that came with being an erotic attraction’, another means by which she balanced the powers of attraction and repulsion upon which she built her celebrity. While the caricatures usually depicted Fargueil as an ‘object of repugnance’ they were usually coupled with praise for the star. For example, in figure 4.10, an 1876 caricature depicts Fargueil in her latest titular role in *La Comtesse de Lérins* with an excessively prominent nose and unruly hair. This is coupled with a bouquet, symbolising her huge success, and a caption referring to her as ‘la grande comédienne Fargueil’ [the great actress Fargueil]. Similarly, like the 1857 caricature of Fargueil’s *Dalila* (figure 4.4) who had ‘even more talent than crinoline’, the caption of an 1867 caricature (figure 4.8) read that Fargueil was ‘a bit bald, but so talented that one forgets to count the hairs on her head’. The image is perhaps the most grotesque of all the caricatures, published the same year as the one of Fargueil as the ‘old, debauched hag’ (figure 4.7). These two images thus demonstrate the ageist quality that her caricatures acquired as the star approached her late forties. As Marcus argues in the case of Bernhardt, age and career stage were among various factors that dictated how a star negotiated their public image.<sup>305</sup> It is possible that as Fargueil aged she allowed for her caricatures to increase in their depiction of the grotesque. What the many similarities between Fargueil and Bernhardt’s celebrity do reveal is that like Doche, Fargueil also set the scene for her reputable successors at the primary stage, and through none other than her onstage courtesan roles.

### **Fargueil, the *Fille de marbre* Par Excellence**

Beyond Fargueil’s illustrious career which extended for thirty more years following her creation of Marco in 1853, her *fille de marbre* type lived on through her celebrated successors. Like Doche’s Marguerite, *Dalila* was reprised by stars of the Comédie-Française in historical competition with their reputable predecessor: the renowned Mlle Favart (1833–

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<sup>305</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 112.

1908) was the first to revive the role in 1870, followed by Bernhardt in 1873. At the time, Bernhardt had recently returned to the Comédie-Française, where she had only briefly appeared at the outset of her career in 1862. As *La Presse* noted, her first two debuts on her return had been ‘deux rôles d’amoureuse plaintive’ [two plaintive lover roles], whereas with Dalila Bernhardt was ‘attaquant pour son troisième début un terrible premier rôle’ [tackling a tremendous star role for her third debut].<sup>306</sup> The fact that Bernhardt performed one of Fargueil’s signature courtesans to establish herself at Paris’s premier theatre demonstrates the influence of the *Fargueil* type.

Yet, both Favart and Bernhardt fell short of the role’s creator. *Le Siècle* wrote in its review of Bernhardt’s 1873 reprise that Fargueil had been ‘une interprète parfaite’ [a perfect interpreter]; whereas Favart ‘rendit moins bien l’esprit du rôle’ [less successfully conveyed the role’s essence] it conceded that Bernhardt was ‘adroite, intelligente’ [astute, intelligent] in her rendition.<sup>307</sup> *La Presse* critiqued Favart for misunderstanding ‘le double caractère du personnage’ [the dual personality of the character]; of Bernhardt it asked ‘est-il résulté une création originale, sinon puissante? Hélas! non’ [has it resulted in an original – or at least powerful – creation? Alas! not]. *Le Gaulois*, similarly observed that Bernhardt ‘n’a rien de ce qu’il faut [...] pour succéder dignement [sic] à Mlle Fargueil [...] elle manque surtout du côté plastique indispensable’ [has none of the characteristics necessary [...] to succeed Mademoiselle with dignity [...] she especially lacks the role’s indispensable artificiality].<sup>308</sup> Favart lacked the ‘double caractère’ [dual personality], that is to say the paradoxical powers of attraction/repulsion, of Fargueil’s creation; Bernhardt required more of the material, marmoreal quality (‘côté plastique’) that was so central to the *fille de marbre* type. Janin’s review of Bernhardt harked back to *Les Fille de marbre* itself: ‘de la divine Marco, la fille de marbre, et de sa chanson avec accompagnement de louis d’or [...] ainsi est faite la princesse Dalila!’ [To be Princess Dalila you must be the divine Marco, the *fille de marbre*, and her song with the accompaniment of golden coins].<sup>309</sup> Critical consensus was that only the original *fille de marbre* could do justice to the role type which, after all, was known as the *Fargueil*.

Despite Bernhardt’s limited success in 1873, she reprised *Dalila* at various important moments in her career, both internationally and back in Paris in March 1899, for the opening

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<sup>306</sup> B. Jouvin, ‘Théâtres’, *La Presse*, 31 March 1873, n.p. Her first two roles were as Junie in Racine’s *Britannicus* and as Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle in Dumas’s 1837 play of the same name.

<sup>307</sup> E. D. de Biéville, ‘Revue des théâtres’, *Le Siècle*, 31 March 1873, n.p.

<sup>308</sup> François Oswald, ‘Théâtres’, *Le Gaulois*, 30 March 1873, n.p.

<sup>309</sup> Jules Janin, ‘La Semaine dramatique’, *Le Journal des débats*, 31 March 1873, n.p.

series of her theatre: the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt. *Dalila* was one of several revivals Bernhardt selected to inaugurate the theatre, including other major successes like *La Dame aux camélias*. In anticipation of *Dalila*'s opening night on 8 March 1899 *La Presse* predicted that 'Sarah, devenue plus "elle-même" et dégagée de toutes traditions, incarnera quelque autre aspect encore de l'énigmatique mangeuse d'âmes' [Sarah, who has become more 'herself' and freed of all traditions, will embody some yet unknown aspect of the enigmatic heartbreaker].<sup>310</sup> However, the newspaper backtracked the next day, claiming that Bernhardt 's'est trompée, lorsqu'elle a cru qu'elle retrouverait à Paris [...] le succès qui accueillit cette même pièce dans les tournées à l'étranger' [was wrong to think that she would find the same success in Paris [...] that she did for this same play on her tours abroad]. Notably, Bernhardt enjoyed great international success as *Dalila*, breaking free from Fargueil's creative monopoly. But even Bernhardt's global reputation as a star 'dégagée de toutes traditions' [star freed of all traditions] could not uproot the *filles de marbre*'s tradition in the original city where Fargueil created her over forty years prior.

Although complimentary of Bernhardt, *Le Charivari* ultimately put her 1899 *Dalila* revival's success down to play's enduring tradition:

*Dalila* va retrouver les sympathies du public, qui est resté plus fidèle qu'on ne croit à ses anciennes préférences et qui aura l'occasion de voir que les excentriques d'aujourd'hui ont tort de vouloir se faire passer pour des maîtres, lorsque trop souvent ils ne sont que des élèves ratés de leurs prédécesseurs.

[*Dalila* will be warmly received by a public who remains more faithful to its old preferences than you might think, and who will have the chance to realise that the eccentrics of today are wrong to pass themselves off as masters, when far too often they are nothing but misdirected disciples of their predecessors.]

The critic was writing more generally about how the revival was much indebted to its original. Certainly, considering Bernhardt to be a 'misdirected disciple' of Fargueil would be misrepresentative of the former's indisputable status. But it is worth noting the critic's reference to 'eccentrics', given that perhaps the most notable aspect of Bernhardt's celebrity

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<sup>310</sup> George Jubin, 'Dalila', *La Presse*, 9 March 1899, n.p.

was precisely her eccentricity.<sup>311</sup> While perhaps not ‘misdirected’, what transpired was that Bernhardt was certainly a disciple of Fargueil.

As explored through this chapter, Fargueil’s example demonstrates that Bernhardt’s idiosyncrasies were perhaps not quite so unusual, but rather a development of pre-existing facets of celebrity culture, particularly the careful balancing of powers of attraction and repulsion. Rachel is largely considered Bernhardt’s greatest influencer due to the way both incorporated their Jewishness into their celebrity and their shared status as stars of Paris’s Comédie-Française. Fargueil’s celebrity, just like Doche’s before, nuance this narrative by incorporating the huge influence of stars from Paris’s secondary stages on their successors at Paris’s premier stage. Specifically, Fargueil and Doche demonstrate the crucial role of their courtesan creations in validating them as reputable stars, worthy of imitation. Bernhardt may have ultimately been more successful as the ‘amoureuse plaintive’ type of the *dame aux camélias* than as the ‘terrible premier role’ of the *fille de marbre*, yet the powers of attraction and repulsion of both roles were at the very heart of her eccentricity and celebrity.

Perhaps the greatest testament of all to the durability and power of Fargueil’s *fille de marbre* was the commemorative statue that was erected of the star in her native city of Toulouse in 1896, following her death. According to Berlanstein, this act was ‘something of a political leap’ given it was the first time in all of France that a woman stage star from immediate history was publicly venerated with a statue.<sup>312</sup> Talma had been the first man who was a performer to receive a commemorative statue in Paris in the 1880s; the first women stars to receive such an honour were Mlle Duchesnois (1777–1835) in 1895 and Mlle Clairon (1723–1803) in 1896, in their native towns of Saint Saulve (Nord) and Condé (Nord) respectively. Berlanstein argues that ‘honoring these stars was made easier by their being part of history’. What was striking about Fargueil’s statue, erected the same year as Clairon’s, was the immediacy with which it appeared following her death. For Berlanstein, Fargueil’s statue was a turning point, finally demonstrating the legitimization of the women’s acting profession at the *fin de siècle*. To this I would add that Talma, Duchesnois, and Clairon were all stars of the Comédie-Française, and that Fargueil was thus also the first woman from Paris’s commercial stage to receive such an honour. It was a fitting tribute that she who had elevated herself to the highest theatrical ranks, from none other than Paris’s secondary stage

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<sup>311</sup> See for example Mary Louise Roberts, ‘Rethinking Female Celebrity: The Eccentric Star of Nineteenth-Century France’ in *Constructing Charisma: Celebrity, Fame and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Edward Berenson and Eva Giloi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), pp. 103–116.

<sup>312</sup> Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve*, p. 174.

and through the marmoreal qualities of her *fille de marbre*, should have her ‘sainteté plastique’ [material sanctity] commemorated through her own statue – her own *fille de marbre*.

## 5 – Rose Chéri’s Spectacular Disappearances as a *Demimondaine*

Elle était la grâce en personne; et quand ce bruit de mort se répandit là-bas dans la ville aux grands bruits, portant la douleur et le deuil de théâtre en théâtre, alors la louange aussi fut unanime et sérieuse de ce talent très rare et complet qui faisait facilement de Mme Rose Chéri, depuis Mlle Rachel, cette perte irréparable, la première comédienne de son temps.

[She was grace personified; and as word of her death spread through the hustle and bustle of the capital, theatre upon theatre went into mourning and the praise too was unanimous and serious, honouring the talent that easily made of Mme Rose Chéri, since the irreparable loss of Mlle Rachel, the best actress of her time].<sup>313</sup>

When the boulevard star Rose Chéri (1824–1861) died from diphtheria aged thirty-six, Jules Janin described how the Parisian theatre world mourned much like it had the death of Rachel (1821–1858), the global star of the Comédie-Française, three years prior. The comparison with Rachel is an indication of the immense impact of Chéri’s own untimely passing not only on the French theatrical institution, but internationally. A British publication similarly reported ‘the unusual spectacle’ of Parisian theatres closing for several days to honour Chéri.<sup>314</sup> Yet, while the symbolic mourning of the theatrical world may have been similar for both stars’ passing, there was a huge material disparity in the treatment of their mortal remains. Following Rachel’s death in 1858, the courts had to intervene to prevent the publication of a photograph of her corpse on her deathbed. This ruling was considered the

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<sup>313</sup> Jules Janin, ‘La Semaine dramatique’, *Journal des débats*, 30 September 1861, n.p.

<sup>314</sup> Emily Johnstone, ‘Our French Correspondent’, *English Woman’s Journal*, 19 October 1861, n.p.

origin of individual right-to-privacy laws.<sup>315</sup> While Lilti analyses this necrophilic media storm as a moment of arrival in celebrity culture, we must consider why Chéri – who acquired similar levels of celebrity to Rachel – was treated with much greater posthumous respect three years later. Especially, given that unlike Rachel, Chéri was a star of the secondary Parisian stage, which was especially associated with loose mores.

Of course, by Chéri's death the privacy ruling following Rachel's death had come into effect, but there was more to their differing treatments than simple chronology. Another British obituary, in *The Ladies Companion*, observed 'Chéri had this advantage over Rachel: she was loved and revered; Rachel was never revered'.<sup>316</sup> Although Rachel was eventually honoured through burial in a mausoleum in the Jewish part of the Père Lachaise Cemetery, with Chéri there was an equivalence in respect shown to her symbolic, celebrity image and material body both in life and death. Not only did a huge procession accompany her interment in Montmartre ceremony, but at her overcrowded funeral in her church in the Parisian suburb of Passy she was honoured with Catholic funerary rites – an honour not easily bestowed upon actors at the time, due to their continued dubious social standing.<sup>317</sup> The end of *The Ladies Companion* obituary implied the reason for the difference in reverence shown to Chéri and Rachel, recalling the latter as 'the beautiful and terrible Jewess'. By contrast, the obituarist opened by establishing Chéri's exemplary Christianity, recollecting a time when they saw Chéri one 'divine morning' on a 'peaceful Sunday' on her way to a 'Norman church'.<sup>318</sup> Having set this idyllic scene, the obituarist claimed that Chéri was 'the lady who has done more to raise her profession of actress into reverence and good repute than any comedian before or since the date when she conquered the Parisian public'.

In line with British attitudes regarding the relative immorality of the French stage at the time,<sup>319</sup> Chéri's moral virtue was considered the first of her kind in Paris. This sentiment was echoed by the *English Woman's Journal*, which claimed 'till her appearance on the Paris boards, talent and morality were, in her profession, supposed to be incapable of uniting'.<sup>320</sup> However, this opinion was equally shared by Chéri's compatriots: *La Mode nouvelle* remembered her as 'celle qui restera célèbre, pour avoir singulièrement honoré le théâtre de notre temps sous le nom gracieux de Rose Chéri' [she who will remain famous for having

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<sup>315</sup> Antoine Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity*, trans. by Lynn Jeffress (Oxford: Polity Press, 2017), pp. 261–62, 274.

<sup>316</sup> J. R. Ware, 'Rose Chéri', *The Ladies Companion and Monthly Magazine 1861, Volume XX*, n.p.

<sup>317</sup> Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 135–148.

<sup>318</sup> Ware, 'Rose Chéri', n.p.

<sup>319</sup> Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, pp. 81–113.

<sup>320</sup> Johnstone, 'Our French Correspondent', n.p.

singularly honoured the theatre of our time under the gracious name of Rose Chéri].<sup>321</sup> As seen in the epigraph above, Janin similarly deemed Chéri ‘la grâce en personne’ [grace personified].

Yet, despite these substantial claims and Janin’s belief that in Rachel’s wake Chéri became the greatest woman actor of her time, only Rachel’s celebrity survives to this day, while Chéri is almost entirely absent from scholarship. As with Page, Doche, and Fargueil in the previous chapters, this disparity is largely due to the genres and institutions in which the stars performed: Rachel starred in high-status tragedies at Paris’s premier theatre whereas Chéri made a name for herself in the lower-status genre of vaudeville at the secondary Théâtre du Gymnase.<sup>322</sup> Although scholars such as Maurice Samuels and Sharon Marcus have demonstrated how Rachel self-consciously built her celebrity around her racialised Jewish identity and body as an eroticised, exoticized other,<sup>323</sup> it is worth considering how Chéri’s internationally recognised, unique brand of Christian femininity might nuance our understandings of French theatre history and women’s celebrity more broadly.

What is surprising about Chéri is not only her seemingly immaculate moral reputation – performing as she did on the secondary Parisian stage – but that like her other women contemporaries on the boulevard stages explored throughout this thesis, the creation of courtesan characters was crucial to her uniquely pious celebrity. Arguably, Chéri gained her greatest accolades for her role creations of the courtesans Suzanne (la Baronne d’Ange) and Albertine de la Borde in Dumas *filis*’ plays *Le Demi-monde* (1855) and *Un Père prodigue* (1859) respectively. Janin described these as ‘rôles restés célèbres’ [roles that have remained famous];<sup>324</sup> Eugène de Mirecourt wrote that ‘les plus grandes de comédiennes lui envieraient la création de la baronne d’Ange’ [the greatest of actresses would envy her creation of the *Baronne d’Ange*].<sup>325</sup> Indeed, it was from this play and infamous character that the terms *demi-monde* and *demimondaine* were coined and came into common parlance in France and beyond.<sup>326</sup> But how did Chéri maintain such an unparalleled virtuous persona throughout her career on the secondary stage, despite the creation of one of its most infamous characters, whose infamy lives to this day?

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<sup>321</sup> A. Rémond, ‘Rose Chéri’, *La Mode nouvelle*, 2 October 1861, n.p.

<sup>322</sup> Hemmings, *Theatre and State in France, 1760–1905*, pp. 101–112 and 160–175.

<sup>323</sup> Samuels, *The Right to Difference*, pp. 50–72; Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, pp. 14, 29, 122–23 and 201.

<sup>324</sup> Janin, ‘La Semaine dramatique’, 30 September 1861, n.p.

<sup>325</sup> Eugène de Mirecourt, *Rose Chéri (Madame Montigny)* (Paris: Gustave Havard, 1855), p. 83.

<sup>326</sup> On the neologisms *demi-monde* and *demimondaine* see Alexandre Dumas *filis*, *Théâtre complet de Al. Dumas Fils*, Deuxième Série, (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1868), pp. 8–9.

Janin elucidated the celebrity and esteem Chéri acquired through these courtesan creations:

à représenter ces vénales amours du demi-monde où toute autre à sa place en eût été quelque peu embourbée [e]lle sortait éclatante et superbe et...ça n'était pas plus difficile que cela de démontrer la duplicité, la trahison, l'effronterie et le sans-gêne de ces tristes habitants [sic] des maisons suspectes.

[representing these venal loves of the *demimonde*, in which all others in her place would have got somewhat embroiled, she came out radiant and superb, and... it could not have been harder than that to represent the duplicity, the infidelity, the impudence, and the brazenness of these sad inhabitants of the houses of ill repute].<sup>327</sup>

Janin's analysis is revelatory in many ways. Firstly, it highlights the exceptionalism of Chéri's ability to separate the courtesan character from her own persona. Secondly, it demonstrates the star quality enshrined within the courtesan role creation, from which Chéri emerged 'éclatante et superbe' [radiant and superb]. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it implies that it was precisely through this total contrast between Chéri's offstage persona and onstage courtesan characterisation that she excelled in performing the very duplicity that was so integral to the role type: 'ça n'était pas plus difficile que cela de démontrer la duplicité [...] de ces tristes habitants' [it could not have been harder than that to represent the duplicity [...] of these sad inhabitants].

As established in my introduction, the historical equation between actors and courtesans in nineteenth-century Paris was tied, in part, to Rousseau's diatribes regarding the duplicity of both professions. Chéri seemingly voided this historical association precisely by performing the separation between her artistic (onstage) and her moral (offstage) virtue. She thus appears to have built on the celebrity pathway established by her predecessors on the secondary Parisian stage, as explored throughout this thesis, to which the courtesan creation was essential. But rather than embroiling her onstage and offstage personas like Dorval, Page, Doche, and Fargueil had all done to varying degrees – Doche most actively of all – Chéri's strategy was one of total opposition. Yet the onstage/offstage were equally symbiotic:

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<sup>327</sup> Janin, 'La Semaine dramatique', 30 September 1861, n.p.

the success of Chéri's courtesan creations depended entirely on her pristine offstage persona, and her pious celebrity image was elevated further through her uncharacteristic courtesan creation in the theatre. Chéri, like her aforementioned predecessors, similarly collapsed the distance between women actors and courtesans by taking on courtesan roles which others like Rachel and Déjazet, as explored in chapter three, had snubbed. But rather than merging the two, with Chéri the courtesan and the actor co-existed side by side, one onstage, the other offstage. In so doing, she made a spectacle of the very association between courtesans and women actors, turning it into a mere illusion in her exceptional case.

To make sense of the power of Chéri's courtesan creations and resultant celebrity, I engage with Julia H Fawcett's theories in *Spectacular Disappearances*, which explore how the celebrated British actor, poet, and royal courtesan Mary Robinson (1757–1800) reversed the celebrity models of her predecessors by responding to – rather than reproducing – their 'autobiographical performances'.<sup>328</sup> Fawcett defines 'autobiographical performances' as any performance of the self beyond the theatre, be it in print, portraiture, or a publicity stunt.<sup>329</sup> Whereas Robinson's predecessors used methods of 'overexpression' to exaggerate their own personae in their public self-narratives beyond the stage, Robinson's autobiographical methods highlighted the absence of the self. Her autobiography, poems, and portraiture were characterised by ellipses and absences which, instead of self-expression, aimed for 'its spectacular disappearance'.<sup>330</sup> Fawcett reads these disappearances as a defiance of 'spectators' tendency to read women's performances as always confessional and never professional'.<sup>331</sup> In response to others' attempts to imprison her persona in print or in the plays in which she performed, Robinson attempted to capture the ephemerality of her performances – both in the theatre and beyond – through her own self-representation in print.<sup>332</sup> For Fawcett, Robinson thus upstaged and exceeded the frames and characters into which her public tried to confine and commodify her by exaggerating her persona's 'conspicuous absence'.<sup>333</sup>

Chéri's celebrity model is in many ways opposite to Robinson's, given the former left behind very few written or spoken traces of her own. Unlike Robinson, access to Chéri's life and career is almost entirely limited to the accounts of others. And yet, we can read Chéri's

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<sup>328</sup> Fawcett, *Spectacular Disappearances*, pp. 1–22 and 173–205.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21 and 176.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5 and 182.

silences as an alternative – perhaps more elaborate, perhaps more sincere – form of ‘spectacular disappearance’ and ‘conspicuous absence’, which similarly usurped the public assumptions that women’s performances were ‘always confessional and never professional’. Whereas Robinson’s strategy of spectacular disappearance took place beyond the theatre, I explore how Chéri performed hers onstage to great spectacular effect, via her courtesan creations. I demonstrate how from the outset of her career she established her public persona in concordance with her theatrical ingenue roles before achieving her ‘spectacular disappearance’ onstage as a *demimondaine*.

### The Framing of Fame: From ‘The Scissor Sisters’ to Rose Chéri



Figure 5.1 – ‘Mlles Rose et Anna Chéri’, lithograph by M. Alophe, *Galerie de la presse* (Paris: Chez Aubert & Cie, n.d.). BnF, 4 ICO PER 4982.

Rose-Marie Cizos was born on 27 October 1824 in Étampes into a provincial travelling troupe led by her parents Sophie Juliette Cizos *née* Garcin and Jean-Baptiste Cizos. The troupe was a family affair formed of a dozen actors from the Garcin and Cizos families. Rose received singing and piano lessons from her maternal grandfather Jean-Joseph-Benoist Garcin who was the troupe’s orchestral director and she appeared in child roles aged four, soon joined by her younger sister Anna Cizos (1826–1912). By 1834, Rose and Anna reprised roles created by celebrity Parisian actors, such as those of Virginie Déjazet (1798–1875) and Léontine Fay (1810–1876) in *Le Mariage*

*enfantin* (a *comédie-vaudeville*), at the theatre in Nevers. The Cizos family troupe was not just a business, it was a brand. Indeed, one of the earliest published images of Rose is a family portrait with her sister (figure 5.1), in the *Galerie de la presse, de la littérature et des beaux-arts* that ran from 1839–1841, when the girls were in their teens.

An anecdote that circulated around the time of the sisters' family portrait accentuated their virtuous, familial brand. Mirecourt recalled a famed incident at the theatre in Périgueux in 1841, when the Cizos sisters performed in front of Auguste Romieu, the prefect of the Dordogne. Romieu, who was known for his witticisms, reportedly admired Rose and Anna's joint performance by exclaiming: 'quelle jolie paire de Cizos!' [what a fine pair of Cizos/scissors!]. The pun played with the homophones Cizos (the sisters' surname) and the French word for scissors [ciseaux]. Mirecourt recorded the family's reaction to this reported repartee as follows:

le mot courut à Périgueux [...] mais, dans les coulisses, le directeur et sa femme ne furent que très médiocrement flattés de voir leur nom de famille prêter ainsi au coq-à-l'âne. On décida que le nom de *Cizos* disparaîtrait de l'affiche et serait remplacé par celui de *Chéri*, que [...] ses filles donnaient dans l'intimité à [...] leur père.

[word went around Périgueux [...] but behind the scenes, the director and his wife were highly unimpressed to hear their family name spreading like wildfire, in such a manner. The decision was made that the name 'Cizos' would disappear from the bill, to be replaced with 'Chéri', which [...] the daughters used as an intimate nickname for their father].<sup>334</sup>

While the anecdote's veracity was later debated,<sup>335</sup> the name change certainly took place and the narrative nevertheless demonstrates that the Cizos were considered a sober family who were particular about the public attention they attracted. Notably, their rebrand took the form of another intimate, family name, continuing the troupe's familial image but with a more innocent and euphonic resonance. *Le Monde illustré* reflected on this rebranding in Rose's obituary, as 'un nom de conte de fées [...] une enfance prédestinée' [a fairy-tale name [...] a fated childhood].<sup>336</sup> This branding was also internationally intelligible: *The Ladies Companion* noted that 'chéri' was 'a term which, it need not be said, is of very common use throughout France amongst members of a family'.<sup>337</sup> As Rose's career progressed, she continued to uphold this angelic, familial, and child-like brand.

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<sup>334</sup> Mirecourt, *Rose Chéri*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>335</sup> Johnstone, 'Our French Correspondent', n.p.

<sup>336</sup> Charles Monselet, 'Théâtres', *Le Monde illustré*, 28 September 1861, n.p.

<sup>337</sup> Ware, 'Rose Chéri', n.p.

In addition to Rose's sisterhood with Anna, another connection that later turned into a sisterly union through marriage brought Chéri to the Parisian stage. Chéri's 1841 performance in Périgueux caught the attention of the composer Loïsa Puget (1810–1889), who later became Chéri's sister-in-law. Puget was so taken by Chéri's reprise of the virtuous Marie in *Grâce de Dieu* (a *drame en cinq actes, mêlé de chant* from 1841 composed by Puget herself) that she visited Rose in her dressing room and approached the aforementioned prefect Romieu to write Chéri a formal letter of recommendation. This secured Chéri's debut at Paris's secondary stage of the Théâtre du Gymnase in March 1842, in the titular ingenue role of *Estelle ou le père et la fille*. Chéri soon became typecast at this theatre through her creation of a multitude of angelic and daughterly vaudeville roles: as Cécile, in *Le Premier chapitre* in July 1842, and as the titular characters in *Angélique* in 1843, *Emma ou un Ange Gardien* in 1844 and *Geneviève ou la jalousie paternelle* in 1846. Chéri was so successful by June 1846 that she went on a six-week tour to London's St. James theatre, for which she was reportedly offered a contract of one thousand pounds.<sup>338</sup>

Offstage too, Chéri launched her Parisian career by upholding her established brand as an angelic daughter. The playwright Pierre Berton wrote in his unedited memoirs, later published in *La Revue de France*:

À l'époque de ses débuts au Gymnase, Rose fut en butte aux poursuites d'un jeune homme [...] dont la passion chercha, deux mois durant, à vaincre [...] une vertu inflexible [...] il lui jetait des fleurs et des lettres. Rose donnait tout à sa mère et ne lisait rien [...] Sophie-Juliette et son mari coururent chez le père du jeune homme [...] en le conjurant avec larmes de faire cesser [c]es manœuvres [...] on pourra feuilleter longtemps les annales des coulisses avant d'y trouver un fait semblable.

[At the time of her debut at the Gymnase, Rose fell prey to the whims of a young man [...] who spent two months passionately trying to win over her unyielding virtue [...] he would throw flowers and letters at her onstage. Rose would give everything to her mother, without reading anything [...] Sophie-Juliette [Rose's mother] and her husband went to the young man's father [...] begging him, with tears in their eyes, to stop his

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<sup>338</sup> Ware, 'Rose Chéri', n.p.

son's advances [...] you would be hard pressed to find any other such tale in the annals].<sup>339</sup>

Just like her onstage characters, Chéri was celebrated as a daughter of inflexible virtue, which – according to Berton – was an exception in the theatrical history books.

By August 1846 Chéri had acquired great celebrity for her creation of the virtuous daughter figure of Clarisse Harlowe in the *drame* of the same name (itself an adaptation of Samuel Richardson's 1748 novel *Clarissa*) at the Gymnase theatre. Monselet reminisced in Chéri's obituary that 'c'est de cette création [sic] que date sa grande renommée [...] jusqu'alors mademoiselle Rose Chéri n'avait pas abordé le drame' [her great renown dates back from this creation [...] until then mademoiselle Rose Chéri had not yet broached the *drame* genre];<sup>340</sup> Pierre Larousse wrote that Clarisse Harlowe 'plaça Rose Chéri au premier rang des artistes inspirées' [promoted Rose Chéri to first place among inspired actresses].<sup>341</sup> As seen in the previous chapters, the *drame* was a more serious and respected genre in Paris's theatrical hierarchy than the lighter roles (vaudeville and *comedies mêlées de chant*) of Chéri's established repertoire. Yet while this signalled a new genre for Chéri she was again typecast. The plot centred around Clarisse's unsuccessful quest for female virtue, foiled by her family's shortcomings, and which resulted in her tragic death, due to mental illness and exhaustion. The religiosity of the role is visible in posed lithographs of Chéri, printed for public dissemination in Paris, as a *Souvenir du théâtre* (figure 5.2) and published as far as St. Petersburg, in the *Revue étrangère* (figure 5.3). The circulation of these images is testimony to Chéri's international celebrity as the virginal daughter, which now spanned from London to St. Petersburg.

Following Chéri's huge success as Clarisse, the Gymnase director Adolphe Lemoine-Montigny (1812–1880) asked for her hand in marriage. Montigny was described as an 'homme d'honneur et de loyauté' [honourable and loyal man],<sup>342</sup> and in contrast to stereotypical anecdotes of couch casting that abounded in the annals, Chéri's union with Montigny followed her success rather than caused it. The *Comœdia illustré* pointedly

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<sup>339</sup> Pierre Berton, 'Madame Rose Chéri (1824–1861)' in *Revue de France*, 19 May 1931, n.p.

<sup>340</sup> Monselet, 'Théâtres', 28 September 1861, n.p.

<sup>341</sup> Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, Tome IV, (Paris: Larousse et Boyer, 1869), p. 25.

<sup>342</sup> Max de Revel, *Les théâtres de Paris* (Paris: Simon Raçon et Compagnie, n.d.) p. 3.



Figure 5.2 – ‘Rose Chéri (Clarisse Harlowe), lithograph by anon., *Souvenirs du théâtre*, (Paris, 1846), BnF, 4 ICO PER 4982.



Figure 5.3 – ‘Rose Chéri, rôle de Clarisse Harlowe’, lithograph by anon., *Revue étrangère*, (St Petersburg, 1846), BnF, 4 ICO PER 4982.

observed that when Montigny proposed, Chéri ‘comptait déjà parmi les meilleures actrices de Paris’ [was already considered one of Paris’s best actresses];<sup>343</sup> *The French Correspondent* later reflected on how ‘Montigny determined upon demanding the hand of the woman who [...] made the Gymnase the centre of attraction among the Paris theatres’.<sup>344</sup> The religiosity of the couple’s wedding further showcased Chéri’s pious nature beyond the stage. Mirecourt explained how before coming to Paris, despite the Cizos family’s impeccable morals, the family of actors had been granted the Catholic rite of baptism only to be later denied their first communion due to ongoing moralistic attitudes towards their profession that were particularly manifest in the provinces.<sup>345</sup> Without receiving communion, Rose could not marry in a church. Mirecourt expanded that Rose:

ne supportait pas l’idée d’un hymen conclu simplement sous l’écharpe du maire  
[...] L’idée lui vint de solliciter une audience de l’archevêque. Monsieur Affre

<sup>343</sup> Léopold Lacour, ‘Rose Chéri’, *Comœdia illustré*, 15 September 1912, n.p.

<sup>344</sup> Johnstone, ‘Our French Correspondent’, n.p.

<sup>345</sup> On heightened moralistic provincial attitudes towards the acting profession at the time see Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 143–44.

accueillit les deux sœurs [...] on put les voir, un matin, communier l'une et l'autre, avec une piété d'ange, à l'une des chapelles de Saint-Roch. Deux mois après, le 12 mai 1847, Rose épousa M. Montigny.

[could not bear the thought of a civil ceremony [...] and so the idea came to her to request an audience with the Archbishop. Monsieur Affre received the two sisters [...] and you could see them, one morning, at a chapel in Saint-Roch, receiving communion with the saintliness of angels. Two months later, Rose married Montigny].<sup>346</sup>

Mirecourt's description highlighted the public visibility of the Chéri sisters' religiosity, in the public exhibition space of the church. Janin similarly wrote that Chéri 'savait le chemin de l'église; on y montre encore aujourd'hui la place qu'elle occupait dans un coin bien modeste' [was a churchgoer; to this day the seat she occupied in a modest corner of the church is on display].<sup>347</sup> Somewhat paradoxically, Chéri's modesty was exhibited posthumously. Yet this treatment can be seen as a product of Chéri's own overtly visible and performed religiosity in life, both onstage and off.

Beyond the church, the location of the Chéri's new family home with Montigny similarly signalled her absence from normative Parisian theatre circles. The novelist Gabrielle de Saint Mars (under the pseudonym Jacques Reynaud) wrote in an article that went into print shortly before Chéri's death:

la divine comédienne est avant tout mère et épouse [...] elle aime sa famille et son intérieur d'une tendresse qui passe la première dans son cœur. Elle ne reçoit personne intimement, que ses parents très proches [...] Elle vit à Passy, très retirée [...] ce n'est pas une vie d'artiste, c'est une vie bourgeoise'.

[the divine actress is first and foremost a mother and a wife [...] she loves her family and interior life with a tenderness that takes priority in her heart. Apart

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<sup>346</sup> Mirecourt, *Rose Chéri*, pp. 89–91; a similar version of events is relayed in Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel*, p. 25.

<sup>347</sup> Janin, 'La Semaine dramatique', 30 September 1861, n.p.

from her immediate family, she does not receive anyone at home [...] She lives in a retreat in Passy. Hers is not the life of an artist, but of a bourgeoisie woman].<sup>348</sup>

Chéri was deemed to be a very private theatre woman, who prioritised her domestic life over her public persona. However, given the familial branding that characterised Chéri's career, an alternative reading of her bourgeoisie lifestyle is possible. Rather than reneging her artistic life, her religious domesticity can be considered a further development of her successful and unique selling point as both family woman and esteemed woman actor.

Indeed, Chéri's marriage crystallised her public image as a family-centred theatre woman. The union marked her passage from angelic daughter and sister of a provincial family troupe to wife and mother of one of the most influential Parisian theatrical families. The wedding formalised Chéri's sisterhood with Loïsa Puget, who was married to Adolphe's brother Gustave Lemoine – himself a playwright whose works were frequently performed at the Gymnase. Adolphe's father, Michel Auguste Lemoine, ran the accounts and his other brother, Édouard, was the theatre's administrator. Alongside Chéri as the Gymnase's lead woman actor, Chéri's mother Sophie-Juliette, her sister Anna, and her brother-in-law François Lesueur also performed, while her brother Victor directed the orchestra.<sup>349</sup> Beyond her artistic role, Chéri's indirect financial involvement in the theatre became apparent the year following her marriage, during the 1848 revolution. Mirecourt explained how: 'les événements de 1848 plongèrent le directeur du Gymnase dans un embarras financier [...] Montigny n'eut pas d'autre capitaliste que Rose elle-même [...] voilà comment le Gymnase fut sauvé' [the events of 1848 plunged the director of the Gymnase into financial ruin [...] luckily Montigny had a capitalist up his sleeve: Rose [...] it is thanks to her that the Gymnase was saved].<sup>350</sup> Larousse detailed Rose's financial contribution explicitly: 'en 1848, Rose Chéri vendit ses diamants et n'hésita pas, pour sauver la fortune de son mari [...] à donner en province des représentations dont le produit fit face aux premiers embarras' [in 1848 Rose Chéri sold her diamonds and, in order to save her husband's fortune, was quick to tour the provinces with her plays in order to pay the bills].<sup>351</sup> Chéri's husband's fortune was, of course, the Gymnase theatre. Notably, in contrast to the mercenary association between actors and courtesans – which as I have demonstrated was heightened on the commercialised

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<sup>348</sup> Jacques Reynaud, 'Rose Chéri', *La Mode nouvelle*, 2 October 1861, n.p.

<sup>349</sup> Cécile Riviere and Sylvain Duchene, *Rose Chéri: sainte et comédienne (1824–1861)*, Exhibition catalogue (Etampes: Musée municipal d'Etampes, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>350</sup> Mirecourt, *Rose Chéri*, p. 94.

<sup>351</sup> Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel*, p. 25.

secondary Parisian stages, especially in the case of Fargueil in the previous chapter – Chéri made a name for herself as a self-sacrificial type precisely through her acting and in association with the secondary theatre of the Gymnase.

Having been integral to its finances, Chéri was also considered responsible for the theatre's charitable mission during the 1848 revolution. It was reported that in June 1848, in response to the June Days, the Gymnase was 'by the order of its director's wife, converted into an hospital for the wounded and the dying. And the sister of charity who relieved so many sufferers within its walls was no other than the actress'.<sup>352</sup> The theatre may have officially been under Montigny's direction, but Chéri was seemingly as influential in its administration. In addition to her charity work in Paris, Chéri helped the needy in her own neighbourhood of Passy: in her obituary, *The Ladies Companion* lamented how: 'that gentle right hand [...] will no more help the sick and poverty-stricken people of Passy' and concluded that "'All the poor at Passy knew her.'" This is her best epitaph'.<sup>353</sup> As explored previously in the case of Doche, charity was a crucial aspect of celebrity at the time and the fact that Chéri's charity was again recorded by the British press demonstrates the international celebrity that her actions acquired. The link between her virtuous persona and posthumous legacy is also explicit. Whereas Doche at the Vaudeville theatre had – unusually – linked her charitable works with her onstage courtesan, Chéri's philanthropy was akin to that which Hilary Poriss identifies with the women opera stars of Paris's primary, operatic stage: 'as someone who gave back, disconnecting her from those who did not — specifically, courtesans'.<sup>354</sup> Chéri's altruism, which she performed both within her own family-owned theatre and closer to her private home, concurred with the virtuous characters she performed onstage, representing a total disconnect with historical associations between women actors and courtesans.

What is more, as with Poriss's prima donnas, these narratives of generosity were also a means of conveying 'a sense of self-effacement'. As discussed in the case of Doche in chapter three, Poriss explains how operatic performers rarely relayed their own virtuous tales; instead 'the task of publicizing their virtue [was] left to biographers, journalists, and bystanders'.<sup>355</sup> Whereas we learned of Doche's charity through her public letters to the press, with Chéri we have only the words of others to go by, thus elevating her actions and narrative

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<sup>352</sup> Johnstone, 'Our French Correspondent', n.p.; this anecdote is also relayed in Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel*, p. 25.

<sup>353</sup> Ware, 'Rose Chéri', n.p.

<sup>354</sup> Poriss 'Prima Donnas and the Performance of Altruism', p. 17.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

to the level of the prima donnas of Paris's primary stage. While this lack of access to Chéri's own voice presents a methodological problem, this very inaccessibility can be recalibrated as intrinsic to her private, domestic persona. Rather than a barrier to her life story and career, this absence can be reframed as a 'conspicuous' one – as the defining aspect of her public persona. With this in mind, I now explore how Chéri's 'self-effacement' behind the scenes developed into what Fawcett terms a 'spectacular disappearance' onstage and a 'conspicuous absence' offstage.

### **Spectacular Disappearances and Conspicuous Absences in *Le Demi-monde* and Beyond**

Given Chéri's well-established and unique celebrity as a virtuous, family-focused, theatre woman, her character creation of the infamous *demimondaine* Suzanne (la Baronne d'Ange) on 20 March 1855 produced a total shock among the spectators of the Gymnase. The *Comœdia illustré* recalled that *Le Demi-Monde*:

éclata dans l'art dramatique comme une sorte de révolution morale et littéraire: il parut en effet plus hardi que *La Dame aux camélias* jouée au Vaudeville en 1852; et l'audace fut surprenante aussi d'une artiste "honnête femme", et honnête femme célèbre, osant incarner la terrible baronne d'Ange.

[erupted in the dramatic arts like a sort of moral and literary revolution: it appeared more daring than *La Dame aux camélias*, which premiered at the Vaudeville in 1852; its surprising audacity was also due to a 'respectable woman' *artiste* – a respectable woman celebrity even – daring to embody the terrible 'Baronne d'Ange'].<sup>356</sup>

The subject matter of Dumas *fils*' second contemporary courtesan play was even more shocking than the first. Whereas Doche's creation of Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias* in 1852 had somewhat appeased moralistic critics through the purity of her love, repentance, and redemption in death (following in the footsteps of Dorval's 1831 *courtisane amoureuse* Marion de Lorme), *Le Demi-monde*'s contemporary courtesan Suzanne (la baronne d'Ange) in 1855 – an unapologetic and calculating courtesan – was a complete anti-heroine to Marguerite, and much more in line with Fargueil's *fille de marbre* type, which the latter had

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<sup>356</sup> Lacour, 'Rose Chéri', n.p.

established two years prior, in 1853. *Le Demi-monde* (a *comédie en cinq actes*) centres around Suzanne, who had risen through contemporary society's ranks by selling herself to rich men. Having made a name for herself in the *demimonde* as 'la baronne d'Ange', her ambition is to establish herself in *Le Monde* (Parisian high society) by marrying the honourable Olivier de Jalin, whom she dupes into betrothal by falsifying her past. However, Suzanne's scheme comes to a cataclysmic end in the play's final scene, as she unintentionally reveals her real identity and motivations to her unsuspecting fiancé.

According to the *Comœdia illustré*, equally scandalous to the plot was the play's casting: 'l'audace fut surprenante aussi d'une artiste "honnête femme", et honnête femme célèbre' [its surprising audacity was also due to a 'respectable woman' *artiste* – a respectable woman celebrity even].<sup>357</sup> Chéri's creation of the *demimondaine* was considered audacious not only because of her reputation as an honest woman, but because said reputation was the fabric of her celebrity. It was this contrast that was central not only to the play and character's success, but to Chéri's heightened celebrity. Indeed, in his review of *Le Demi-monde*'s premiere, Gautier wrote 'Chéri a fait de Suzanne d'Ange une de ses meilleures créations; depuis Clarisse Harlowe, elle n'a pas obtenu un pareil succès' [Chéri has made *Suzanne d'Ange* one of her best creations; since Clarisse Harlowe, she has not achieved such levels of success].<sup>358</sup> Notably, Gautier equated the success of Chéri's onstage courtesan creation to that of her celebrated, iconic role as the virtuous Clarisse Harlowe. Whereas previously Chéri's pious celebrity persona was in line with her virtuous character specialisation onstage, her new *demimondaine* creation signalled a break from this fusion between her onstage and offstage – a 'spectacular disappearance', to borrow again from Fawcett, of her normative celebrity persona onstage. It is in this sense that Chéri differentiated her celebrity from that of her celebrated courtesan-creator predecessors on the secondary Parisian stage: with Dorval, Page, Doche and Fargueil there was no such separation between their onstage and offstage roles.

Attempting to make sense of this unprecedented triumph, *Le Siècle* wrote of the premiere:

je n'exprimerai jamais l'effet produit par Mme Rose Chéri [...] elle a établi ce rôle de la baronne avec une audace effrayante; il n'y avait à Paris que Mme Rose

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Théophile Gautier, 'Théâtres', *La Presse*, 27 March 1855, n.p.

Chéri, la plus honorable et la plus estimée entre toutes les comédiennes, pour étaler effrontément un pareil cynisme de paroles et d'actions [...] Cette création est son apogée dramatique.

[words will never convey the effect Mme Rose Chéri produced. She established the role of the *Baronne d'Ange* with terrifying audacity; she was the only one – the most honourable and esteemed of all the actresses of Paris – capable of brazenly displaying such cynicism of word and action [...] This creation was her dramatic apogee].<sup>359</sup>

The critic was so shocked by Chéri's courtesan creation that he narrated his inability to put into language the effect she created onstage. Chéri – considered the most artistically and morally virtuous Parisian women actor – reached her dramatic zenith through the shock factor and efficacy of her courtesan creation. Her own creative input is highlighted as 'elle [qui] a établi ce rôle' [she [who] established the role]. Unlike Doche, Page, and Dorval, who had acquired great renown and celebrity through a somewhat natural, seemingly true to lie, approach to their onstage craft, Chéri – like Fargueil and her *filles de marbre* – was entirely detached from her onstage courtesan creation through a 'cynisme de paroles et d'actions' [cynicism of word and action]. Yet, with Fargueil (like Dorval, Page, and Doche before) there was still a fusion between her onstage courtesan character and her offstage persona – particularly evidenced through Fargueil's seemingly active participation in her own caricature. What was unprecedented with Chéri's courtesan creation was the total disconnect between her onstage creation and her offstage persona. Like Fargueil, Chéri played up to the duplicity of the courtesan/actor – as elaborated by Rousseau – but whereas Fargueil used the stage to perform this duplicity, with a continuation of this persona in her offstage depictions, Chéri used the very contrast between her onstage creation and her offstage persona to make a spectacle of this duplicity. Again, like Fargueil, Chéri was described as 'honorable' in relation to her courtesan creation, thus also contesting Perry's claim that 'for the actress to qualify for the 'honorable' status which Siddons achieved, she must be freed from the specific associations of whoring'.<sup>360</sup> However, in the case of Chéri, she continued to 'free

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<sup>359</sup> Ch. M. De Fiennes, 'Revue des théâtres', *Le Siècle*, 26 March 1855, n.p.

<sup>360</sup> Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations*, p. 24.

herself from the specific associations of whoring’, through associating herself with the onstage courtesan that ‘spectacularly disappears’.

The struggle to fully verbalise or make sense of the effect of Chéri’s *demimondaine* creation was characteristic of both contemporary reviews and her obituaries, penned a few years after her creation, in 1861. In its review of the 1855 premiere *Le Figaro* claimed ‘dire que le *Demi-Monde* a obtenu un grand succès, c’est rester encore en-deçà de la vérité’ [to say *Le Demi-Monde* was a great success still does not convey the full picture];<sup>361</sup> *Le Monde illustré* recalled Chéri’s *demimondaine* performance, in her obituary, as a ‘métamorphose incompréhensible’ [inexplicable metamorphosis] and asked ‘où avait-elle pris tant d’effronterie et de perversité? Nous frémîmes tous, le soir de la première représentation, en nous regardant les uns et les autres’ [where had she learned such impudence and perversity? The night of the premiere we all quivered, exchanging glances with each other];<sup>362</sup> *The Ladies Companion* obituary similarly claimed ‘it is beyond the pen to give a sketch of Chéri’s treatment of this character’.<sup>363</sup> Seemingly, words and pens failed to capture the shocking ephemerality of Chéri’s totally unexpected onstage spectacle: audience members consulted each other quizzically as reviewers rhetorically appealed to their readers to help explain and process what had taken place before their incredulous eyes. Chéri’s critics’ faltering language and inability to capture the onstage *demimondaine* can be read as an offstage mirroring of Chéri’s ‘spectacular disappearance’ onstage. As *Le Monde illustré* expanded ‘tout était complet et nouveau dans cette révélation: attitudes, gestes, coups d’œil’ [everything was perfect and new in this revelation: her attitude, her gestures, how she glances].<sup>364</sup> Chéri’s performance and method was entirely different to all her previous creations and offstage persona. Whereas Robinson had conveyed the ephemerality of her own performances in print, Chéri achieved this effect onstage, reflected in her critics’ inability to capture her creation on paper. Not only had the Chéri they knew disappeared before their eyes, but the effect was spectacular in the truest sense of the word.

*The Ladies Companion* best conveyed the spectacle of Chéri’s ‘spectacular disappearance’ onstage when it wrote:

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<sup>361</sup> B. Jouvin, ‘Théâtre du Gymnase’, *Le Figaro*, 25 March 1855, p. 5.

<sup>362</sup> Monselet, ‘Théâtres’, 28 September 1861, n.p.

<sup>363</sup> Ware, ‘Rose Chéri’, n.p.

<sup>364</sup> Monselet, ‘Théâtres’, 28 September 1861, n.p.

it is to be regretted that M. Dumas took a morbid pleasure in writing pieces of a nature that would call a blush to the cheeks of the woman whose professional exigencies obliged her to perform the principal parts in them. He used to say [...] the most exciting spectacle in Paris was to witness Rose Chéri, who only knew vice by name, making immorality wince beneath the creative power of her genius.<sup>365</sup>

According to the moralistic British press this ‘most exciting spectacle’ was entirely of Dumas *filis*’ volition: the separation between Chéri’s offstage and onstage personas was so complete that the obituarist attributed the immorality of the *demimondaine* to the playwright and not its onstage creator. Notably, this signals a departure from the tendency in nineteenth-century theatre history for the actors – rather than the playwrights – to be deemed immoral in relation to their character creation.<sup>366</sup> This dislocation of immorality, from the woman actor to the man and playwright, is testament to the power of Chéri’s ‘spectacular disappearance’ onstage.

However, Dumas *filis*’ offered an alternative version of events. In his notes accompanying a later edition of *Le Demi-monde*, the playwright observed: ‘c’était la première fois que madame Rose Chéri jouait un rôle de cette nature. Il la passionnait’ [it was the first time that Rose Chéri played a character of such a nature. She was passionate about it].<sup>367</sup> Dumas *filis* spoke of Chéri’s professional excitement at undertaking the new challenge of this unexpected role. Rather than his own ‘morbid pleasure’, he located the agency and excitement of this casting choice with the actor herself. Dumas *filis* recounted how Chéri navigated her husband’s reservations about her new role type, explaining that Montigny ‘ne parvenait pas toujours à dégager complètement *madame Montigny* du personnage [...] qui, selon lui la déconsidérerait’ [was not always capable of separating *madame Montigny* from the character she was playing [...] whom, in his opinion, discredited her]. Dumas *filis* added that:

il n’était pas rare qu’une discussion s’engageât sur ce point entre lui et moi.

Alors, madame Rose, qui aimait son art et le succès, mais qui n’osait résister ouvertement [...] car elle servait d’exemple en tout à ses camarades, alors

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<sup>365</sup> Johnstone, ‘Our French Correspondent’, n.p.

<sup>366</sup> Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 143 and 146–47.

<sup>367</sup> Alexandre Dumas *filis*, ‘Le Demi-monde, Note C’ in *Théâtre complet*, 8 vols. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1890–98), VIII (1898), pp. 59–60.

madame Rose se mettait [a] me faire, derrière Montigny, toutes sortes de petits signes pour que je tins bon. Je tenais bon et Montigny finissait par céder.

[it was not unusual for a discussion to take place on this matter between him and I. In such a case, *Madame Rose*, who loved her art and success, but who did not dare resist openly [...] because she served as a role model to her colleagues, in such an instance *Madame Rose* would start to make all sort of signals to me, from behind Montigny, so that I stood firm. And firm I stood, and Montigny ended up conceding].<sup>368</sup>

Notably, Dumas *fils* described Chéri as loving both her art and success. This implies Chéri's foresight as to how the role would serve her celebrated career. Moreover, that Chéri was understood as maintaining her exemplary role in front of her colleagues gives an indication of the control Chéri maintained around her public image, knowingly performing different roles onstage, behind the scenes, and beyond the theatre walls. Dumas *fils* also implied a sense of complicity between him and Chéri, suggesting her moral support assisted him in remaining firm against the theatre director's whims. This collusion is reminiscent of his prior professional partnership with Doche in the controversial staging of *La Dame aux camélias* a few years prior, as explored previously.

Beyond his somewhat passive description of Chéri, Dumas *fils* related how she actively embraced this new role type once onstage: 'il y avait des effets que [...] Chéri n'indiquait pas en répétant, parce qu'elle prévoyait qu'ils lui eussent été [...] interdits *par le mari*. Elle les gardait pour la représentation' [there were some effects that Chéri did not reveal in rehearsals, because she suspected that they would be forbidden by her husband. But she kept them for the performance itself].<sup>369</sup> An example he gives is at the play's end:

Chéri, lança ces paroles avec toute la ruse [...] d'une aventurière qui veut avoir le dernier mot [...] puis elle sortit de scène en appliquant de telle manière son châle [...] qu'il n'y avait [...] le moindre doute à avoir sur le genre de vie que Suzanne allait mener désormais. L'effet fut très grand.

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

[before her final exit, Chéri threw her words with all the cunning of a seductress that must have the final say [...] then she left the stage by applying her shawl in such a manner as to leave no doubt as to the type of life Suzanne would lead going forward. The effect was spectacular].<sup>370</sup>

If we are to believe Dumas *filis*' account then Chéri had the final say – in a similar vein to her courtesan creation – when it came to her *demimondaine* casting, much to her husband's apparent chagrin.

The fact that Chéri went on to create several similar contemporary courtesan roles at the Gymnase in Dumas *filis*' following plays strengthens the latter's claims regarding her enthusiasm for the new role type. Following the success of the *Demi-monde*, Chéri created courtesan characters in two subsequent *comédies en cinq actes* by Dumas *filis*: Clara Vignot in *Le Fils naturel* (1858), and Albertine in *Un Père prodigue* (1859), before reprising the role of Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux camélias* in 1860, all at the Gymnase. Dumas *filis* also made similar comments about Chéri in his notes accompanying *Un Père prodigue*, recalling how she created the courtesan Albertine 'toujours au plus grand chagrin de Montigny, qui ne pouvait se faire à l'idée de voir sa femme dans la peau de celles qu'il appelait "mes drôlesses"' [once again to the greatest regret of Montigny, who could not bear to see his wife embodying one of those types that he called 'my hussies'].<sup>371</sup> If Montigny was unable to separate his wife from her courtesan creations, Chéri and her public had no such difficulty. As she exited the stage at the end of the play, her virtuous celebrity persona reappeared intact.

When *The Ladies Companion* claimed it was 'beyond the pen to give a sketch' of Chéri as the *demimondaine*, we can take these words almost to the letter. Unlike her early portraits of idyllic sisterhood and her many posed variations as Clarisse Harlowe, I have encountered no posed portraits of Chéri in her multiple *demimondaine* roles, despite their huge importance to her career, or the typical imagery that surrounded actors in these roles. The only images I have found of her courtesan characters are caricatures, such as that in figure 5.4, which depicts the entire cast of *Le Demi-monde*, naming the characters but not the actors. Chéri's role is ironically captioned as 'la Chaste Suzanne', a biblical reference to the virtuous Susanna which could be read as an enjoyment of the contrast with Chéri's

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>371</sup> Alexandre Dumas *filis*, 'Un Père prodigue, Note B' in *Théâtre complet*, 8 vols. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1890–98), VIII (1898), pp. 212–13.

established religious persona. Suzanne is depicted as ushering away the ghosts of her courtesan past, making way for her deceitful marriage to the naïve Olivier. The white colouring of her dress could convey her deceitful bridal aspirations or the ironized chastity of ‘la Chaste Suzanne’ – unlike the genuine redemptive codification I demonstrated previously with Dorval and Doche’s white dresses as Marion and Marguerite in chapters one and three respectively. The crinoline shape is reminiscent of Fargueil’s debauched crinolines, characteristic of her *fille de marbre* type, in chapter four. This gives us an impression of what *Le Monde illustré* had called Chéri’s inexplicable metamorphosis ‘sous la robe tapageuse de la baronne d’Ange’ [under her scandalous dress as the *Baronne d’Ange*];<sup>372</sup> or the transformation Larousse observed in Chéri’s costume choice ‘[de] revêtir les crinolines suspectes des filles perdues’ [to wear the suspicious crinolines of a fallen woman].<sup>373</sup>



Figure 5.4: ‘Le Gymnase, Le Demi-monde’, caricature by Marcelin, *Le Figaro*, 29 May 1855, p. 5.

Yet, while this caricature is perhaps the most concrete attempt to capture Chéri’s ephemeral performance as the *demimondaine* Suzanne in print, as previously observed, the ensemble of characters depicts the play rather than its specific actors. As explored with Fargueil, from 1852 to 1881 French law required those publishing caricatures to secure the permission of any individual they depicted and therefore caricatures tended to be ‘heavy on allegorical figures and abstract social types to lampoons of living individuals’.<sup>374</sup> Unlike

<sup>372</sup> Monselet, ‘Théâtres’, 28 September 1861, n.p.

<sup>373</sup> Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel*, p. 25.

<sup>374</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, p. 92.

Fargueil, who was named as the actor in the caricature of her courtesan creation of *Dalila* in 1857 (and thus likely associated herself with her courtesan character beyond the stage), the caricature of Chéri as Suzanne, from 1855, only referenced Chéri indirectly. The lack of posed portraits depicting Chéri's celebrity roles as *demimondaines* can thus be read as a 'conspicuous absence': as a deliberate refusal to incite more interest and a conscious effort to ensure the 'spectacular disappearance' of her courtesan character creations beyond the stage, mirroring Chéri's own disappearance onstage, in these roles. Rather than targeting Chéri specifically, this caricature is arguably another example of the character's satirised immorality residing within the play, and with its author, rather than with its performers.

Through a very measured control of her iconography, Chéri not only maximised the dramatic effect produced by her courtesan roles onstage, but prevented any cross-contamination with her pious celebrity beyond the theatre. Another obituary commented on Chéri's refusal to be photographed:

[e]n vain vous visiterez les 11,542 ateliers photographiques de Paris; en vain vous passerez en revue la vitrine de tous les marchands papetiers, on vous met au défi de rencontrer un seul portrait de Rose Chéri. En revanche, mesdemoiselles Cora, Evéline et Armanda [...] sont représentées debout, assises, couchées, de face, de trois quarts, de profil, en robes de chambre, en robes de bal, sans robes et dans les plus simples appareils.

[a visit to the 11,542 photographic studios of Paris would be in vain; it would be pointless to pass the vitrines in the shop windows of any of the publishers, we defy you to find a single photographic portrait of Rose Chéri. By contrasts, *mesdemoiselles* Cora, Evéline and Armanda [...] are portrayed standing, seated, lying down, forward facing, up close, from the side, in their dressing gowns, in their ballgowns, without any clothing at all, or scantily clad].<sup>375</sup>

The hyperbolic enumeration of studios and the lengthy list of the poses, angles, and outfits of other women celebrities' photographic portraits testifies to how photography had taken over the capital by Chéri's death in 1861, and how it was a crucial technology of celebrity – as seen previously in the case of Doche's *carte de visite* dating from around this time. The

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<sup>375</sup> Anonymous and undated obituary, BhvP, Dossier Cheri (Rose), 43003481.

‘Cora’ was almost certainly a reference to Cora Pearl (1836–1886) who at the time was a celebrity *demimondaine*, while the description of the women posing prostrate and naked gives an indication – albeit likely exaggerated – of the sexualised nature of some photographic images, and thus more general associations with the new medium at the time. The obituarist also implied a certain voyeurism associated with the sites of display of the photographs: the glass panels of the shop windows that were there for all to see. By contrast, the lack of a single photograph of Chéri was conspicuous.

To make sense of the enigmatic Chéri, and of her ‘conspicuous absence’ in the photographic medium – given the extent of her celebrity – the obituarist resorted to rhetorical questions, like many of her critics and other biographers before: ‘à quel motif faut-il attribuer la répugnance que la grande comédienne témoigna lorsqu’on sollicita de reproduire ses traits par la photographie?’ [what reason can we assume for the great actress’s total revulsion when someone requested to capture her features photographically?]. They added that ‘le seul portrait d’elle que je connaisse est une belle toile de Pérignon’ [the only portrait of her that I know is the beautiful canvas by Pérignon]. The reference was to a painting of Chéri by the society painter Alexis Joseph Pérignon (1806–1882), an engraving of which was circulated following Chéri’s death (figure 5.5). As already observed, other lithographs of Chéri existed – primarily depicting her dramatic roles – but the obituarist was referring to portraits of the actress herself rather than her characters. Through this detail the obituarist helps elucidate the lack of Chéri’s photographic portraiture. Indeed, from the daguerreotype’s invention in 1839 to well into the twentieth century, the photographic portrait arguably struggled to acquire the high status of an artwork.<sup>376</sup> Cyrielle Dodet notes that from the seventeenth century, the most esteemed French performers had their portraits captured in the prestigious mediums of paint and sculpture.<sup>377</sup> To these ‘high-art’ categories Dodet adds what she calls the more ‘modest’ mediums of miniatures, sketches, and prints. As photography emerged in the mid-nineteenth

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<sup>376</sup> Arnaud Rykner, ‘Photographier l’acteur des origines du médium au début du XXe siècle en France’ in *Registres, revue des études théâtrales*, 20 (Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2017), p. 47; Joël Huthwohl, ‘La “peinture du visage”’, in *Figures de l’acteur: le paradoxe du comédien* (Paris: Gallimard, collection Lambert en Avignon, 2006), p. 96–97.

<sup>377</sup> Cyrielle Dodet, ‘À l’œil nu : les photographies d’acteurs dans les fonds de la BnF et de la Théâtrothèque Gaston Baty’ in Rykner, ‘Photographier l’acteur’, p. 21.



Figure 5.5 – Portrait of Rose Chéri, engraving from a painting by Alexis Joseph Pérignon, *L'Illustration, Journal universel*, vol. 38, no. 972, 12 October 1861, n.p.

century, it joined this secondary genre of portraiture. Thus, as well as likely avoiding the seemingly immoral, sexually exhibitionist association of photography implied by the obituarist, it is also probable that the ‘honourable’ Chéri chose only to pose for the most reputable of portrait types.

The highly selective nature of Chéri’s choice of portraiture is further substantiated by her appearance in another high-art medium which the obituarist overlooked. As well as the high-status medium of painting, Chéri’s portrait was captured in sculpture – the other prestigious form identified by Dodet – by the well-established sculptor Jean-Pierre Dantan (1800–1869), (figure

5.6). The title of the sculpture ‘Portrait sérieux de l’actrice au Gymnase’ [serious portrait of the actress at the Gymnase] highlights its sober nature. When Chéri died, an illustration by Edmond Morin (1824–1882) of this sculpture also circulated in the press, (figure 5.7), in which the caption refers to previous publications of the same image: ‘voir le *Courrier de Paris* et la *Chronique théâtrale* de la semaine dernière’ [see also the *Courrier de Paris* and the *Chronique théâtrale* from last week]. Unlike Rachel, whose corpse was subjected to a necrophilic, photographic, media storm three years prior, Chéri’s death was honoured by the serial reproduction of the high-status mediums of paint and sculpture in the newspapers of the time.

Chéri’s refusal to be photographed further nuances our understanding of the differing ‘reverence’ shown to herself and her rival Rachel, in life and death. Huthwohl has already explored how Rachel’s triumph at the Comédie-Française coincided, almost exactly, with the success of the daguerreotype in 1839, noting how the star’s huge international celebrity was directly linked to her frequent appearance and reproduction in the photographic format.<sup>378</sup> Similarly, Dodet has observed that if photography contributed to Rachel’s huge international celebrity, the importance of photography to her career also played into her posthumous

<sup>378</sup> Joël Huthwohl, ‘La “peinture du visage”’, p. 97.

(mis)treatment.<sup>379</sup> Thus, beyond how Rachel and Chéri knowingly performed their differing Jewishness and Christianity respectively, both on and offstage, the way they negotiated the new technology of celebrity – the photographic image – also played into their differing reputation. Despite Rachel starring on France’s premier stage, she was frequently portrayed through the lower-status medium of photography. Chéri, by contrast, created one of French theatre’s most infamous characters on none other than the secondary, boulevard, stage and yet her refusal both to be captured offstage in the role and to be captured by photography more generally – a nascent medium associated with public exhibitionism and real *demimondaines* – ultimately ensured that any association with her courtesan creations remained onstage. Like Robinson, Chéri too can be considered to have exceeded the frames and characters into which her public might have tried to confine and commodify her throughout her life and also in her final act of ‘spectacular disappearance’: in death.



Figure 5.6 – ‘Portrait sérieux de l’actrice au Gymnase’, sculpture by Jean-Pierre Dantan, 1866. Musée Carnavalet, S1231.



Figure 5.7 – ‘Mme Rose Chéri, d’après le buste de M. Dantan Jeune’, lithograph by L. Chapon, *Le Monde illustré*, 5 October 1861, n.p.

<sup>379</sup> Dodet, “À l’œil nu”, p. 18.

## Straddling and Challenging Binaries: from the Virgin/Whore, to the Primary and Secondary Stage

Chéri's prestige was so great that the director of the Comédie-Française, M. Samson, gave a eulogy at her funeral in which he lamented: 'rien ne manque à sa gloire; elle manque à la nôtre' [her glory lacks nothing; it is we who lack hers].<sup>380</sup> Similarly, Janin observed in his obituary that Chéri belonged to France's premier theatre by virtue of merit. Alongside Samson, representatives of the Society of Dramatic Authors and the Association of Dramatic authors also gave glowing eulogies and years after her death Dumas  *fils*  was still writing plays with Chéri in mind.<sup>381</sup> The playwright dedicated his 1867 play *Idées de Madame Aubray* (a *comédie en quatre actes*) to Chéri's son, with the following words: 'Je veux, mon cher enfant, te dédier cette comédie. Elle te revient de droit. Mme Aubray, c'est la foi, le dévouement et le sacrifice. C'est ce que fut ta mère. Je t'embrasse, Alexandre Dumas  *fils* ' [My dear child, I want to dedicate this comedy to you. It is your birth right. Madame Aubray is the embodiment of faith, of devotion and of sacrifice].<sup>382</sup> The playwright's words not only demonstrated the extent of his gratitude and esteem towards Chéri, but were testament to how her death represented one final 'spectacular disappearance' that further cemented her self-effacing celebrity and legacy.

Chéri contracted fatal diphtheria tending to her sick son, whom she cured back to health at the expense of her own. The poet Edouard Plouvier (1821–1876) described Chéri's passing as that of a 'sainte victime [...] en plein célébrité' [a saintly victim [...] at the height of her celebrity].<sup>383</sup> Saint Mars (pseudonym Reynaud) used the same term when praising Chéri's versatile ability to play 'aussi parfaitement une fille perdue qu'une sainte victime' [in equal measure a fallen woman and a saintly victim].<sup>384</sup> While Chéri ensured a total separation between her 'fallen women' characters and her own persona, her death and final 'spectacular disappearance' resulted in an ultimate concurrence between her onstage and offstage characterisations as a 'saintly victim'. Berton described Chéri as 'la grande actrice, martyre du dévouement et de la maternité' [the great actress, martyr of devotion and maternity].<sup>385</sup> As shown previously, Dorval and Doche had acquired the status of Mary Magdalene types (the repentant sex worker *par excellence*) through their *courtisan amoureuse* creations of Marion

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<sup>380</sup> Anonymous and undated article, BhvP, Dossier Chéri (Rose), 43003481.

<sup>381</sup> Johnstone, 'Our French Correspondent', n.p.

<sup>382</sup> Berton, 'Madame Rose Chéri', p. 327.

<sup>383</sup> Edouard Plouvier, 'Rose Chéri', undated biography, BnF, Rt 6456.

<sup>384</sup> Reynaud, 'Rose Chéri', n.p.

<sup>385</sup> Berton, 'Madame Rose Chéri', p. 327.

and Marguerite. By contrast, Chéri's exaltation as a Christian icon of maternal devotion, sacrifice, and female virtue carried resonances of the cult of the Virgin Mary. Whereas, to borrow once more from Ferris, Dorval and Doche's creation of penitent courtesans 'fulfilled the patriarchal belief that acting women are merely being themselves'; Chéri's total separation between her courtesan role and pious celebrity persona defied spectators' tendency to always read women's performances as confessional not professional.

Chéri thus further developed the celebrity pathway of the onstage courtesan, established by her predecessors and contemporaries on the Parisian popular stage. She mobilised her *demimondaine* character to create a new female fantasy and spectacle by nearing the iconic heights of the Virgin mother, despite her most celebrated role creations being those of contemporary courtesans. Echoing Saint Mars's appreciation of her dual embodiment of the fallen woman and the saintly victim, Monselet wrote that 'pour comprendre l'étonnante souplesse de son talent, il faut l'avoir vue dans *le Mariage de Victorine* et dans *le Demi-Monde*. Victorine et la baronne d'Ange sont les deux figures antipodiques par excellence: une vierge, une courtisane' [to truly comprehend the spectacular suppleness of her talent, you needed to have seen her both in *Le Mariage de Victorine* and *Le Demi-monde*. Victorine and the Baronne d'Ange are the two antithetical figures *par excellence*: one a virgin, the other a courtesan].<sup>386</sup> Rather than merging her celebrity and courtesan personae, Chéri was pioneering in her ability to successfully create the roles of the virgin and the courtesan while maintaining her iconic Christian celebrity.

It was precisely by straddling the virgin/courtesan binary so effectively that Chéri – like her celebrated boulevard contemporaries explored throughout this thesis – challenged another binary: that between Paris's primary and secondary stages. Following Chéri's huge success as the virginal Clarisse Harlowe in 1846, there was a report of 'la nouvelle étrange, inouïe [...] qui certainement restera comme un fait sans exemple dans l'histoire de l'art' [the strange and unprecedented news [...] that will certainly remain as an anomaly in the history of art].<sup>387</sup> The report elucidated that Chéri 'a refusé l'autre jour les propositions que lui faisait le Théâtre-Français' [had the other day refused an offer from the Théâtre-Français]. Although hyperbolic, the claim demonstrated how unusual it was in 1846 for a star to turn down a contract at France's premier theatre. However, Chéri and her boulevard contemporaries went on to continually disprove the rhetorical prediction that this would remain an exception in

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<sup>386</sup> Monselet, 'Théâtres', 28 September 1861, n.p.

<sup>387</sup> Anonymous newspaper clipping, BhvP, 4 BIO 03481. Chéri (Rose).

theatrical history. Unlike Dorval, who a decade previously in 1835 had to prove her ultimate worth at the Comédie-Française, Page, Doche, Fargueil and Chéri all carved alternative pathways to the apex of the Parisian theatre world from the 1840s onwards. Dorval certainly set the stage for her successors, by elevating the status of Parisian boulevard theatre and doing so through her courtesan creation of Marion de Lorme in 1831. But whereas Dorval's subsequent courtesan roles appeared on the primary stage – as she made her way up the theatrical hierarchy through the Odéon and the Comédie-Française – her successors' pathways to success were equally founded on courtesan creations, but all bypassed the Comédie-Française.

As we have seen, with Page – following her courtesan creation of Musette at the Variétés in 1849 – the star eventually reached the 'the zenith of talent and success' at the important secondary stage of the Ambigu-Comique, through her creation of Pompadour in 1858.<sup>388</sup> Similarly, Doche and Fargueil reportedly turned down contracts at the Comédie-Française following their courtesan creations of 1849 and 1852, apparently preferring – at least in Fargueil's case – 'to earn lots of money and glory at the Vaudeville, rather than earn lots of glory... and little money at the Théâtre-Français'.<sup>389</sup> By the 1840s and 50s glory and financial reward were seemingly available in equal measure at Paris's commercialised, secondary stages. Similarly, Chéri only ever appeared in the French capital at the Gymnase – which became her family business the year after her aforementioned refusal of the Comédie-Française in 1846. Despite several further requests from the Théâtre-Français and the Odéon, Chéri continued to perform at the Gymnase until her death, at which time – as explored above – the Comédie-Française's director Samson publicly lamented that the theatre lacked her glory, but not the reverse.<sup>390</sup>

As evident in Samson's eulogy for Chéri, if these boulevard stars owed their celebrity and success to the theatres where they created their celebrated courtesans, this relationship was symbiotic. That is to say, the boulevard theatres enjoyed great success and prestige through the popularity of these women celebrities and their historical and contemporary courtesan creations. It was not just the actors' star factor that added to the theatres' prestige, it was the very nature of the repertoire, roles, and genres these women created to such success. *The Westminster Review* observed in 1859 that:

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<sup>388</sup> Enault, 'Adèle Page', Rt 9843.

<sup>389</sup> Le Diable Boiteux, 'Anaïs Fargueil', *Le Passe-temps*, 2 September 1864, n.p.

<sup>390</sup> Riviere and Duchene, *Rose Chéri: Sainte et comédienne*, p. 8.

in strong contrast with Madlle. Déjazet's acting, at least as regards the choice of parts, is that of Madlle. Rose Chéri [...] who excels rather in real than imaginary characters [...]. Since her marriage with M. Montigny, the manager of the Gymnase, the plays there acted have been of a more [...] sober character than heretofore, the lively vaudeville giving place to the more elaborate five-act comedy.<sup>391</sup>

Notably, the lead women actors and their choice of parts were considered to be a driving force behind the direction of the Gymnase theatre. As observed with the casting of *La Dame aux camélias* in the early 1850s, Déjazet – of an older generation and more traditional repertoire – had turned down the role of the real, contemporary courtesan due to the part's modernity, in addition to generic and possible moral concerns. However, Déjazet's successors – Page, Doche, Fargueil, and Chéri – willingly took on the modern and more serious genres of the five-act dramas and comedies by the likes of Dumas *films*, to which the contemporary courtesan was a central figure, and which determined the future direction of the theatres where they performed. It was for this reason that Page and Doche were deemed 'accomplices' to the new and emerging playwrights Murger and Dumas *films* for their creations of Musette and Marguerite respectively,<sup>392</sup> and why Page was later credited with having 'imprint[ed] a sense of elegance and majesty to the modern drama', through her starring role creation of Pompadour in 1858.

Jean-Claude Yon observes that under the Second Empire the Gymnase and the Vaudeville became two of Paris's most reputable stages, due to their staging of the 'comédie sociale', also known as the 'comédie moderne', or a new 'comédie de mœurs' [comedy of manners] by the likes of Dumas *films*.<sup>393</sup> After Dumas *films*' pioneering *La Dame aux camélias* at the Vaudeville in 1852, between 1853–73 he staged ten other such plays at the Gymnase, of which – as Yon maintains – the most impactful for the theatre's reputation was *Le Demi-monde* in 1855. In the case of the Vaudeville, we have seen how Dumas *films*' first courtesan play – under Doche's creation – was emblematic of the dawn of the Second Empire. Not only did the new regime, under Doche's influence, finally lift *La Dame aux camélias*' censorship restrictions, but the Empire's extravagant aesthetic was intrinsic to Doche's modern creation and costuming of Marguerite. When it came to the Gymnase, Dumas *films*' courtesan play *Le Demi-monde* was equally fundamental to establishing the theatre's newfound status under the

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<sup>391</sup> Anon., *The Westminster Review*, Vol 71-72, April 1859, p. 241.

<sup>392</sup> R, *Le Constitutionnel*, 26 November 1849; Claretie, *La Vie à Paris*, VI, 182.

<sup>393</sup> Yon, *Théâtres parisiens*, p. 160.

emerging regime. Under the Second Empire, the Gymnase was granted permission to perform *comédies* in verse and prose in one, two or three acts. Most importantly, at the end of 1854, the Gymnase was authorised to stage four- and five-act *comédies* which, according to Yon, not only placed the secondary theatre on an even playing field with the Comédie-Française and Odéon but anticipated the decree on 6 January 1864, which brought an end to all generic restrictions in France's capital.<sup>394</sup>

*Le Demi-monde* (a five-act comedy) premiered at the Gymnase on 20 March 1855, very soon after the new authorisation that allowed the performance of this new genre at this theatre. Following this huge success, as detailed previously, Chéri created two further courtesan characters at the same theatre in Dumas *filis'* subsequent five-act comedies: *Le Fils naturel* in 1858 and *Un Père prodigue* in 1859, before reprising *La Dame aux camélias* (a five-act drama) in 1860, again at the Gymnase.<sup>395</sup> Thus, the importance of courtesan creations to this new genre, to the successes of the likes of the Vaudeville and Gymnase, and the role they played in the eventual dissolution of the theatrical decree of 1864, as observed by Yon, cannot be overstated. And as this thesis demonstrates, the actors who created these courtesan roles were collaborators to these artistic and institutional developments. Following *Le Demi-monde*'s premiere, *Le Figaro* wrote 'Madame Rose Chéri [...] a nuancé avec un art infini ce rôle odieux de madame d'Ange qu'il fallait en quelque sorte imposer au public' [Madame Rose Chéri [...] with infinite artistry, has nuanced the odious role of *madame d'Ange* that needed to be imposed, in some form, upon the public].<sup>396</sup> *Le Figaro* considered the *demimondaine* character as a necessary evil – intrinsic to the new comedy of manners that revolutionised French theatrical history. Chéri thus spearheaded what the *Comœdia illustré* in 1912 called *Le Demi-monde*'s 'moral and literary revolution' that was 'more daring than *La Dame aux camélias*'.<sup>397</sup> Following in Dorval's footsteps, Chéri and her courtesan-creator contemporaries thus helped elevate the status of the Parisian secondary stage, a concept which ceased to exist as a category by 1864.

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid. pp. 159–60.

<sup>395</sup> Enault, 'Adèle Page', Rt 9843.

<sup>396</sup> B. Jouvin, *Le Figaro*, 25 March 1855.

<sup>397</sup> Lacour, 'Rose Chéri', n.p.

## Conclusion

### Une Image Écho: An Echo-like Image

In a review of a reprise of *Marion de Lorme* at the Comédie-Française in 1907, the poet Catulle Mendès (1841–1909) wrote: ‘il nous est impossible d’être ému par le souvenir Évangélique de la Madeleine [...] aux pieds de Jésus, sans que s’érige en nous, comme une image écho, non moins sacrée, Marion, rachetée [...] par le baiser, près de l’échafaud, de Didier!’ [it is impossible for us to be moved by the evangelical memory of Mary Magdalene [...] at Jesus’s feet, without the echo-like image, that is no less sacred, of Marion redeemed [...] by Didier’s kiss, next to the gallows].<sup>398</sup> While hyperbolic, Mendès’s claim demonstrated to what extent the character of Marion de Lorme had infiltrated the Parisian cultural imaginary by the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to the poet, Marion’s final rehabilitation was such a powerful and pervasive cultural reference point that it had superseded the memory of one of the most iconic Catholic saints: Mary Magdalene, the repentant sex worker *par excellence*. Far from the ephemerality frequently ascribed to theatrical performances – particularly those that predate the invention of photography and voice and film recording – Mendès’s vignette is evidence of the durability of Dorval’s creation of Marion at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in 1831. As I established in the first chapter of my thesis, Dorval was the principle curator of *Marion de Lorme*’s final redemption, through her combined influence over the playscript and her onstage ‘fleshing out’ of the repentant courtesan in her iconic ‘robe de satin blanc’ [white satin dress].<sup>399</sup> It was Dorval who was primarily responsible for elevating Marion to the status of an eponymous heroine and for transforming her into the quintessential *courtisane amoureuse* who was performed at France’s premier stage well into the following century.

As well as the longevity of Marion’s presence both onstage and in the cultural imaginary of nineteenth and twentieth century Paris, Mendès’s peculiar description of the courtesan role as an ‘image écho’ [echo-like image] is helpful for reconsidering the broader reverberations of Dorval’s pioneering creation. If the imagery Dorval created as Marion was so powerful as to be intertwined with that of Mary Magdalene more than seventy years after its conception, what other ‘echo-like images’ did Dorval, through this character creation, engender? The answer, elucidated throughout this thesis, resolves my original postulation:

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<sup>398</sup> Vigner, *Dossier pédagogique*, p. 56.

<sup>399</sup> Gautier, ‘Théâtres’, *La Presse*, 28 May 1849, n.p.

how to solve a problem like Joséphine (who took the stage name Mlle Delorme for her debut in 1846)? Whereas scholarship maintains that the most reputable stars of the time evaded historical associations with courtesans, I have demonstrated how Dorval reversed this paradigm on the 1830s Parisian secondary stage. As an ‘artiste bohème’ [a bohemian artist] from the boulevard stage,<sup>400</sup> Dorval established an alternative pathway to success that creatively played with the heightened historical association between courtesans and women boulevard performers. By putting this association front and centre of the popular stage, Dorval ascended Paris’s binary theatrical hierarchy, eventually defeating her rival Mars at Paris’s primary stage. Following Dorval’s star trajectory, the conservatoire trained Joséphine became Mlle Delorme and thus embarked on a theatrical career at the secondary stage of the Variétés in association with Dorval’s celebrated courtesan creation. Here, during 1849, Delorme succeeded in multiple role creations of historical performer/courtesans: as Nell Gwyn, Camargo, and Pompadour. If Delorme’s stage name paid tribute to Dorval’s Marion, these comedic courtesan creations also evoked Dorval’s playful Madame du Barry in *Jeanne Vaubernier* (1832), a key role in Dorval’s contestation of her rival Mars’s comedic dominion. Whereas Mars’s unsuccessful creation of the courtesan Thisbé arguably reaffirms scholarly assertions that the most esteemed performers were such by evading associations with courtesans, I have demonstrated the opposite was true for stars of Paris’s secondary stages. By 1849, creating the role of historical courtesans on the popular stage was a pathway to success: one which both Dorval and Delorme enjoyed, to varying degrees of success.

Although Delorme retired from the stage in 1851, in preparation for marriage to the owner of the Variétés, her short-lived career is nonetheless key to better understanding how women’s careers and celebrity worked on the Parisian popular stage of the mid-nineteenth century. My identification of Delorme and her courtesan creations as ‘image écho[s]’ of Dorval’s Marion and du Barry, helps join the dots with subsequent courtesan roles created following Dorval’s celebrity pathway. On 22 November 1849, only five days after Delorme’s creation of Pompadour at the Variétés, Page created the ground-breaking contemporary figure of the *lorette* Musette in *La Vie de bohème* at this same theatre. Whereas in 1831 the historicity of Dorval’s Marion caused outrage, by the end of 1849 the historical courtesan role type was so well-established on the Parisian secondary stage that it was time to raise the stakes. After all, Pompadour was the third such role type Delorme created that year. By contrast, Page’s contemporary *lorette* Musette – based on the real, living figure of Marie

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<sup>400</sup> Filippi and Gros de Gasquet, ‘Entre jeu romantique et jeu mélodramatique’, 68.

Roux – was hailed as ‘une nouveauté piquante’ [an exciting novelty],<sup>401</sup> which ‘excita la curiosité’ [piqued the public’s interest].<sup>402</sup> This creation was also an ‘image écho’ of Dorval’s 1831 Marion, causing similar ripples to the theatrical conventions of the late 1840s. The scandal of Dorval’s historical courtesan had transmuted into a new type of temporal outrage among theatre critics, provoked by the sheer contemporaneity, and thus modernity, of Page’s Musette. And, like Dorval, Page enjoyed unprecedented celebrity through this risqué courtesan creation. So much so that Page was too in demand to even consider Dumas *filis*’ related proposal for the creation of another *lorette* based on a real, contemporary figure – Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias*, which premiered in 1852.

It was precisely the success that Page enjoyed as the true to life, contemporary *lorette* Musette that unleashed a ‘foule de mangeuses de pommes’ [throng of apple-eaters], further ‘image écho[s]’ of Dorval’s Marion, on the secondary Parisian stage throughout the 1850s. Not only did Dumas *filis* originally have Page in mind for Marguerite following her triumphant Musette, but this triumph influenced Doche’s subsequent ready acceptance of Marguerite’s creation. As we have seen, Rachel, Déjazet, and Fargueil all rejected the risqué role after Page’s first refusal. Indeed, when Adolphe Brisson interviewed Doche at her home in 1896 about her creation of Marguerite half a century prior – ahead of Bernhardt’s reprise of *La Dame aux camélias* – Doche spoke of a ‘rôle délicieux refusé par toutes les actrices de Paris’ [delightful role, declined by all the actresses of Paris].<sup>403</sup> Unlike her peers, Doche instantly recognised Marguerite’s potential and importance for her career. A reason for this becomes clear at the end of the interview. As Doche guided Brisson through her picture gallery of ‘têtes illustres’ [famous personalities], Brisson reported her words in the third person and recorded the portraits of Rachel ‘à qui elle portait des bouquets quand elle avait quinze ans’ [to whom she brought bouquets when she was fifteen years old] and Page ‘qui fut sa rivale’ [who was her rival].<sup>404</sup> That the late Page featured alongside Rachel, one of the most celebrated stars of nineteenth century France to this day, was indicative of the level of celebrity Page had acquired as a ‘tête illustre’. Moreover, the fact that Doche kept a portrait of the late Page, and that she evoked their rivalry in the context of Doche’s Marguerite, is testament to the power of Page’s rival influence on Doche’s celebrated *lorette* creation, and the interlinked celebrity of both roles.

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<sup>401</sup> A. Escande, ‘Théâtres’, *L’Union*, 28 June 1859, n.p.

<sup>402</sup> Biéville, ‘Revue des Théâtres’, p.2.

<sup>403</sup> Brisson, ‘La Créatrice de la “Dame aux Camélias”’, n.p.

<sup>404</sup> Brisson, ‘La Créatrice de la “Dame aux Camélias”’, n.p.

In turn, Doche's hugely successful Marguerite influenced Page to be the first to reprise the role she had previously overlooked, to celebrate *La Dame aux camélias*'s 250<sup>th</sup> performance at the Vaudeville in August 1855. She triumphed as Marguerite for 50 shows: Énault recalled of Page's Marguerite that Doche 'restait debout, inébranlable sur son piédestal; mais à côté d'elle, au même plan, ni plus haut ni plus bas, apparaissait mademoiselle Page, non comme une rivale, mais comme une émule acclamée' [remained firmly on her pedestal; but next to her, on the same level, neither higher nor lower, appeared mademoiselle Page, not as a rival, but as an acclaimed emulator].<sup>405</sup> For Énault, Page and Doche's mutual incarnation of Marguerite made them equals. Savard reached a similar conclusion regarding their feud: 'qui l'emporta? nous ne saurions le dire! Mais nous croyons que chacun des deux partis put s'attribuer la victoire' [who won? we could not say! But we believe that each party could claim the victory].<sup>406</sup> The importance of the courtesan role to Page and Doche's rivalry was itself an 'image écho' of Mars and Dorval's feud which – as I have argued – also centred around courtesan creations. Whereas Mars, as a star of the primary stage, was deemed too proper to convincingly create courtesan roles in the 1830s, the boulevard stars Page and Doche followed Dorval's celebrity pathway and were considered equally triumphant in their creation and recreation of the *lorettes* Musette and Marguerite on the secondary stages of the late 1840s and 1850s.

Moreover, Doche's Marguerite broke ground for others to follow – and it is in this sense that it should modify our understanding of how women's celebrity worked. Whereas Dumas *fils* had struggled to find an actor to create Marguerite, the celebrity and esteem Doche acquired through this creation transformed the contemporary courtesan into the most coveted role in women's repertory of Paris's secondary stages. Fargueil, who had rescinded the role of Marguerite after initial rehearsals, realised this missed opportunity and created the *lorette* Marco the following year in *Les Filles de marbre* (1853). The contemporary character was what I have termed a 'reverse repertory' – a heartless anti-heroine in comparison to the loving Marguerite which revamped Fargueil's dwindling career.<sup>407</sup> Marco was a 'célèbre création [...] qui la mit hors de pair parmi ses camarades' [celebrated creation [...] which made her unparalleled among her colleagues].<sup>408</sup> The celebrity was enshrined in the role creation, evidenced in the careful phrasing of a 'célèbre création'. Fargueil subsequently

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<sup>405</sup> Énault, 'Adèle Page', BnF, Rt 9843.

<sup>406</sup> Savard, *Les Actrices de Paris*, p. 207.

<sup>407</sup> Anne Martin-Fugier, *Comédienne: de Mlle Mars à Sarah Bernhardt* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 112.

<sup>408</sup> Félix Jahyer, 'Anaïs Fargueil', *Paris-théâtre*, 25 December 1880, n.p.

created Olympe and Dalila – more contemporary courtesans considered the antithesis of Marguerite. Although somewhat distorted, Fargueil's *lorettes* were further 'image échos' unleashed through Dorval's celebrity pathway. Less of a true reflection of Dorval, Page, and Doche's *courtisanes amoureuses*, Fargueil's *filles de marbre* were a somewhat refracted, reversed image. Yet they are further evidence of the mutual interdependence of these courtesan creations, through which each onstage creator did not just emulate their predecessor, but spurred innovation. Fargueil, who refused the creation of the contemporary *lorette* Marguerite in 1852, made a whole career out of a distorted version of the *courtisane amoureuse*. She thus further developed the celebrity pathway, that centred on courtesan creations, by coining her own role specialisation of the *Fargueil* or the *fille de marbre*.

It was this 'reverse repertory' of the heartless, contemporary courtesan that informed Chéri's *demimondaines*, and there is no clearer demonstration of the importance of the courtesan creation for courting celebrity on – and beyond – the nineteenth-century popular Parisian stage than Chéri. As a celebrated star of the Gymnase, and something of an anomaly among secondary stage actors for her virtuous persona both onstage and off, even Chéri enjoyed newfound celebrity and esteem for her creation of her *demimondaines* La Baronne d'Ange, Clara, and Albertine in *Le Demi-monde* (1855), *Le Fils naturel* (1858) and *Un Père prodigue* (1859). Eugène de Mirecourt wrote that 'les plus grandes de comédiennes lui envieraient la création de la baronne d'Ange' [the greatest of actresses would envy her creation of the *Baronne d'Ange*];<sup>409</sup> Jules Janin described these courtesan creations as 'rôles restés célèbres' [roles that have remained famous].<sup>410</sup> Although Chéri had created the fictional, eighteenth-century Manon Lescaut in the aforementioned 1851 *drame*, it was her contemporary courtesan creations – as with Page, Doche, and Fargueil before – that shone a new light on the star and made her the object of envy among her most renowned contemporaries. By the time Chéri took over the creation of contemporary courtesans in 1855, this role creation as a celebrity pathway was so well established that it did not detract from her pious celebrity persona, but rather enhanced it. There was less risk involved in Chéri's courtesan creations precisely because this pathway to celebrity was so well trodden, on the Parisian secondary stage, by this point.

What is more, Dorval's pioneering of the onstage courtesan as a pathway to celebrity influenced not only her successors at Paris's secondary theatres, but her contemporaries and

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<sup>409</sup> Mirecourt, *Rose Chéri*, p. 83.

<sup>410</sup> Janin, 'La Semaine dramatique', 30 September 1861, n.p.

successors on the primary stage of the Comédie-Française. As I have argued, Mars took up the creation of the courtesan role Thisbé to compete with Dorval as the quintessential onstage courtesan, and Rachel reprised the role of Marion de Lorme, in ‘historical competition’ (to use Marcus’s term) with Dorval at the Comédie-Française in the 1840s. Following Doche’s creation of Marguerite in 1852, the Comédie-Française star Mme Judith toured the provinces as Marguerite from 1853, as ‘shadow repertory’ (to borrow again from Marcus) of her contemporary Doche, before Bernhardt made the role her own, again in ‘historical competition’ with Marguerite’s creator and other subsequent interpreters of the role from the 1880s. Bernhardt also frequently reprised Fargueil’s *fille de marbre* Dalila, a role previously reprised by the Comédie-Française’s Favart. While my insistence on the longevity of these courtesan roles supports Marcus’s theorisations regarding the centrality of ‘shadow repertory’ and the ‘historical competition’ of roles to the cult of celebrity, it also goes beyond these claims. This longevity nuances the understanding propagated by Marcus et al that the most celebrated women actors are such on the basis of evading historical associations with courtesans. It also demonstrates the huge, and hitherto largely overlooked, importance of stars from Paris’s secondary stages to the study of celebrity.

Whereas scholarship has previously identified Rachel as Bernhardt’s primary influencer – due to the way both incorporated their Jewishness into their celebrity and their shared status as stars of Paris’s Comédie-Française – the celebrity of the boulevard stars explored in this thesis challenges this narrative. Bernhardt may ultimately have been more successful as Doche’s ‘amoureuse plaintive’ type of the *dame aux camélias* than as Fargueil’s ‘terrible premier rôle’ of the *fille de marbre*, yet the powers of attraction and repulsion of both roles were at the very heart of Bernhardt’s eccentricity and celebrity. Whereas Marcus considers Bernhardt’s method of ‘courting repulsion’ to have been ‘unusual’, I have shown through Fargueil how this was a pre-existing facet of celebrity culture that the former adopted and adapted from the latter.<sup>411</sup> As well as my identification of Fargueil’s *fille de marbre* as an additional comparative performance technique of ‘reverse repertory’ – alongside Marcus’s identification of ‘historical competition’ and ‘shadow repertory’ – I have demonstrated how another important reversal transpired through the trajectory of these boulevard stars. That is to say, the reversal of the most prestigious trajectory for actors necessarily leading to the primary stage, and more specifically to the Comédie-Française. If Dorval had to prove her ultimate worth at the Comédie-Française in the mid 1830s, and if it was virtually unheard of

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<sup>411</sup> Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, pp. 116–17.

for a star like Chéri to turn down this same theatre's advances in the mid 1840s, the same could not be said by the following decade, when both Doche and Fargueil reportedly spurned the advances of the Comédie-Française, following their celebrated courtesan creations. While scholarship considers Talma's death in 1826 as a catalyst to the declining reputation of France's premier stage prior to Rachel's arrival in 1838 (as outlined in my introduction), this thesis reveals the equally important role of women celebrities of the secondary theatres in elevating the status of these stages to similar heights to the Comédie-Française and to thus challenging the capital's binary theatrical hierarchy. As I have shown, Dorval, Page, Doche, Fargueil, and Chéri's courtesan creations were crucial to the development and staging of the five-act *drame* and 'comédie moderne' on the secondary stages, the appearance of which – as Yon maintains – anticipated the decree on 6 January 1864, which brought an end to all generic restrictions in France's capital.<sup>412</sup> Their example demonstrates, time and again, the importance of the intersection of what Everist calls a 'politics of genre' with what I have termed a 'politics of gender and sexuality' to the dissolution of the Parisian theatrical binary categorisation in the mid-nineteenth century.

Beyond my specific focus on women celebrity actors from Paris's secondary stages, this thesis proves the need for scholarship to broaden the scope of enquiry to other performers whom nineteenth-century French – or indeed Francophone – theatrical history has overlooked or marginalised. It raises the question of how a closer look at other intersectionalities, in addition to gender and sexuality, might further complicate the narrative. Although my thesis has touched on questions of class and the racialisation of nineteenth-century Parisian performers – specifically with reference to Jewishness – there is both scope and an urgent need to further investigate these issues and how they relate to questions of celebrity culture and nineteenth-century theatrical history more broadly.<sup>413</sup> Given it was the career of a lesser star – of Mlle Delorme, or Joséphine Bowes – who first brought these issues to my attention, how might moving beyond models that prioritise the most eminent or celebrated stars further nuance scholarship?<sup>414</sup> And, as many of my case studies originated in the provinces, how might the study of performers outside of the metropole further broaden our understanding of

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid. pp. 159–60.

<sup>413</sup> Robin Mitchell has led the way here with her exploration of the nineteenth-century mixed-race performer Jeanne Duval, see Robin, Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020), pp. 81–99.

<sup>414</sup> To this end, the upcoming conference “‘Voix d’or et petites mains’: la place des femmes dans l’historiographie du théâtre” at the University of Rouen in October 2023 calls for a renewed focus on ‘les comédiennes de second ou troisième rang’ [second and third rate women actors], <https://www.fabula.org/actualites/110511/voix-d-or-et-petites-mains-la-place-des-femmes.html>.

French cultural history?<sup>415</sup> Ultimately, the example of these boulevard stars challenges the historic neglect of the secondary stages by showing the significance of their actors for histories of French theatre and Western celebrity. It could also call into question the utility of hierarchical divisions between theatres. In that much of these women's performance work took place beyond the stage – whether through their engagement, or lack thereof, in the press or in publicity stunts – their use of the onstage and offstage serves as a useful reminder that, when it comes to understanding theatrical celebrity, the stage, whether primary or secondary, is not a discrete space.

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<sup>415</sup> See for example Sophie Horrocks' forthcoming doctoral thesis, provisionally entitled 'Sung Theatre for the French Provinces: the Troupes d'Arrondissement and the National Imaginary, 1824–64', Durham University.

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