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Male and Female *Bildung*: The *Mémoires de Céleste Mogador*

Claire Marrone

In the *Mémoires de Céleste Mogador*¹ (1854), Céleste Mogador reveals her feminine libertine experiences, her life as a prostitute and as an actress, and a liaison with a count whom she eventually marries. This "Cinderella story" depicts the *Bildung* of an "exceptional" nineteenth-century heroine, and provides fertile ground for the study of female subjectivity and development. Céleste leaves the brothel thanks to the help of certain clients, and becomes involved in the theatrical world. She frequents the chic *bal Mabille*, "l'établissement le plus huppé du monde où l'on s'amuse" (Clermont-Tonnerre 10). According to François Clermont-Tonnerre, "la mode était aux surnoms exotiques," and it is in a dance competition at the *bal Mabille* that the protagonist is crowned "Mogador," after the Moroccan city, now called Essaouira (10). Mogador, later the Comtesse de Chabrilan, is much better known today as a nineteenth-century actress than as a writer, yet she left an extensive œuvre that includes novels, plays, poems and songs.

I read the *Mémoires* as *Bildungsroman*, or novel of development, and focus on the significant events that shape the female protagonist's maturation. As the nature of the *Bildungsroman* and of autobiography both frequently involve progression, development and identity, there is a great degree of overlapping between the two. Narrative strategies, character portraits, and structural techniques are often similar in both genres. I also compare Celeste's developmental process to the *Bildung* of her lover Lionel. Typical in women's texts, the protagonist's development is nurtured and shaped by her connection with others; Céleste's self-discovery will be intertwined with the psychological evolution of her lover, who will be introduced in the second half of the story. The embedded male quest for selfhood parallels that of the main character and highlights the gender prejudices of nineteenth-century French society.

Although many women writers were still struggling to take up the pen in Mogador's era, a tradition of female memoir writers can be identified. Madame Roland and Madame de Staël preceded Mogador. Flora Tristan, George Sand, Daniel Stern and Louise Michel were her contem-

poraries. The feminist fervor of the nineteenth-century contributed toward increased production of texts by women authors.

Like many female writers of her era, Mogador veils any ambitious tendencies with humility—her text is a confession, a justification, an explanation of her past and not an opportunity for self-aggrandizement. In the tradition of Rousseau, Mogador feels compelled to confess even the scandalous details of her past to her readers.: “. . . j'avais pensé que des mémoires devaient être vrais et qu'on n'avait pas le droit d'arracher à sa fantaisie une page du livre de sa vie . . .” (*Mémoires*, 1858, 1: 3). She chooses a forthright narrative voice, emphasizing the seriousness of her task and the exemplary nature of this personal story. Mogador completes her autobiography with a sequel to the *Mémoires*, published over twenty years later, entitled: *Un deuil au bout du monde: Suite des Mémoires de Céleste Mogador* (1877). I shall limit my analysis to the *Mémoires*.

We recall that the prototypical *Bildungsroman*, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, portrays a young hero who undergoes a series of adventures, encounters and disappointments, all part of the “growing up” process. As he assimilates certain societal expectations and prejudices, Wilhelm comes to know himself and his “place” in society. Several characteristics of the male “novel of formation” will be useful to my study, although they will come to be modified when discussing female development. Marianne Hirsch outlines the following generic components for heroes: the focus on one central character and the story of the individual's growth and development within a defined social context; society as the novel's antagonist and a “locus for experience”; the novel of formation's plot as a version of the quest story, a search for meaningful existence and values which will allow for the protagonist's inner capacities to unfold; an emphasis on the development of selfhood and the significant events shaping the individual's apprenticeship; a narrative point of view and voice characterized by irony and distance vis-à-vis the inexperienced hero; the novel's other characters serving as educators, companions, lovers; and finally the novel of formation as a didactic novel which educates the reader through the portrayal of the protagonist's education (“The Novel of Formation” 296-98).

Yet typical hero's travels, amorous conquests, and tests of courage, are often impossible trajectories for heroines in the nineteenth century. The young man's wanderings and escapades eventually lead to a shedding of youthful ways in order to become a contributing member of society. For women, this scenario is often replaced by learning through interpersonal relationships, and progress measured through success in the domestic sphere. Furthermore, women's journeys are often accompanied by introspection and self-discovery. The obstacles heroines face are also different from those men encounter, and society has different expecta-

tions of women. Feminists critics have found that the various criteria that have come to define the traditional male *Bildungsroman* must be rewritten when it comes to women's texts; gender often clashes with genre.² Indeed, discussion of a "female *Bildungsroman*" can be found in critical literature since the 1970s.³

Céleste's journey toward freedom and her quest for a new sense of self constitutes a portrait of the "exceptional" nineteenth-century heroine, one who is more gifted and intelligent than most. Other less fortunate nineteenth-century sisters commonly suffer madness or death resulting from frustrating marriages or a lack of appropriate channels to enable them to develop to their full potential. Céleste confronts a public that has branded her a "fallen woman," and hers is a "success story." Satisfaction only occurs, however, after surmounting serious personal and societal hurdles.

In the French *Bildungsroman* tradition, where society is seen as a corruptive force, Mogador's text represents a reverse response to the masculine model. In texts like Balzac's *Illusions perdues* (1843) and Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869), I find a move from moral purity to corruption and delusion. In Mogador's text, by contrast, Céleste passes from purity to corruption and back again, her final state being one of awareness of her strengths and qualities despite a difficult youth. Going past her "past," however, will ultimately mean a separation from conventional French society, one which has no place for her, a woman of her *passé douteux*, and her aristocratic lover Lionel, who has lost his fortune. At the end of the text they prepare to set off for Australia in search of a new life.

Inconsistent maternal guidance hinders Céleste's development, along with the loss of her father at age six, and the abuse she and her mother endure at the hands of the latter's various lovers. Moreover, one suitor, Monsieur G., captures Celeste and whisks her away to a brothel, an obvious foreshadowing of her future abode. Soon after, another of the mother's suitors, Vincent, attempts to rape Céleste. She narrowly escapes, but falls in with Parisian prostitutes who encourage her to enter the profession and who oversee her initiation. Céleste becomes *inscrite*, the official term for prostitutes registered at the *préfecture de police* and legally permitted to practice their profession. She becomes a *pensionnaire* in a Parisian brothel, with her mother's resigned approval to boot. Mogador writes: "J'étais inscrite sur ce livre infernal d'où rien ne vous efface, pas même la mort!" (112). Her *Mémoires* will indeed be a confession and explanation of this earlier inscription.

The kidnapping motif found in the *Mémoires* is reminiscent of the "enlèvements" that occurred over the centuries, when desired young women were taken away, raped and forced to marry, either because the "suitor" truly loved or desired them, or because he was interested in se-

curing a financial or familial destiny. Kidnapping and induction into prostitution, a frequent French literary theme, is also part of the nineteenth-century sociolect.

Céleste's experience, which to us might sound more like fiction than life, would not have been unusual for a woman of her class and time period. Social historians document a high rate of prostitution from 1830-1870, for example, years that have been termed "les plus sinistres de toute l'histoire du travail féminin" (Albistur and Armogathe 313).⁴ According to E. Charles-Roux et al., in 1851, 39% of the working population in the *grande industrie* was made up of women (qtd. in Albistur and Armogathe 313). Working conditions in factories were often dangerous, illness common, long working hours and poor salary the norm, especially when compared to the wages earned by men. In domestic labor situations, young women were often harassed and sexually abused by rich employers. Maïté Albistur and Daniel Armogathe add that "un tel état de pauvreté a déclenché la recrudescence de la prostitution dans les zones urbaines" (315). They quote Parent-Duchâtelet's important study *La Prostitution à Paris* (first edition 1836; 1900) that states "sur 3120 prostituées parisiennes, 36 seulement ne travaillent pas antérieurement en fabriques. 4112 prostituées sur 4222 ne savent pas signer leur nom, ou le font avec beaucoup de difficultés" (qtd. in Albistur and Armogathe 315).⁵ The *cinquième quart* referred to women's "extra hours" after a day's work in order to make ends meet. Due to a lack of education and training for manual or professional work, and little legal protection, working women of this period were often the hardest hit victims of an unfair system. Prostitution as a legal structure within that system was often the only solution, the only means of supporting oneself in dire circumstances.

The prostitute is also quite common in nineteenth-century literature amongst such novelists as Balzac, Sand and Flaubert. Charles Bernheimer offers a valuable analysis into nineteenth-century representations of prostitution in male writing and art. He finds the prostitute "ubiquitous in the novels and the paintings of this period not only because of her prominence as a social phenomenon but, more important, because of her function in stimulating artistic strategies to control and dispel her fantasmatic threat to male mastery" (2). A comparison between the manner in which male and female writers endeavor either to restrict the harlot's power in narrative, or confront her threat to bourgeois society and marriage would be an engaging study. I underscore the fact that Mogador, whether or not she was representing her own story, was writing within a given literary tradition. Literary portraits of prostitution invoked both fear and fascination in this time period. The fact that these representations conjured up particular preconceptions of

the lifestyle is evident in the scandal and censor produced by the publication of Mogador's text.

Bernheimer claims that first-hand descriptions of the experiential aspect of prostitution in the nineteenth century are few and far between: "with the exception of a few autobiographical writings by great courtesans of the period, we have no nineteenth-century accounts written by French prostitutes themselves" (3). He may have had Mogador in mind in his mention of great courtesans, as she did eventually have clients and contacts in high society. Neither Mogador nor her life story, however, is mentioned in Bernheimer's study. Yet her debut in the profession was as a poor girl in an average brothel, and these experiences are described in some detail in the *Mémoires*. She recounts, for example, her humiliation after her scarring first experience with a customer, and other specific evenings with various clients, some of whom treated her with kindness and others with disdain. Hence some first-hand accounts of common brothel life do exist. Bernheimer nonetheless offers valuable insights into the male writer and male artist's portrayals of the frightening *femme fatale*.

In women's developmental literature, society functions not only as an antagonist as in the male *Bildungsroman*, but commonly as a stifling agent, especially in the nineteenth century. Mogador first blames society and her family situation for her downfall: "Autant il est difficile à une jeune fille, dans la position où j'étais, de se créer une existence honorable par le travail, autant il lui est aisé de glisser sur la pente du mal" (109). She adds: "La loi, qui ne permet pas d'administrer ses biens avant vingt et un ans, laisse une fille de seize ans vendre son corps" (117). She furthermore criticizes society's treatment of certain kinds of women. We hear the story of Lise, a well-known dancer and courtesan. Mogador scorns newspaper writers who shower Lise with "de mauvais compliments et de railleries. Les journalistes traitent les femmes comme les gouvernements" (148). She later recounts Lise's death, her train of lovers nowhere in sight, and entitles the section with the biting "Quand la courtisane n'a plus rien à vendre" (234).

Over the course of her observations and analyses, however, we become aware that the protagonist is developing a growing sense of self-appreciation. A certain pride and self-love appear as Céleste starts to make her own way in life. She gives several examples of her generosity and goodness. For instance, as soon as her own financial condition and social status improve, she more than once offers refuge to abandoned women. She also agrees to be the Godmother of her maid's child, the mother dying of cholera shortly after childbirth. The *filleule*, who appears throughout the rest of the work and in the sequel, will give Céleste the opportunity to "mother," and the relationship will provide a comforting haven when others abandon her. We see in the above ex-

amples that positive character traits that had long been buried, even to the protagonist herself, come to the fore. It is this self-love that Céleste must rediscover in order to feel “worthy” of the life and relationships she desires.

Another important influence in Céleste's maturation process is her relationship with Lionel, the Comte de Chabrilan. Their liaison and its impact on both characters is described in the second half of the *Mémoires*. We can then divide the work into two parts: the first includes childhood, disillusionment, going out into the world on her own and breaking with her mother; the second portrays the development of Céleste the woman, her love relationship that will influence the rest of her life, the continuation of her theatrical career and her first attempts at writing.

Céleste meets Lionel at a ball, and they instantly fall in love. Through the course of her relationship with Lionel, a “new Céleste” begins to appear. She still struggles with her past, however, which will be a constant obstacle for the couple, especially for Lionel's family. We read: “Je rentrerai chez moi, la tête et le cœur remplis de son image. Insensée que j'étais de désespérer de la vie! A vingt ans!” (245). The myriad of experiences Céleste has undergone in her youth, her career, and the people she has had to deal with give the reader the impression that she is much older than twenty, and much older than Lionel, nine years her senior. Her liaison with Lionel, however, enables her to rediscover an innocence that was too quickly stolen from her: “. . . la femme qui aime trouve dans son passé un souvenir de pudeur, de pureté; je l'aimais” (248). The nostalgic tone in the above passage emphasizes the fact that the narrative voice we hear is one of wisdom and experience. The declarative, maxim-like “la femme qui aime” in the present tense, juxtaposed with the imperfect “je l'aimais,” distinguishes the mature narrator from the young protagonist, all tied together at the hands of the writer.

Mogador emphasizes love's purifying power, adhering to the Romantic myth of redemption by love. George Sand expresses similar sentiments regarding her parents' relationship in another noted nineteenth-century autobiography, *Histoire de ma vie* (1847-55). Toward the beginning of *Histoire*, Sand ascribes to her father's voice this Romantic theme in a letter he writes to his mother: “L'amour purifie tout. L'amour ennoblit les êtres les plus abjects, à plus forte raison ceux qui n'ont d'autres torts que le malheur d'avoir été jetés dans le monde sans appui, sans ressources et sans guide” (1: 362).

Céleste's will in fact turn out to be a “Cinderella story,” the typical female trauma of the “motherless” daughter of lower social standing who is saved by Prince Charming. Lionel will lose his fortune by the end of the text, but he remains noble all the same. Several feminist crit-

ics have emphasized the conscious or unconscious influence of such well-known legends and fairy tales on women's writing.

Why do some men choose "fallen women"? Other literary works such as Madame de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807) illustrate the desire to "rescue" the loved one. Parallels between this text and Mogador's *Mémoires* include the fact that both Corinne and Céleste are charismatic, talented performers, intelligent women who attract attention. Whereas Oswald agonizes over whether Corinne could be satisfied with a solitary, domestic life in England, Lionel struggles with the fear that Céleste could be swept away by one of her many other suitors. Writing on *Corinne*, Nancy K. Miller points out the importance of this "object choice" made by men. Miller discusses Freud's article "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" (1910) in which "love for a harlot," as Freud puts it, reflects a desire to "save" the beloved, and a certainty that the woman needs him (qtd. in Miller 199). Miller notes that the "impulse to rescue" is in fact linked to the child's attachment to his parents. In one scene in *Corinne*, Oswald saves an old man from drowning, a reflection of his guilt over his relationship with his own father. Miller explains that this enacts the "fantasy to repay them (the parents) by 'saving' them" (qtd. in Miller 199). In Mogador's text, Lionel's parents are less "active" as defined characters insofar as we know very little of their actual lives. They are present, however, through the letters Lionel receives exhorting him to leave Céleste and pursue a proper marriage. It is when Lionel's father dies that he first distances himself from her.

A final example of Lionel's influence on Céleste's awakening as a woman is their physical relationship. Set in opposition to her disgust with her first sexual experience as a prostitute, Lionel's kiss sparks a contrary reaction: "Je lui racontai tout ce que j'avais fait . . . / —Je voudrais ressaisir le passé, mais c'est impossible. Voulez-vous le présent? / Sa réponse fut un baiser. Il me sembla qu'une autre femme venait de s'éveiller en moi" (249, emphasis mine). Indeed from the moment of her encounter with Lionel, Céleste's past will be a problem for both of them, but she is on her way toward something new. Lionel is not only a lover but a "family" for her.

The couple will lead a stormy love affair, including many separations, reunions, jealous arguments, rivals and even one violent encounter in which Céleste stabs herself and Lionel because of another woman. As the text is in the first person, we are continually aware of the narrator's interpretations and feelings. The reader witnesses the couple's interaction through a great deal of dialogue, especially when they argue. This type of direct discourse underscores the volatile, passionate nature of their relationship and moves the narrative along at a rapid pace.

Mogador also includes numerous letters in the *Mémoires* that the couple exchanged over the course of several years. They highlight the protocol, the distance and the oftentimes artificial nature of nineteenth-century society. They also gauge the exchange at hand; by the time the written representation of feelings, events, and declarations arrives, the state of mind of the sender is often completely contrary to what is stated in the letter. At the same time, they reflect the “one-upmanship” characteristic of Céleste and Lionel’s liaison. Each is constantly trying to get the better of the other, whether it be through a new rival, a separation, a declaration of love, hate, misery, etc. Letter-writing is furthermore continued in *Un deuil*, notably when the couple travel separately between Australia and France.

Lionel’s character is one of excesses, extremes and rage, as well as sensitivity. His need for excess is revealed in the luxurious presents he offers Céleste, from precious jewels to apartments to fancy carriages. Céleste is objectified when Lionel dresses her up and adorns her with riches, when she becomes the possession he shows off to his friends. He meanwhile loses almost all of his fortune in gambling and incurs debts he is unable to repay.

Lionel finally proposes to Céleste in a letter. At first, she is ecstatic: “Je ne pouvais en croire mes yeux . . . Mon orgueil me criait: 'Accepte!'” (393). She later responds “Mon cher Lionel, je vous renvoie cette lettre, dont je suis indigne et qui ne peut être adressée à une femme comme moi. Votre couronne de comte me ferait une couronne d’épines . . . laissez-moi Mogador, restez Lionel de C***. . .” (393). The letter again illustrates the opposition between the passion of the moment and the reason that comes with reflection and the time it takes to write down one’s thoughts. The metaphor of the “couronne d’épines” invokes the reader’s sympathy and the Christian symbolism conveys Céleste’s suffering. We note that “Mogador,” the name she has earned through her talent and her art, opposes the wealth and social prestige of the count.

Lionel blames her refusal on his “poverty,” and sends the following letter: “Votre prédiction sera accomplie: vous ne m’auriez quitté qu’avec mon dernier sou. Je viens d’apprendre ma ruine . . . Ma cervelle rejailira jusque sur votre robe de théâtre et votre lit de plaisir” (395). In his infinite immaturity, Lionel must insult Céleste by metonymy—he reduces her to her *jolie robe*, and makes reference to their physical relationship. This is of course a sensitive issue for Céleste, and Lionel’s emphasis on pleasure rather than love evokes the following response: “Je trouve vos accusations tellement exagérées que je m’excuse un peu en pensant que je ne vous ai jamais menti. . . / Croyez-moi, si mon corps est avili, il y a une place bien pure où je vais renfermer l’offre que vous m’avez faite. . . répondez-moi. . . Je vous aime” (396). Again, the purifying power of love “cleanses” Céleste of her past and renders her wor-

thy in her mind of Lionel's affection. Furthermore, she subtly portrays herself superior to her lover because of another virtue, honesty. After Céleste refuses Lionel's proposal, he sets off for a long journey by ship to Australia to try his luck at gold mining.

Lionel's *carnet de voyage*, letters to Céleste written throughout his journey from France to Australia, include an outpouring of his love for her, his encounters and experiences at sea, and a chronicle of his itinerary. Mogador reproduces the *carnet* in her text, along with Lionel's *Journal d'un mineur*, a diary that he writes from the moment of his arrival in Australia. Both the embedded *carnet* and the *Journal* represent masculine parallels to the *Mémoires* themselves.

Time is an important factor in the *carnet*: the voyage to Sydney will take five months, letters take three months to arrive in Europe, and once in Australia, it will take eleven to fifteen days to get to the center of the continent. Lionel's emphasis on the length of time of his travels parallels his physical distance from Céleste, and the long emotional road toward their reunion.

In the *carnet de voyage*, Lionel often portrays Céleste as the Baudelairean paradox, the *femme-satan* and the uplifting *femme vertueuse/bien aimée* at the same time. Though she is the "femme sans cœur et sans âme" (401), he still forgives and loves her. Céleste is not only objectified once again through such generalizations, but also through the portrait Lionel carries with him, and the name "Céleste" that he has had tattooed on his arm. There is the living Céleste with whom Lionel interacts, and there is also the image/representation Lionel makes of her through artifacts, in his remembrances and on the written page.

Céleste's reaction when she receives the *carnet* is a mixed one. She is, of course, back in Europe and faced with the realities of life there. Lionel is abroad, with all of the romanticism, philosophizing, and illusions that go with "leaving home" for far-away places. She is happy because she has "inspiré à cet homme si bon, si courageux dans son malheur, une passion si tendre et si dévouée" (411), but at the same time she is facing legal battles. Lionel's ruin continues to menace her life, and legal officials are trying to take everything Lionel ever offered her in terms of money, gifts and property.

It is at this point in her life, and in part to help in her legal struggle, that Mogador began writing her *Mémoires*: "Un ami m'avait engagée à faire une confession qui pourrait éclairer mes juges. J'écrivis donc ma vie entière, espérant rendre ma défense plus facile" (433). Her writing, then, begins with a particular purpose in mind. It already shows, however, signs of becoming a future passion: "Etudier le jour, écrire la nuit, rien ne m'arrêterait. Je me suis mise à ce travail et j'y ai trouvé un intérêt qui m'a surprise et enchantée" (433). Finally, writing helps soften the

pains of her youth: "En repassant ma vie, j'étais étonnée de voir les amertumes s'en adoucir" (433).

In the 1858 edition of the *Mémoires*, Mogador includes a *Préface* that reiterates that her life story was also a defense against false accusations (1: i). She also includes *Notes* at the end of the fourth volume, consisting of the memoirs written by her defense attorneys for the judges in her trial. Finally, she inserts in this edition written responses addressed to her adversaries. In the context of her *Mémoires*, these documents lend authenticity to the text. Once again, her attempt to justify and explain her actions reflects her desire to be sincere. The documents support Mogador's claim that she wishes to tell her life story in its entirety, however impossible this may be.

The appearance of Lionel's *Journal d'un mineur* in the text shortly follows Mogador's description of her own writing debut, and again functions as a masculine parallel to her woman's story. He continues to write of his love for her as he did in the *carnet*, but focuses to a greater extent in the *Journal* on the dangers of his exploits, and on the other miners he meets. He portrays himself as the worker struggling to establish himself in a new environment, and the pains he goes through are in part an "atonement" for his past frivolousness. This is hence Lionel's *Bildung*, his voyage out into the world, and lastly his path toward maturity.

The reader sighs an "it's about time," and realizes that Mogador has set up an engaging opposition. While she has on the surface written her own social evolution into a woman worthy of the love and social station Lionel will offer her, the development of a self-sufficient woman by virtue of her intelligence, hard work, talent and experiences, on another more subtle level she presents an embedded counterpoint by describing Lionel's psychological evolution. The "spoiled rich boy," no matter how charming a prince he may be, must get down in the dirt and use his hands, make his own way in order to render him worthy of the more emotionally mature and ultimately more worldly Céleste. She has already suffered great personal loss, learned to defend herself against ridicule, and improved her own social station. In Australia, Lionel's growing up includes learning to work and be productive. Masculine *Bildung* in the nineteenth century must include not only love adventures, but the formation of an individual who will become a contributing member of society.

Lionel discusses, for example, other miners who have undergone a fate similar to his own: "Cette population des mines est ce qu'on peut se figurer de plus étrange. On y voit le rebut des villes, des gens immondes, échappés des galeries, à côté d'hommes bien élevés, qui ont vécu dans l'élégance...et qui, comme moi, ont tout dissipé" (440). At another point in the *Journal*, Lionel and his companions have reached "le centre d'ex-

exploitation de la rivière" where various diggers have their claims. It is, however, difficult and expensive to secure places in which to dig. Lionel despairs: "Je ne puis rester plus longtemps sans rien faire; toutes mes ressources s'épuisent...Ah! Céleste! Céleste! où m'as-tu conduit?..." (440). Céleste had already refused one marriage proposal and she indeed "drives" Lionel away and forces him to mature. In her response to the *Journal*, she will express her longing for their reunion. The *véritable réconciliation*, as Mogador calls it, will follow soon after Lionel's imminent return to Paris.

The conclusion of the text, then, is ruled by two events: preparations for her departure with Lionel for Australia, readings of her *Mémoires* at court, and the circulation of the text among such important figures of the day as Alexandre Dumas, and Théophile Gautier. We learn that Mogador submitted her manuscript to a publisher but dared not discuss the project in detail with Lionel for fear of his reaction. She furthermore refers to Lionel as Robert in the original edition of the text. This discretion is understandable given the fact that the *Mémoires* were to appear soon after the couple's departure. Indeed, Mogador opens the 1877 sequel to the *Mémoires*, *Un deuil*, with this amendment: "Lionel (car Robert n'était pas le vrai nom de M. de Chabrilan), était parti seul pour Londres, afin d'y faire publier nos bans. . ." (1).

Concerning the first edition of the life story, *Adieux au monde: Mémoires de Céleste Mogador*, Clermont-Tonnerre writes:

Cette première édition, par ce qu'elle révélait sans ménagement du passé d'une malheureuse, puis d'une fille entretenue, d'une 'croqueuse de fortunes', devenue femme d'un consul de France, provoqua un scandale...l'édition fut interdite et saisie. Il en sera de même de la seconde édition. . . (14)

The censorship may account for the fact that Mogador's *Mémoires* were not appreciated as they might have been in her own time, and perhaps explains why they are little known today. The reaction to the life story also reflects a conception of women that affected the production and consumption of literary texts. Céleste returns to France in 1858, and rekindles her writing career, however, including novels, plays and the sequel to her life story. It is interesting to note that in *Un deuil*, Mogador does express regret concerning the publication of her *Mémoires*. After the long journey from France, for example, the couple arrives in Melbourne only to be greeted with newspaper articles and gossip of the count "qui avait fait la folie d'épouser sa maitresse et de croire pourtant que la société de la colonie de Victoria ferait un bon accueil à la trop célèbre Céleste Mogador. . ." (74). Though they would experience financial hardship and Céleste would suffer ridicule, Lionel does eventually gain respect in the new land.⁶

The decision to leave Europe for Australia recalls similar flights from society earlier in the text. Céleste's legal battles have taken a more fortunate turn, and both she and Lionel are able to pay their debts. Yet they must abandon a society that has no place for them. Lionel has, however, managed to secure a post as a French Consul in Melbourne. Mogador writes: "Il voulut refuser à cause de moi; je refusai de partir s'il n'acceptait pas. Il y avait pour lui une question d'avenir; mon avenir, à moi, je m'en inquiétais peu" (455). We note the balance of these two sentences, and of the clauses within them, the repeated *il/je, moi, avenir*, and finally the consonantal alliteration in *pas/peu* concluding each sentence. The equilibrium of these sentences reflects the equality finally achieved in Céleste and Lionel's relationship. They can set off as a couple only when their maturity as individuals has reached a level that allows for harmonious exchange.

Mogador has concluded her story/their story. In the final paragraphs, she uses present tense verbs which give a sense of immediacy to the ending; she only intimates what the future may hold: "J'éprouve quelques terreurs à m'en aller si loin de mon pays, de ma beauté, de ma jeunesse" (455). She presents the text as having been completed just before the couple's departure in 1852. Her conclusion underscores "la volonté de Dieu" (455) as "Dieu seul condamne sur l'Océan!" (455), outcries which emphasize the emotional nature of the moment and the scope of decision both she and Lionel are undertaking.

The *Mémoires* end here, without any detail about discussions in which Céleste would have finally consented to a permanent union. "Ultime pudeur?" ponders Clermont-Tonnerre (13). It seems that the life story Mogador wants to recount is one that she will leave behind in Europe. She writes: "Il ne m'en restera bientôt plus que le souvenir" (455). The sequel would not be told for another twenty years. In the *Mémoires*, Mogador reveals the trials of an exceptional nineteenth-century heroine, one who has the strength and determination to succeed despite societal conventions that limit women's roles and dictate proper marriages. She remains hesitant about the future: "Si Lionel allait redevenir ce qu'il était, violent, emporté! / Peut-être mourrai-je, abandonnée là-bas. . ." (455). By the end of the *Mémoires*, Céleste is ready for the voyage.

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Notes

¹A previous version of this article entitled "Male and Female *Bildung*: the *Mémoires de Céleste Mogador*" was presented at the MMLA Conference, St. Louis, 4 Nov. 1992. All quotations, unless indicated, will be taken from the one-volume 1968 edition of her *Mémoires* and cited in the text.

²See, for example, Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, eds., *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* and Frye, *Living Stories*.

³See Fuderer's useful annotated bibliography.

⁴See Albistur and Armogathe (313-17) on the frequency of poor working women turning to prostitution in France during the mid-nineteenth century.

⁵See Berheimer's first chapter that offers a parallel between public health official Parent-Duchâlet's fascination with and research on fertilizers, sewer systems, cadavers, and so on, and his subsequent work on prostitution as a social decadence to be controlled by the government.

⁶See Mogador's first novel *Les Voleurs d'or* (Paris: Michel-Levy Freres: 1857), also set in Australia, for a fictional account of the struggles of pioneers in a new world.

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