

HOMOSEXUAL: MALE

Henri de Latouche, *Fragoletta, ou Naples et Paris en 1799* (extract)

*Henri de Latouche's now-forgotten story, from 1829, was a major point of reference for early nineteenth-century literature, notably inspiring Balzac's *Séraphîta* and Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (see previous extract) with its fascination with the androgynous or doubly-sexed body. It is one of the first nineteenth-century novels to feature a hermaphrodite protagonist. In this passage, we see a moment of intimacy between the brooding military man d'Hauteville and Philippe Adriani, the supposed long-lost brother of d'Hauteville's previous love interest, Camille, who has repeatedly refused his advances. It is repeatedly implied, although never directly stated, that this is due to Camille's hermaphroditism, and that Philippe and Camille are, in fact, the same person. As in Gautier's novel, then, the spectre of same-sex attraction is absorbed into a recuperative narrative of ambiguity concerning the gender identity of one of the protagonists, which keeps the door of heterosexuality open.*

[trans. Rebecca Sugden]

La conversation reprit bientôt le caractère d'intimité et d'abandon que les affections de chacun supposaient. Adriani contemplait à la clarté de la lune, quelquefois voilée, cette noble figure d'Hauteville, où respiraient la confiance du courage et toute la sérénité de la vertu. Il se rappela tout ce qu'il savait de lui et se surprit dans un élan d'amour et d'admiration pour sa personne ; il lui tendit une main blanche et efféminée et serra la sienne avec une plus vive et plus longue étreinte que n'en comportait l'affection fraternelle [...].

– Je me défie de tout ce qui n'est pas le moment présent, dit-il. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a de vrai, de sûr, de juste au monde excepté ce qu'on sent et ce qu'on désire aujourd'hui ? [...]

– Et sous quel nom comprenait-vous donc l'amitié et le dévouement ? demanda d'Hauteville.

Il voulut accompagner ces paroles des mêmes et affectueuses caresses qu'il venait de recevoir. Adriani se retira par un sentiment de retenue singulière, puis se rapprocha de lui passionnément.

The conversation soon regained a free and intimate nature, the result of the participant's mutual affection. In the moonlight, Adriani contemplated the aristocratic contours of d'Hauteville's face, which exuded the calm composure of integrity and the steadfastness of fortitude. He recalled all that he knew about the other man and found himself surprised by a sudden depth of feeling, admiring and amorous. He held out a hand, white and effeminate, to d'Hauteville and squeezed, with a more forceful and lengthier embrace than fraternal affection required.

"I am wary of everything but the present moment," he said. "For what in the world could be true, just and certain if it isn't what one feels and desires today?" [...]

"And what, then, do you understand by friendship and devotion?" asked d'Hauteville.

He sought to couple these words with an affectionate caress, the same as that he himself had just received. Adriani pulled back in an abrupt display of modesty, only to draw passionately closer once again.