

A gendered *Faust*:

The portrayal of gender in the opera *Faust* (1859) by Gounod (1818–1893)

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by
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ABSTRACT

This thesis deconstructs the gender symbolism evident in the opera *Faust* (1859) by Gounod. The objective is to determine the gendered authenticity, originality and contributing nature of the work, acknowledging the Catholic nineteenth-century French context in which it was written. The study aims to establish the nature of the gender constructs portrayed (whether representative of their conservative milieu, or suggestive of unconventionality, liberalism and innovation) and how these portrayals were executed by Gounod and his librettists.

An exploration of the construction of *Faust* and a comparison with Goethe's *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* (1808), on which the Gounodian creation is loosely based, initiates the study. The theory of *performativity* by Judith Butler (1990), together with other general gender hypotheses on, for instance, masculine and feminine personalities and perversity, follows. Hereafter, gender in the context of artistic performances, and gender constructs in Christianity are investigated. These general, performance-based and theological theories and ideas are then compared to the gendered characters in *Faust*.

The secular and Catholic gender norms that governed men and women in nineteenth-century France inevitably had an influence on how gender is represented in the opera. Hence, contextual aspects, as well as Gounod's own interaction with, and exhibition of gender are analysed in order to establish their influential extent on *Faust*.

A deconstruction of the opera as three different texts – libretto, score and DVD productions of three *Faust* performances – is applied since this contributes to holistic and objective conclusions.

The aspects investigated in the study have brought to light that *Faust* shamelessly highlights the destructive consequences of social, cultural and religious gender stereotypes governing nineteenth-century Catholic France, whilst simultaneously proposing liberated gender identities. Gounod is innovative in presenting a female protagonist through the role of Marguerite. She is an intricate, developing character representative of multiple perplexed femininities, many of which are conquering and symbolic of female empowerment. Siébel serves as a source of great gender ambiguity and contradiction. These aspects are fuelled by

an ironic *female* identity – hence, the notion of *performativity* is ingeniously incorporated into this character. Both femininity and masculinity is advocated in the portrayals of Méphistophèles and the Christian God, while interesting and unexpected masculinities are embodied through Faust and Valentin.

By using the above methodology, I suggest that Gounod’s *Faust* is an authentic and pioneering work representing ambivalent, controversial, contradictory and empowering gender constructs, making it a composition of considerable worth, both musically and historically.

KEY TERMS

Jules Barbier

Michel Carré

Catholicism

Faust (1859)

France

Gender

Goethe

Gounod

Nineteenth Century

Opera

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

“A not so Faustian *Faust*” is perhaps an appropriate way by which one can refer to the opera composed in 1859 by Charles Gounod (1818–1893). The justification for this epithet would be that the opera’s focus is much more on the female character Marguerite than it is on her male lover, and supposed leading-role, Faust. However, that is but one of many prominent gender aspects of the opera that makes it to my mind an avant-garde masterpiece. Although the opera is based on the play *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* (1808) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), it is a work of self-contained merit when one looks at the changes that the composer and his librettists, Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, made to the eminent German drama. (Huebner 1992: 131–132.)

Gounod’s portrayal of gender is unconventional, especially in terms of Catholicism, which plays a major part in the opera. A strong link between Marguerite and the Virgin Mary, a consideration of a female God and female Devil, and the gender roles of French nineteenth-century Catholic society are prominent motives that can be derived from experiencing *Faust* on stage or on a DVD.

1.2 Research questions

The main research question is formulated as follows:

- How is gender portrayed in Gounod’s opera *Faust* (1859)?

In order to answer the main research question the following sub-questions ought to be investigated:

- How was *Faust* constructed? (Chapter 2)

- What alternations were made to the original Goethe plot in order to make the focus on gender more prominent and unique to its French nineteenth-century milieu? (Chapter 2)
- What are the predominant postmodern theories of gender and how are they portrayed in *Faust*? (Chapter 3)
- What was the situation in terms of gender roles circa 1859 in France? (Chapter 4)
- To what extent did Catholicism have an influence on these gender roles? (Chapter 4)
- How are the secular and Catholic gender constructs of nineteenth-century France represented in *Faust*? (Chapter 4)
- What were the gender influences in Gounod's life and how are they portrayed in *Faust*? (Chapter 5)
- How is gender represented in the libretto? (Chapter 6)
- How is gender portrayed through the orchestral score? (Chapter 6)
- How are the postmodern gender theories, the gender situation in France at the time of composition, and the gender influences in Gounod's life portrayed in DVD productions of the opera? (Chapter 6)

1.3 Aim of the study

To link with my main research question, the predominant aim of this study is to determine how gender is portrayed in Gounod's *Faust*. In order to answer this question I shall look at the social and religious contexts in which the opera was composed, and thereafter endeavour to show how Gounod portrayed the current gender constructions of the time, but also how he proposed different, more liberal representations of femininity and masculinity. I would hence be able to deduce whether and, if indeed, how Gounod contributed to the field of gender studies by means of this composition.

1.4 Methodology

I shall be using the empirical research method "Textual analysis, hermeneutics, textual criticism" (Mouton 2001: 167).

I will investigate literature on the historical sources influencing Gounod's *Faust*. This will entail the circumstances and decisions contributing to the construction of the opera; a discussion of significant gender theories; an investigation into the composer's own exposure to, and experience with gender throughout his life; and a holistic account of the secular and Catholic norms on gender identities dominating nineteenth-century France. I shall also refer to more recent theories on gender and Christianity in order to determine whether the portrayals of theological figures in the opera have current and universal relevance to modern day audiences.

Textual interpretation and criticism of Goethe's *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* as well as the libretto and score of the opera by Gounod will be conducted. These texts will then be hermeneutically deconstructed by referring to the literature review. The texts discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6 will be presented in a scene-by-scene manner, as ordered and named in the respective sources. After much consideration I have decided on this method, since it provides for a logical, discernable and unambiguous presentation of information that creates easy accessibility as regards referencing and comparing.

A similar hermeneutical examination will be executed on three DVD productions of Gounod's *Faust*.

1.5 The contents of the dissertation

Chapter 2 consists of a synopsis of Gounod's *Faust*, followed by an overview of how the opera was constructed in order to produce an original composition, unique to the context it was created in. A comparison of *Faust* and Goethe's *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* will furthermore shed light on the originality of Gounod's version and how gender is portrayed differently in the two works. In order for the comparison and consequent conclusions to be indiscriminate and more objective, a summarized version of each scene of Goethe's text is presented, in order to prevent uncertainty or scepticism with regard to the merits of the conclusions.

The gender theories discussed in Chapter 3 are mostly of a philosophical and psychological nature. This will include theories on postmodernism and the performance of identities and

genders. A discussion of theological ideas as regards gender will then follow, with specific reference to Catholicism and the significance of the Virgin Mary in the latter.

In Chapter 4 I shall examine the social and political circumstances in France during the nineteenth century and determine whether and how these arguably served as an inspiration for the creation of the different gendered characters in *Faust*. I believe that these influences could either be observable in representations of the gendered milieu, or perhaps in the suggestion of alternative gender constructs, which would then serve as commentary on, or critique of, the social order of the time.

With regard to Chapter 5 and the gender influences in Gounod's life, I shall investigate whether there exist similarities between his own gender experiences, and the gender portrayals in *Faust*. This shall also include commentary on Gounod's own gender identity.

In Chapter 6 I shall hermeneutically deconstruct an English translation of the libretto in order to note significant gender references or symbolism in the text. The orchestral score will be discussed, since certain compositional techniques and application of instrumentation might suggest the dominance of masculinity or femininity in certain scenes. A full, specialised score analysis will however not be possible, due to limitations in space and because I regard it as but one contributing factor, amongst many others, that substantiates the argument. In terms of the DVD productions of the opera, I will make hermeneutic gender-based deductions of the set design, costuming, lighting, and actions of the different characters.

Similar to Chapter 2, a summary of each scene of the libretto, score and respective DVD productions will be given. For continuity I will use the order of the scenes stated in the score. I shall specify when the relevant order or scene of a discussed production deviates from the score. Hence, this chapter will serve as an objective and holistic impression of possible gender messages that Gounod intended to convey in *Faust*.

1.6 Literature overview

The literature consulted for this study encompasses an array of different research fields and media. These include historical accounts and views on the secular and religious gender

constructs governing nineteenth-century France; philosophical, psychological and theological hypotheses on gender; biographical records entailing Gounod's experiences with different gender identities; the prose texts of the plot (Goethe's *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil*, and the libretto of Gounod's *Faust*); the orchestral score; and three DVD productions of *Faust*.

A short overview of the literature relevant to the study now follows.

With regard to the political, social and religious context of *Faust*, Valenze's article "Gender in the Formation of European Power, 1750–1914" (2004) sheds light on the gender ambivalence dominating nineteenth-century Europe. Although many of the patriarchal views of the previous century were abolished and greater parity between women and men was developing, countries like France, Germany and Italy were governed by laws that inhibited such growth. The Napoleonic Code, a set of laws instituted in 1804 by the self-appointed emperor of France, became the basis of nineteenth-century values, being influential not only in France, but also in its imperial colonies. (Valenze 2004: 459, 466.)

A significant change that accompanied these laws was Napoleon's restoration of the Catholic Church, which denounced the former era of rationalism. Interestingly, this had an ambiguous effect on gender constructions of the time: although religious institutions exerted strict conservatism, religion paradoxically became "feminized" (Valenze 2004: 467.)

In *A Social History of French Catholicism 1789-1914*, Gibson (1989) is of the opinion that the most striking and much neglected aspect of the nineteenth-century church in France, was the mushroom growth of women's religious orders. Nearly 400 new female orders were established and an estimated 200,000 women entered the religious life. Accompanying the Catholic church in its revival, was the subsequent upsurge in Marian devotion. The Virgin Mary served as the ultimate role model for women, and appealing to men was her purity, docility, femininity and representation of maternal love. This, however, contributed to the Church's support of role differentiation according to gender. Priests continued to associate men with qualities such as strength, authority, power and wisdom, and women with sweetness, tenderness, domesticity, grace and love. Although women were active in leading roles in the Church, they were viewed and treated according to their gendered characteristics.

I observe then that the nineteenth century was a time in which gender entailed different, perhaps even contradictory, meanings. (Gibson 1989: 182, 186, 104.)

Gounod's *Faust* portrays these nineteenth-century gender roles convincingly seeing that gender in this opera also takes on several different "characters". A 2009 CD-ROM publication of the libretto of *Faust* (written by the librettists Barbier and Carré) as well as Demuth's *Introduction to the Music of Gounod* (1981) aids in understanding the plot and the gender identities of Marguerite, Faust, Valentin, Siébel, Méphistophèles, Faust and the Christian God.

In the opera, Marguerite is a young, naive girl who has lost both her mother and sister, and now lives with her brother Valentin who is a soldier. After a series of events, she is seduced by the philosopher Faust and then discovers that she is bearing his illegitimate child. Marguerite, who is a devout Catholic, is left with immense feelings of guilt and desperately prays for forgiveness, but her prayers seem to go unanswered as the result of the interference of Méphistophèles. (Demuth 1981: 18–20.)

Marguerite is rejected by her humiliated brother and the Catholic community, and is ultimately driven to madness. She kills her unborn child and is sent to prison. Faust begs Marguerite to join him in hell, but she resists and again prays for forgiveness. Her prayer is answered and her soul rises to heaven. (Demuth 1981: 21.)

Howard's article "Gounod's *Faust*: Opera of Redemption" (2009) and the article "Mary and Femininity: A Psychological Critique" by Harrington (1984) were consulted in constructing my argument that Marguerite is both the representation of the Virgin Mary, and also its exact contradiction. At the outset of the opera she is the embodiment of piety, purity, receptivity, femininity and maternity (she was the carer for her sick mother and sister, and now for Valentin) – all characteristics of the Madonna. Later, through her pregnancy, she becomes an object of sin, defying her gender role. Interestingly, at the conclusion of the opera, her salvation again signifies the Virgin: the latter has a central position in the concept of Catholic redemption.

Harrington, who uses Freud to interpret the symbolism and theology of Mary in Catholicism, is of the opinion that Mary (in her role as the mother of believers) functions to place the Christian in the position of a child who receives illusory gratification from the mother. Serving as an idol for Christians to emulate, Mary induces the Christian to the position of receptivity and dependence. Harrington argues that the femininity that Mary represents serves to preserve patriarchal social structures. (Harrington 1984: 204.)

As regards my deductions on other aspects relating to Marguerite's femininity, as well as an examination of the stereotypical masculine messages conveyed by Valentin and Faust, I consulted general hypotheses on gender. Most prominent is the feminist theorist Judith Butler's unequalled theory of *performativity* explained in her famous collection of essays *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). Others include Amalia Gladhart's similar views in her article "Playing Gender" (1996) in which the author argues that gender *is* performance, Nancy Chodorow's research on the differences in male and female personalities, and the theories of Estella Welldon on perversity. (Lechte 2008: 184.)

Together with his portrayal of French gender constructions of the first half of the nineteenth century, I am of the opinion that Gounod also proposed other unconventional gender ideas in *Faust*. Both God and Méphistophèles (the Devil) are occasionally referred to in feminine forms. In conjunction with this, life and death are in many instances in the opera connected to God and Méphistophèles, respectively. The gender portrayals of these theological entities are analyzed by referring to theories of notable theologians. These will include Mulack's proposal in *Die Weiblichkeit Gottes: Matriachale Voraussetzungen des Gottesbildes* (1983) of a gender duality in God, manifested in the two biblical divine names Yahweh and Elohim.

The orchestral score, libretto, a CD recording and three DVD productions also served as sources for these deductions:

In Act 1 the sopranos sing about dawn and the Creator of Nature (God) with flowing, lyrical orchestral accompaniment which is conceivably very "feminine". Furthermore, in the 2004 Royal Opera House production of *Faust*, Méphistophèles is dressed as a queen in the "Walpurgis Night" scene in Act 5, complete with an evening gown and tiara. He is also

exclusively accompanied by female ballet dancers, stressing the femininity of evil. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 1–2; Gounod 1869: 3–7; Gounod 2004; Gounod 2009.)

The role of Siébel, also modified and enlarged by Gounod, is another noteworthy aspect of the opera, seeing that it is a breeches role. This is unconventional, because the breeches role had its heyday in eighteenth-century opera and very few nineteenth-century composers still made use of it (Harris & Jander 2001: 305). In my discussion of Siébel's character I shall make reference to Lenard Berlanstein's article "Breeches and Breaches: Cross-Dress Theater and the Culture of Gender Ambiguity in Modern France" (1996). I shall furthermore propose the idea of Siébel representing an authentic "woman", rather than man.

It would be naive to deny the possibility that Gounod's personal life might have had an influence on his operatic portrayals of gender in *Faust*. The premature death of his father and the idealisation of his mother are but two examples of possible gender influences. In my investigation of these and other biographical aspects concerning Gounod's experiences with different gender identities, my references include the article "Gounod before *Faust*" by Curtiss (1952) and Huebner's *The Operas of Charles Gounod* (1990).

On gender in music I shall refer to the musicologist Susan McClary's work on gendered aspects in music theory, for instance her article "A Material Girl in Bluebeard's Castle" (1991) in which the idea of masculine and feminine cadences is discussed. Theories on the semitone and leading tone and their relation to femininity and desire have been noted by, among other musicologists, Elizabeth Eva Leach and Richard Taruskin, to whose works I shall also make reference. (McClary 2007: 119–122.)

I shall make gender-based deductions from the instrumentation used in the orchestral score, derived from psychological studies of how instruments are stereotyped in terms of gender connotations. One such study is "The Sex-Stereotyping of Musical Instruments" by Harold Abeles and Susan Porter (1978).

1.7 Delimitations of the study

In order to prevent this study of becoming too generalized, and consequently bear the risk of becoming insubstantial, I have decided on the following delimitations:

- A discussion of, or a comparison to, possible gender representations in other compositions by Gounod shall not be included.
- I shall not be looking into other librettos or scripts by the librettists Barbier and Carré.
- I shall not endeavour to determine whether Gounod's gender representations in *Faust* did, and if indeed how, have an influence on gender discourse in nineteenth-century France. Rather, I am more interested in how Gounod arguably portrayed the predominant gender notions and embodiments of the time.
- I did not apply an in-depth score analysis, since I view it as but one of the many contributors to how gender is being portrayed in *Faust*.
- Although I acknowledge the importance of the cultural and religious contexts of the respective DVD productions, I had to refrain from elaborating on this information. A contrary pursuit would require a far bigger project with less time and space limitations.

1.8 Notes to the reader

It is important to explain why I have decided on certain methods or means of reference, since this will contribute to a better understanding of the reasoning behind some of the theories and ways of presentation.

The reader will note that there are two different spellings applied to the name “Méphistophèles” in the dissertation: “Méphistophèles” and “Méphistophélès”. The former is the spelling that is consistently used in English texts written about *Faust*, while the latter serves as the spelling in French sources, including the score used. I therefore employed the spelling of the relevant text I referred to.

In Chapter 3 I propose the theory that the character Siébel is essentially an authentic “woman” – the representation of the *avant-garde*, independent-minded female who emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century in France. Hence, after the exposition of my hypothesis regarding Siébel’s gender, I shall proceed in using female pronouns with quotation marks when referring to “her”.

My reading, discussion and conclusions drawn from the texts in Chapters 2 and 6 are hermeneutical, with my interpretations and arguments being based on the theories referred to in the other chapters. Hence, my derivations are contestable, by default subjective, and should not be viewed as fact.

I shall be using references in the following manner:

- If a reference is only applicable to one sentence, the reference will appear at the end of this sentence with the full-stop applied directly after the bracket of the reference.
- If a source or sources are applicable to more than one sentence, the reference will appear at the end of the paragraph with a full-stop applied after the page number inside the bracket of the reference.
- Please note that some sources obtained from electronic databases do not have page numbers.

2 GOUNOD'S *FAUST*

In order to determine the extent of authenticity in Gounod's *Faust*, this chapter examines the content and construction of the opera. Chapter 2.1 is a basic summary of the plot, informing the reader of the most prominent characters and their role in the development of the story. Chapter 2.2 sheds light on the creation process of *Faust*, investigating circumstantial influences, as well as relevant individuals' input and decisions contributing to the birth of the opera. Since religion plays a central part in this study, religious aspects unique to *Faust* are highlighted in Chapter 2.3. Chapter 2.4 gives an overview of distinct differences between the presentation of characters and actions in Goethe's *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* (1808) and the libretto (collaboratively written by Barbier and Carré) of the opera *Faust* by Gounod. A summary concludes the chapter.

2.1 Synopsis

Act 1 *Faust's study*:

The philosopher Faust is morbidly depressed due to his inability to attain fulfilment through knowledge, and finds himself on the verge of drinking poison to end his life. However, he is twice stopped short by the sound of youths singing a pastoral chorus which seems to reawaken his desire for life and youth. Cursing his failed life, he calls upon the devil for deliverance. Méphistophéles appears and offers Faust a deal: the carefree and decadent pleasures of youth in exchange for eventual and eternal service in hell. Faust hesitates but is easily won over after Méphistophéles conjures up a vision of the beautiful Marguerite. The philosopher signs the pact and is instantly transformed into a young, handsome nobleman. (Emerson 2009: 4; Huebner 1992: 132, 133.)

Act 2 *Fairgrounds at the town gates; on the left a tavern is visible*:

Soldiers and townspeople enjoy the festivities of a local fair. A young student, Siébel, is asked by officer Valentin to protect his sister Marguerite while he is away at war. A lively song is sung by the soldier Wagner, but it is interrupted by Méphistophéles who entertains the

soldiers with a song about the golden calf – advocating the pursuit of gold and greed. Méphistophéles makes a toast to Marguerite which alerts Valentin to draw his sword; the weapon shatters, though. Recognizing Méphistophéles to be the devil, the other soldiers hold their swords like crosses, successfully scaring him away. As the fair resumes, Faust offers Marguerite his arm, but she demurely rejects his advances and quickly departs (Emerson 2009: 4; Huebner 1992: 133.)

Act 3 Marguerite's garden:

Siébel who is in love with Marguerite, briefly visits her garden to leave her a bouquet of flowers. Faust and Méphistophéles enter, with Faust saluting Marguerite's humble home. After leaving, the devil returns to place a box of jewels near Siébel's flowers. Marguerite appears and sings a ballad reflecting upon the stranger she has just met. Discovering the flowers and the chest, she is overjoyed and adorns herself with jewels. After Marguerite's nosy neighbour Dame Marthe appears, Méphistophéles and Faust join the two women. The devil distracts Marthe so that Faust can pursue his goal of seducing Marguerite. Marguerite confesses her love, but begs Faust to leave. Méphistophéles mocks Faust's failure and dares him to approach Marguerite who has reappeared at her window, where she finally yields to his embrace. (Emerson 2009: 4; Huebner 1992: 133.)

Act 4 A cathedral; the town square:

Abandoned by Faust, Marguerite seeks refuge in a church. She is however pursued by Méphistophéles who curses her and threatens her with damnation. (Emerson 2009: 4.)

In the town's square victory is celebrated by Valentin and his comrades after returning home from the war. But Valentin's joy is short-lived after he receives evasive replies from Siébel when asked about Marguerite. He rushes to her house only to be welcomed by Faust and Méphistophéles, the latter delivering a satirical serenade directed to Marguerite. This infuriates Valentin and he challenges Faust to a duel. Méphistophéles intervenes, controlling Faust's hand – consequently Valentin is killed. As Faust is dragged away by the devil, Marguerite runs to her brother's aid who curses her with his last breath. This then serves as

the catalyst for her madness: the act ends with Marguerite laughing hysterically. (Emerson 2009: 4; Huebner 1992: 133.)

Act 5 The Harz Mountains (Walpurgis Night); a cave with ancient queens and courtesans; a prison:

A chorus of will-o'-the-wisps and witches surround Méphistophéles and Faust, with the latter visibly frightened (Huebner 1992: 133).

The devil takes Faust to a cavern where he is welcomed by beautiful historical matriarchs. Suddenly a vision of Marguerite appears which stirs his longing and he demands Méphistophéles to take him to her. (Huebner 1992: 133.)

In prison, Marguerite is condemned to death for murdering her illegitimate child. She has lost her sanity and when Faust arrives to free her, she hallucinates about the day they met. Her demeanour changes though, and when Méphistophéles appears to urge haste, Marguerite calls upon the angels in heaven to save her. As she walks to the gallows the devil pronounces her condemned, but approaching the hangman, a chorus of angels proclaims her salvation. (Emerson 2009: 4.)

2.2 The construction of *Faust*

Gounod's *Faust* is the product of an array of influences and sources. Although the work is primarily based on the 1827 French translation by Gérard de Nerval of Goethe's *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* (Part I), it would be unfair to disregard the contributions made by the librettists Jules Barbier and Michel Carré.

Between 1839 and 1842 (his term of the *Prix de Rome*), Gounod's interest in *Faust* Part I as the subject matter for a prospective opera was aroused after reading Nerval's French translation of Goethe's masterpiece. A setting of the church scene was attempted by Gounod as early as 1849, but the plan only materialized in 1855 after meeting the libretto-writing team of Barbier and Carré. The opera enjoyed a successful first performance at the Théâtre

Lyrique in Paris 1859, and it was published in June of the same year. Important to note is that Goethe had already passed away in 1832, and was thus not alive to experience the birth of *Faust*, the opera. (Huebner 1992: 131–132.)

Faust et Marguerite, a boulevard play in three acts, had already been written by Carré in 1850 and is regarded by many as the proximate source for Gounod's opera. As is the case in the latter's *Faust*, *Faust et Marguerite* also has Goethe's play as its foundation, but Carré's work is centred around the Gretchen tragedy, as opposed to Goethe's male-dominated focus. An aspect of Goethe's Part I that was particularly problematic for Carré was that it lacked, to his mind, another influential secondary character to accompany Valentine in enlivening the basic Méphistophéles-Faust-Gretchen trilogy. Apart from Valentin, the only two secondary characters to appear in more than one scene are Dame Marthe and Faust's assistant Wagner, but unfortunately their roles in the unfolding of the plot are minimal. This lack of an influential secondary character doesn't seem to bother one in Goethe's play due to the work's large philosophical substance that aids in sustaining the fate of the principals. But since Carré had a boulevard play in mind, plot development had to substitute philosophy. He therefore greatly enlarged the role of Siébel – an alteration Gounod unquestionably welcomed, since this is an aspect of Carré's play which was carried over to the opera and consequently also served as one of the clear deviations from Goethe's original. (Huebner 1990: 101; 1992: 131.)

Carré's rather light play, compared to the seriousness of Goethe's work, is however not the sole medium on which Gounod's opera is built. Among the most noteworthy changes made by Barbier (Carré's partner in libretto-writing) was a return to Goethe's finale – a restoration of tragedy to the work. Valentin is killed by Faust, and there is an unequivocal referral made by Marguerite to her crime of infanticide (both of these scenes were absent in *Faust et Marguerite*). The mere choice of the classical five-act plan also suggests a greater seriousness of intent. However, it is important to remember that most of the changes made by Barbier to Carré's play were done in collaboration with Gounod himself, since most of it involved decisions concerning operatic issues. The only musical episodes from Goethe's play that Carré reproduced were the ballade by Marguerite about the King of Thulé and a chorus in the church scene; both of these are included in Gounod's opera. Other Goethe-derived ideas such as a chorus during Faust's attempted suicide in Act I, material from the scene *Vor dem Tor*,

both of the songs Méphistophéles sings, and a witches' chorus during the *Walpurgisnacht* scene are also incorporated into the opera (Huebner 1990: 110.)

I see it fit to elaborate a bit on Gounod's means of making these episodes his own.

It is already clear in Faust's suicide-attempt in Act I of the opera that it is Gounod who is at work and not the German playwright. Instead of Goethe's Easter chorus accompanying this dire predicament, a simple pastoral song gives him new hope ("*Paresseuse fille*"). It is interesting, though, that an Easter chorus is indeed heard in the opera: when Marguerite dies and her soul ascends to heaven ("*Christ est ressuscité!*"). It is thus quite visible, taking this aspect into consideration, that in contrast to the play, the weight of the opera is bestowed to the side of Marguerite. The celebration of the resurrection is in Gounod's version saved for the moment when death is overcome by the female lead, not the male. Little doubt is therefore left as to who the true hero in Gounod's work is. (Huebner 1990: 110, 111.)

Barbier was innovative in merging Goethe's *Auerbachs Keller* and *Vor dem Tor* scenes (in Goethe's version, the two scenes are separated by another scene in Faust's study) to introduce an original concept in Act II of the opera in which the tavern is situated near a city gate. By doing so, Barbier deviated from simply reproducing Carré's second tableau depicting a tavern and Marguerite's church. The reasoning behind this was purely musical, something which yet again reminds us of the fact that we are dealing with a work of self-contained merit which has music as its foundation. The second act of the opera begins with a vibrant mixed chorus, strategically planned to create relief after the ominous first act. The carnivalesque atmosphere created by the lively going about of soldiers, peasants, burghers and beggar in the *Vor dem Tor* episode, could by means of this alteration, be used more effectively than the *Auerbachs Keller* scene with its student party and all-male chorus. The result is Gounod's famous chorus "*Vin ou bière*" which is not only successful in its separate introduction of each voice, followed by a combined virtuosic conclusion, but also in its incorporation of Goethe's song for the beggar, introduced as counterpoint to the burghers' music. (Huebner 1990: 111.)

Similar to Goethe's character Brander, a song about a rat is sung by the character Wagner in the opera. Again though, the challenges and traps of the operatic genre are foreseen by Barbier and Gounod, and consequently they cut Wagner's song short by the entrance of

Méphistophéles. For to have had two separate songs for Wagner and Méphistophéles, as is the case in Goethe, would have meant that two successive *ariettes* for the low male voices would have had to be used. The solution was thus to alter the episode into one with comic relief by interrupting the first song with the entrance of the *buffo* principal. The subject matter of Méphistophéles's own number, which follows shortly after the devil's comic introduction, was changed from that of a flea in Goethe to that of the golden calf in the opera. Here Gounod's authenticity is again observed in his incorporation of a religious subject – religion playing a central part in his life, as well as the opera. This aspect is also visible in the “*Choral des épées*” in which Wagner and his comrades get the better of the devil, a scene not found in Goethe or Carré. Hence, Christian symbolism is a significant factor of the opera which aids in making it a work proud of original substance. (Huebner 1990: 112–114.)

2.3 Religious aspects unique to Gounod's *Faust*

Howard (2009: 79) refers to Gounod's work as an “opera of redemption”, being of the opinion that the opera is largely built on unique religious themes incorporated by Gounod. He furthermore advocates that opera is both a story *and* music, and however influential Carré and Barbier's contributions to the libretto might have been, the opera would not have existed and be worthy of thousands of successful performances if it were not for Gounod's music. As is the case in all operas, the music in this French landmark is central and unquestionably responsible for the opera's sustaining power and influence.

In the first scene of the opera, which also happens to be Easter morning, peasant girls and reapers are heard outside the window of Faust's room thanking God for fertile earth and fine weather in a pastoral song. Despite Faust's mockery in his echoing of the words “*Dieu! Dieu! Dieu!*”, the girls and men merely continue their worshipping. Later in the opera during Valentin's altercation with Méphistophéles his sword breaks in mid-air. Valentin then turns the sword around to show his enemy the sign of the cross in the handles, after which the *Chorale of the Swords* is sung by the male chorus – another hymn-inspired piece stating, “It is a cross which protects us from hell”. A hymnlike melody is also used as orchestral accompaniment when Méphistophéles points out that Marguerite's purity and faith will be a challenge to Faust. (Howard 2009: 89.)

Gounod's religious touch is furthermore obvious when Siébel, Marguerite's suitor, reverses the curse that Méphistophéles put on any flowers that Siébel gives to Marguerite. This reversal occurs when the young student dips his hand in the font with holy water, situated at the base of a statue of the Virgin Mary where Marguerite prays every night. Another two hymnlike prayers are heard later: a *Dies Irae* (What shall I tell the Lord then? Where shall I find a protector when the innocent himself stands in fear!) sung by the chorus after Marguerite's failed attempts at prayer in the church; and a four-bar a cappella prayer (May the Lord welcome his soul and forgive the sinner) after Valentin's damnation of Marguerite, and his subsequent death. Finally an angelic Easter hymn serves as an ideal ending – also lending structure to the work considering that the opera begins on Easter morning. (Howard 2009: 89–90.)

The above-mentioned hymnlike sections in the opera are telling examples of the great extent to which Gounod's faith influenced his music. They are characteristic of typical Roman Catholic church music, with their predominant tonality and basic I – IV – V chord progressions. According to Howard, these compositional structures are not only expressive of the age-old Christian music tradition, but they also remind us, throughout the entire work, of our sinful, mortal existence here on earth, followed by redemption to those who believe. In this sense it is thus evident that the work was not just made authentic and independent from Goethe's by means of plot and text alterations, but also through the specific style of music used. (Howard 2009: 91.)

Additionally, it is noticeable that the majority of the changes made to Goethe's play were done in order to somehow put more focus on the Marguerite character. I find it especially interesting that the greater part of the religious aspects incorporated by Gounod are in some way connected to Marguerite: the hymnlike melody accompanying Méphistophéles when he informs Faust of Marguerite's strong faith and how it will be an obstacle in his pursuit to win her over, the reversal of Méphistophéles's curse on Siébel's flowers for Marguerite, and the Easter chorus concluding the opera with Marguerite's redemption and death.

I therefore believe that there is a strong link between religion and the female, specifically Marguerite, in the opera – an aspect which is authentically Gounodian.

2.4 An overview of relevant differences between Gounod's *Faust* (1859) and Goethe's *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* (1808)

In order to come to a better understanding of the originality as regards gender portrayals in Gounod's *Faust*, it would be of importance to compare it to *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* (1808) by Goethe, on which it is based. A very important aspect that ought to be recognised when reading this sub-chapter, is the difference in environment and timeframe between the first published version of Goethe's *Faust*, which occurred in 1808, and the première of *Faust* by Gounod in 1859. This is significant since it entails unique societal, cultural and religious factors influencing the gender portrayals in the two works. Since Goethe's *Faust* is such an elaborate and complex text by its own account, I had to refrain from committing too much of a hermeneutical analysis, since it is but one aspect of many that I investigate in this study. It is also important to take into account that I am referring to a 1988 English translated text-version of the German legend. The translator's interpretation of the German will thus inevitably influence my deductions. With regards to the opera, I refer to the libretto and score which I discuss in Chapter 6.

Goethe: From *1 Dedication* to *3 Prologue in Heaven*

These three introductory scenes are not present in Gounod's *Faust* (Goethe 1988: 3–12).

Goethe: *4 Night*, compared to Gounod: *Introduction* and *Act I, Scene I*

In my opinion these are scenes so vastly different that they cannot essentially be compared. Goethe's scene is much longer and philosophical, with a spirit, Wagner and angels also present. The text of the scenes show no exact comparisons. The only correlation as regards gender that I can suggest, is the feminization of nature. The angels do however sing of Christ's resurrection which might indicate femininity being linked to Christ, as is also the case in later scenes in Gounod (not in the *Introduction* or Scene 1). Important is the fact that God (not Jesus) is numerous times referred to as male in Goethe. This differs greatly from Gounod in the sense that a specific gender term is not ascribed to God in the libretto. Arguably though (see Chapter 6.2), God is metaphorically linked to the feminine in this first

scene in Gounod – both in the music as well as the text. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 1–2; Goethe 1988: 15–27; Gounod 1869: 3–7.)

Goethe: 5 *Outside the Town Wall*

This scene is not found in Gounod (Goethe 1988: 27–37).

Goethe: 6 *Faust's study (I)* and 7 *Faust's study (II)*, compared to Gounod: *Act I, Scene II*

There are very little comparisons between Goethe and Gounod here. In Goethe's Scene 6, Faust (sometimes referred to as "Heinrich" in the play) shares his melancholy with a poodle after which Méphistophéles enters, dressed as a student. The latter calls upon spirits to enchant Faust with a lullaby which leads him to sleep and fantasize about love and pleasure. There are thus no comparison to Gounod. In Goethe's Scene 7, Faust awakens with Méphistophéles now dressed as a "cavalier". ("In scarlet, with gold trimmings, cloak of good stiff silk, and in my hat the usual cock's feather.") This is similar to the description of Méphistophéles's attire in Gounod. Important to note though: it is Méphistophéles's *second* appearance in Goethe that corresponds to his *first* appearance in Gounod. Hence, one can argue that the librettists of the opera wanted to articulate a gendered stereotype of masculinity (gentleman). Contradictingly, the music accompanying the Devil's entrance in Gounod is more feminine than masculine. One can thus suggest the idea of gender duality in Gounod's Méphistophéles (Barbier & Carré 2009: 2–5; Goethe 1988: 37–48; Gounod 1869: 26–54.)

A striking difference to me is the representation and references to women in Goethe and Gounod. In Goethe negative metaphors like "sweet and sensual sin" are used when describing a woman (Goethe 1988: 53). Furthermore Méphistophéles gives a very lengthy explanation of how to deal with the "fairer" sex (Goethe 1988: 61):

Learn above all, to handle women! Why,
In all their thousand woes, one sure
And certain cure
Will end their endless sob and sigh!
With a polite approach you'll put them at their ease,

And they'll be yours to treat just as you please [...]
You'll press her tiny wrist just that much harder
To feel her pulse, and with sly ardour
Seize her about the slender waist,
To try if she's too tightly laced!

In my opinion, Goethe's treatment of the female is very derogative, disrespectful and almost "abusive". In the libretto of the opera we do not encounter this extremity. In Gounod, the vision of Marguerite that Méphistophéles shows to Faust, with the latter remarking "divine and bewitching vision!", is naturally objectifying. The score also corroborates this with a fantasy-like atmosphere created by the harp, horns and violin tremolo's. In my view, the portrayal in the opera does still include a degree of respect (however shallow) towards the "fairer" sex – something that I do not find in Goethe. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 2–5; Gounod 1869: 26–54.)

Goethe: 8 *Auerbach's Tavern in Leipzig* and 9 *A Witch's Kitchen*

These two scenes are not included in the libretto of Gounod's *Faust* (Goethe 1988: 62–81).

Goethe: 10 *A Street*, compared to Gounod: *Act II, Scene V*

This scene in Goethe compares to Act II, Scene V in Gounod since they both contain the meeting between Faust and Marguerite (in Goethe she is referred to as either "Margareta" or "Gretchen"). Different to Gounod, though, only the two lovers are present in Goethe's scene. In Gounod all the townspeople including Siébel and Méphistophéles are present. It is possible that Gounod and his librettists aimed to highlight the societal and cultural context and how it compares to an individual's gender behaviour. In both Goethe and Gounod we encounter Marguerite's first line, which entails an independent, unconventional statement for a nineteenth-century female: "I'm not a lady and I'm not sweet, I can get home on my own two feet." (Goethe); "No, thank you, sir. I am neither a lady nor lovely, and I really have no need for a supporting arm!" (Gounod/Barbier & Carré). Hence, one cannot give sole credit to Gounod and his librettists for the idea of female empowerment that this line conveys, as it is clearly based on Goethe. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 14; Goethe 1988: 81–83.)

In my opinion though, the unconventionality of her rejection of Faust's invitation is articulated more by the inclusion of the other townspeople in the scene by Gounod: after Marguerite rejects Faust, the young girls of the town are noticeably surprised by her reaction and behaviour, "Marguerite, who has declined this fine lord's company!" This remark by the young girls, unique to the opera's libretto, clearly implies that Marguerite's conduct is highly unconventional and even controversial for the current female gender context. Musically, Gounod furthermore stresses Marguerite's unique response to Faust's advance by using prominent suspensions and a *ritardando* to accompany her line. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 14; Gounod 1869: 133–135.)

Goethe: *11 Evening*, compared to Gounod: *Act III, Scene IV, V, VI*

Domestication and stereotyping of the female is much more evident in Goethe than it is the case in the opera. In Goethe we find a long description by Faust of Margareta's room which, in my opinion, contains several derogatory, stereotyped and objectifying comments: "What happiness in this imprisonment!"; "Dear girl, your native spirit that ensures / Maternal daily care, the table neatly laid"; [*He draws aside a curtain from the bed*] "What fierce joy seizes me! I could stand gazing here for ever. Nature, you worked this sweet wonder, here the inborn angel grew through gentle dreams to womanhood. Here the child lay, her tender heart full of warm life [...]." By interpreting these lines one can deduce that Margareta is restricted and seen as a controllable object ("imprisonment"), she is domesticated, and she is also objectified in several ways through the metaphor of the bed – the bed implies immaturity, passivity and bodily lust. (Goethe 1988: 84–85.)

Again, I shall not deny that the operatic Faust does not also commit female objectification in his aria of Act III, Scene IV, but in my view it is not done to the excessive extent that we find in Goethe: we do not encounter references to inhibitive control and restriction, domestic chores, or to bed-related metaphors. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 17.)

The rest of the scene by Goethe does compare greatly to Scenes V and VI of the opera, with a few important exceptions. The part of the plot concerning Siébel and the posy is entirely unique to Gounod and his librettists. Therefore, Scenes I–III of Act III, as well as any references thereafter to Siébel's flowers, are not found in Goethe. In Goethe, Margareta's

mother is still alive, and it is indicated in the text that she undresses herself while singing the tale of the king of Thulé. The entire idea of gender duality/ambiguity involving Siébel (implied in the score of Scenes V and VI in Gounod, as well as his decision of making Siébel a breeches role) is therefore not present in Goethe. Furthermore, the fact that Margareta's mother is still alive and sharing a house with her daughter portrays Margareta as more dependent and childlike than the operatic Marguerite. The indication of Margareta undressing while she sings the tale of the king of Thulé is again very objectifying towards the female and her body. We do not find this in the opera. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 15–19; Goethe 1988: 84–88.)

Goethe: *12 A Promenade*

This scene is not included in Gounod's *Faust* (Goethe 1988: 88–89).

Goethe: *13 The Neighbour's House, 14 A Street, 15 A Garden, 16 A Summerhouse*, compared to Gounod: *Act III, Scenes 7–13*

The reason for presenting a number of scenes together now, is because the opera's plot of Scenes 7–13 is loosely based on numbers 13–16 of Goethe's play, but with the chronology of events differing in the two works.

As in Gounod, I did not find much significant gender ideas present in Scenes 13, 14 and 15 in Goethe. It merely describes Marthe and Marguerite's meeting and discussion of the jewels, followed by Méphistophéles's message to Marthe concerning her deceased husband, as well as his attempt at trying to seduce/distract her. Two statements by Méphistophéles regarding Gretchen and Marthe (which are not found in Gounod) do indicate objectification of, and discrimination against, women (both statements are directed at Faust): "Gretchen will soon be in your bed"; and "That Martha's a proper witch, good Lord". The former degrades Margareta to a mere sex-object, whereas the latter is a derogatory and discriminative judgment of Marthe as embodying the evil feminine (witch). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 19–24; Goethe 1988: 90–96.)

A reference and portrayal of the female being intellectually subordinate and domesticated is greatly highlighted in Goethe – again we do not encounter this in the libretto of the opera, nor did I find it being suggested in Gounod’s score of the scenes discussed here. The dialogue between Margareta and Faust indicates her inferiority towards him, brought about by her conditioned gender identity (Goethe 1988: 97–98):

Margareta: I’m quite ashamed, I feel you’re being so kind
And condescending, just to spare
My feelings, sir! A traveller
Must be polite, and take what he can find.
I know quite well that my poor conversation
Can’t entertain a man of education.

Faust: One look, one word from you – that entertains
Me more than any of this wise world contains.

[He kisses her hand.]

Margareta: Sir, you put yourself out! How can you kiss my hand?
It’s so nasty and rough; I have to do
Such a lot of housework with it.

[...]

Margareta: Oh yes, you see our household’s not
Big, but one has to see to it;
And we’ve no maid. I cook and sweep and knit
And sew, all day on my feet.

One can thus argue, by observing the lack of the above dialogue in Gounod, that the latter and his librettists wanted to give a portrayal of a female with a somewhat stronger, more authentic female identity.

A very striking difference between the two texts lies in the presentation of the seduction. In Goethe the sexual deed is merely implied with no direct reference to it in the text. It is thus an assumption that the reader makes. In contrast to this the seduction enjoys a central, if not *the* central, point in the opera. In my opinion, there are various possible reasons for this. It is a possibility that by highlighting the seduction and its repercussions, Gounod and his librettists wanted to depict the unfair harshness in nineteenth-century French societal and religious judgment towards women who commit Catholic sin, compared to men. Because of the encouraged and almost glorified feminine stereotype, constructed by patriarchal forces in

nineteenth-century France and influenced by the predominance of Marian devotion, female conduct that deviated from the “prescribed” femininity, were ruthlessly judged. Men who were to partake in sinful behaviour, were judged less (if at all) by French society and the Catholic church. This is, for instance, evident in the numerous portrayals of alcohol abuse by the supposed religious soldiers and townsmen in the opera. This conduct seems to be accepted and non-judged. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 24–27; Goethe 1988: 98–102.)

It is of course also justifiable to point out that by putting so much focus on the seduction, Gounod shifted the spotlight from Faust (as is the case in Goethe) to Marguerite – hence, from male to female. If one regards Marguerite’s eventual fate as triumphant, this shift contributes to female empowerment.

Goethe: *17 A forest cavern*

This scene of Faust and Méphistophéles summoning spirits are not present in Gounod’s *Faust* (Goethe 1988: 102–107).

Goethe: *18 Gretchen’s room*, compared to Gounod: *Act IV, Scene I*

A notable difference between these two scenes is again Gounod and his librettists’ incorporation and articulation of the societal context of gender. The text of the libretto differs to a great degree from Goethe’s play in that it includes comments by the young girls, and Marguerite’s subsequent response to them. This is unique to the opera (entailing both score and libretto) and not found in Goethe’s play. I believe it to be a means by which the Catholic, French nineteenth-century context in terms of gender is depicted. It is also indicative of Gounod realizing that gender is a culturally-enforced construct. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 27–28; Goethe 1988: 107–108; Gounod 1869: 249–263.)

Act IV, Scene II in Gounod’s opera (which consists of a recitative between Marguerite and Siébel) is not found in Goethe. Considering my argument that Siébel embodies an authentic “female”, together with Gounod’s treatment and enlargement of the character, it is a logical suggestion that Gounod purposefully aimed to highlight, and comment on, the status of females in nineteenth-century France.

Goethe: 19 *Martha's garden*, 20 *At the well*, 21 *By a shrine inside the town wall*

This is not found in the opera by Gounod (Goethe 1988: 114–115).

Act IV, Scene III of the opera, which comprises the church scene, compares to Goethe's 23 *A cathedral*, and will thus be discussed together with the latter. Act IV, Scenes IV–V involving the joyous and patriotic return of the soldiers (including Valentin) from the war, as well as Valentin's conversation with Siébel about Marguerite, is unique to the opera and not found in Goethe. In my view this has great significance: it is indicative of Gounod specifically giving a French nineteenth-century context to his opera, which distinguishes itself as a unique, original work with self-contained merit, as opposed to a mere replica of Goethe's German marvel. By highlighting the soldiers' return, Gounod indicates the enormous societal influence and relevance that war and patriotism played in nineteenth-century France. In turn, it also points out the glorification of the strong, authoritative, victorious masculine stereotype that reigned during this era. Furthermore, it is again obvious that Gounod enlarged Siébel's part greatly. When one considers my argument explained in Chapter 3.3 of Siébel embodying the authentic, *avant-garde female* emerging during the middle of the nineteenth century, Gounod contributed to positively changing and developing the view of women in this milieu. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 29–32; Gounod 1869: 271–322.)

Goethe: 22 *Night. The street outside Gretchen's door*, compared to Gounod: *Act IV, Scenes VI–VIII*

The dialogue between Faust and Méphistophéles at the beginning of this scene in Goethe is very similar to the libretto in Gounod of Scene VI, and therefore does not contain different gender symbolism. When Méphistophéles delivers his serenade directed to Marguerite the symbolism found in Gounod as regards seduction, the evil feminine and a proposed gender duality ascribed to the Devil is, in my interpretation, largely absent in Goethe. I believe these gender ideas to be specifically evident in the score of the opera, and not in the play. It is thus uniquely Gounodian. The encounter between Méphistophéles, Faust and Valentin, as well as the ensuing duel between the latter two, are naturally male, and therefore similar to Gounod. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 33–36; Goethe 1988: 115–118; Gounod 1869: 323–330.)

Very significant is the difference in the manner by which Valentin curses his sister, just before he dies. In Goethe's text Valentin is overtly disrespectful and objectifying of Gretchen. Although one might argue that a similar message is conveyed in the opera's libretto, the extent of disrespect and negative female stereotyping appears to be less in the latter. In Goethe's version of Valentin's dying speech, the soldier uses the following terms to refer to Gretchen: "whore", "slut", "plague-infected corpse", "vile hag", "vile bawd" (Goethe 1988: 118–119). Barbier and Carré did not use any of these, or other closely-related derogatory terms in the libretto of the opera, which implies a greater sense of respect towards the female (Barbier & Carré 2009: 35–37). Another interesting innovation by Gounod and his librettists is the inclusion of a chorus of religious townspeople commenting on Valentin's sinful rage towards his sister (Barbier & Carré 2009: 36–37):

Chorus

O terror! O blasphemy!
Wretched man, when your last hour has come,
think of your own salvation, alas.
Forgive, if you want to be one day forgiven.

[...]

May the Lord welcome his soul
and forgive the sinner.

Again, I am of the opinion that by incorporating this commentary of the townspeople, Gounod and his librettists situated the opera in its context, nineteenth-century Catholic France. In this sense the work once more gains more authenticity.

Goethe: 23 *A cathedral*, compared to Gounod: *Act IV, Scene II*

A few differences between the two texts are found in this scene. In Goethe, a mass is held for Gretchen's deceased mother who has met her fate through an overdose of sleeping potion. This was given to her by Méphistophéles in order for the seduction between Faust and Margareta to occur without interference. This is not found in Gounod: Marguerite's mother died of illness prior to the timeframe of the plot. In the opera it is merely indicated that Marguerite goes to the church to pray. If one considers Gounod's intensely strong bond with,

and respect for, his own mother, it is possible to argue that this personal emotion inhibited him from representing Marguerite's mother's death in such a cruel fashion. Furthermore, instead of Méphistophéles whom we encounter in the opera, in Goethe we find an unnamed "evil spirit" haunting and cursing Margareta during her attempts at prayer. This difference does have gender implications since we find feminine characteristics in the operatic score when Méphistophéles sings – possibly ascribing gender duality to the Devil. Since Méphistophéles is not present in this scene in Goethe, together with the absence of a score as further reference, an additional feminine persona to the Devil is not implied in the play. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 29–31; Goethe 1988: 120–121; Gounod 1869: 272–322.)

Goethe: *24 Walpurgis Night*, compared to Gounod: *Act V, Scenes I–III*

It is nearly impossible to compare Goethe's "Walpurgis Night" scene and Scenes I–III of Act V by Gounod. In Goethe, this scene is extremely long and it seems to contain its own separate storyline, with many characters we do not encounter in the opera. I would assume that it possibly has more philosophical value than what is suggested in the correlating scenes created by Gounod and his librettists. In my opinion these scenes in the opera have an "escapist" purpose for the spectator and/or listener. The preceding scenes, and the ones to follow, are emotionally intense, and heavy in moral, philosophical and religious content. For this reason, I believe Gounod and his librettists purposefully simplified the material depicting Goethe's *Walpurgisnacht* scene in order to make the opera more accessible for its audience. This is evident in the elaborate ballet. The latter naturally does not have text, hence there are less material to interpret intellectually. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 37–40; Goethe 1988: 122–133; Gounod 1869: 362–420.)

The queens and goddesses of antiquity, whom we encounter in the opera, are not present in Goethe. Rather the latter incorporates a variety of different witches in his scene. Witches, or will-o'-the-wisps as they are referred to in the opera, are included in Gounod's work, but are granted minimum focus, as opposed to their extensive role in Goethe. Although the queens and goddesses of the opera may imply female objectification, they do, nevertheless, convey a message of importance, authority and power. The spotlight on the witches in Goethe, however, creates a negative connotation of the female. One can thus argue that Gounod

attempted to give an empowered representation of femininity. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 37–40; Goethe 1988: 122–133.)

The text in Goethe concerning the vision of Gretchen (shown to Faust by Méphistophéles) is similar to that of Barbier and Carré. There is a notable difference, though. In Goethe, Faust's first reaction is indicative of overt objectification and lust: "It's true, it's true! Those eyes are open wide, closed by no loving hand! I know Gretchen's sweet body which I have enjoyed, her breast that lay by mine not long ago!" Although objectification is also implied in the score and libretto of the opera, the extent is in no way as sexually explicit: "Can you not see her? There, in front of us, silent and wan! What is this strange ornament around her lovely neck?" Again, it is thus arguable that Gounod tried to lessen the sexual objectification of the female. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 37–40; Goethe 1988: 122–133; Gounod 1869: 362–420.)

Goethe: 25 *A Walpurgis Night's Dream (The Golden Wedding of Oberon and Titania)*, 26 *A gloomy day. Open country*, and 27 *Night in open country*

These scenes are not found in Gounod's opera (Goethe 1988: 134–142).

Goethe: 28 *A Prison*, compared to Gounod: *Act V, Scenes IV* until the *Apotheose*

Again the denouement in Goethe entails many significant differences when compared to the corresponding last scenes of Gounod's opera. Notable to me is the text of Margareta, which, for the greater part of the scene, is indicative of subordination and inferiority towards Faust. Furthermore, much emphasis is put on her appraisal of him rescuing her. The following are examples (Goethe 1988: 144):

Margareta: That was my lover's voice!
Where is he? I heard him Call to me.
No one shall stop me, I am free!
To his arms I'll fly,
On his breast I'll lie!
He stood and called 'Gretchen'! I recognized him!

[...]

Where are my chains, my prison and my fear?
It's you! You have come to rescue me from here
And I am saved!

[...]

You undid my chains, they fell apart,
And you will take me back to my heart.
How is it you don't find me a vile thing?
Do you really know, my dear, who you are rescuing?

Although we do encounter a certain extent of the glorification, in Marguerite's eyes, of Faust's rescuing deed, there are no direct references in the libretto of Barbier and Carré (2009: 37–40) which indicate subordination or feelings of inferiority because of her “sinful” female gender.

Christian redemption plays a far greater role in Gounod compared to fewer references in Goethe's play. In the opera, Marguerite calls upon God's help five times, as opposed to twice in Goethe. Furthermore, a choral *Apotheose* with a text centred around the resurrection of Christ is added as finale to the opera. As discussed in greater length in Chapter 6.2 and 6.3, the idea of femininity and its relation to Christian redemption is probably suggested in the libretto and score. Since there is no added text concerning the crucifixion in Goethe, this female symbolism is not present in the latter. It is thus valid to argue that Gounod not only suggested a possible femininity being ascribed to Jesus Christ; the combination of feminine symbolism and the theme of liberation and freedom so prevalent in the opera's finale also implies female empowerment and victory. A core aspect which differentiates Goethe's finale (with regard to gender) from Gounod's, is Margareta's very last words in Goethe's *Faust*: “Heinrich! Heinrich!” This directly suggests a dependency on Faust, and a symbolic male victory, as opposed to the female conquering in Gounod's opera – signified by the feminine symbolism found in the *Apotheose* (Barbier & Carré 2009: 44; Goethe 1988: 147–148; Gounod 1869: 455–462.)

2.5 Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to emphasise the fact that Gounod's *Faust* is indeed an authentic work with unique intrinsic value of its own. Although one cannot deny that the

libretto is to a great extent based on Goethe's *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* (Part I), I have argued that Gounod and his librettists incorporated such significant changes and innovations that it would be highly inaccurate to merely view it as a musical replica of Goethe's *Faust*.

After the analyses done in this chapter, I am more convinced that my argument of Gounod creating unique gender portrayals, and contributing to female empowerment and gender equality, is justified. Compared to Goethe, the gender ideas in Gounod is more liberal, unconventional, and theologically connected. He fulfilled this through the innovative construction of the libretto, as well as symbolic compositional and orchestral applications.

Very significant to me is the milieu of Catholic nineteenth-century France which is very evidently articulated in Gounod's *Faust*. This represented milieu does not merely contribute in defining the work as authentically French, and henceforth differentiating it from its German roots, but it also serves as insight and commentary on the highly Catholic-motivated gender constructs that governed the French people in this era. In my opinion it therefore proves itself to be a pure French Gounodian invention.

3 THEORIES ON GENDER

3.1 Introduction

According to Jackson and Scott (2002: 1–2) the term *gender* can be defined as being a hierarchical division between women and men imbedded in social institutions and practices. It is thus a social, structural phenomenon, but is also produced, negotiated and sustained through everyday interaction. Gender encompasses the social and cultural distinctions between men and women, as well as the characteristics generally associated with masculinity and femininity. It thus differs from *sex* in the respect that the latter refers to the biological and anatomical differences between male and female reproductive organs.

Since entering the academic sphere in the early 1970s gender has grown to become one of the most researched and debated fields in philosophy, sociology and psychology. I believe this is due to it being an immensely universal concept: each and every human being can relate to a certain gender. Gender is also closely linked to sexuality, of which the latter has become the source of many a heated debate in recent years. An unrivalled forerunner and highly respected expert in the field of gender studies is the postmodern philosopher Judith Butler (1956–). One can almost go as far as to say her theory of *performativity* is regarded as synonymous with *gender*. For the most part this theory, first published in the collection of essays *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), has become the basis of the majority of consequent theories by other academics in the field. (Jackson & Scott 2002: 1; Lechte 2008: 184.)

Therefore, the greater part of the following sub-chapter shall entail a discussion of the performativity theory. However, a few other relevant theories and opinions on gender shall also be surveyed. The reason behind this is not merely because of the respectability of the performativity theory, but also because of its relevance to the genre of opera, which is itself a performance. The theories that are discussed here are purposely chosen because of their relation to my understanding of the gender aspects in *Faust*. Their inclusion will therefore become clear in Chapter 6.

3.2 General gender theories

Butler's performativity theory employs the notion that gender is an act, a performance – something everyone 'does' every day. This act is however never original, because it is produced through years of societal, political, ethnic and cultural conditioning of so-called "acceptable" gender constructs. These constructs are thoroughly ingrained in our subconscious, causing our "performance" to be almost instinctive, rather than a conscious gender-identity formation. This has a direct impact on our identity: That what we convince ourselves to have original substance is in fact in itself a fabrication (Butler 2006: 185):

That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the "integrity" of the subject. In other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.

Considering the above, the so-called 'original' identity after which gender moulds itself is an imitation without an origin. The 'normal' (the original) is thus revealed to be an inevitably failed copy, an ideal that no one will be capable of embodying. Acting on a stage is similar to everyday "gender acting" in the sense that actors perform within a set of historical conventions and director's cues for how the actor *ought* to articulate, gesture or move his/her body onstage (Bell 2008: 179). Just like traditional theatre which requires rehearsing, so gender is also a rehearsed, repeated act (Butler 1990: 272):

The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one has arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act that has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again.

This repetition of acts structures a gender and strives to resemble, as closely as possible, the identity foundation. This identity foundation, however, reveals itself to be non-existent. In other words, if gendered characteristics and gestures, the different ways in which a body represents or produces its cultural signification, are performative (that is, in the context of the

performativity theory) then there exists no ‘original’ identity by which a gesture or characteristic can be measured. In essence there can thus be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the assumption of a true gender identity is mere fiction. (Butler 2006: 192.)

Butler’s theory of performativity is to a great extent linked to postmodern theories on identity. Similar to gender, postmodernists believe that there exists no self that is stable, whole, and knowable to the self and others. The ‘self’ is instead multiply fragmented and shifting. Although theories on Deconstruction and *Différance*, developed by philosophers like Jacques Derrida, refer mainly to structuralism and signification in language, I believe it can apply to human identity as well. These theories are based upon the belief that meaning is not an anchored concept but rather a chain of signification – one signifier leads to another and to another and to another, with no original and no ending point. In my opinion identity is similar in that it is fluid and shifting. This instability is due to the multiple cultural, social, political, ethnic, racial and religious influences we are exposed to on a daily basis, of which each influence contains in itself an endless chain of meanings/associations. We are subconsciously manipulated and conditioned by these environmental forces, our identities produced out of fear for social judgment and rejection. The question thus arises whether a naked/pure identity exists beneath all the layers of external covering. (Bell 2008: 174; Lechte 2008: 130–132.)

Hence, along with our gender, our identities are also constructs, acts, performances (Goffman 1959: 252–253):

this self – is a product of a scene that comes off and is not the cause of it [...]. The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die: it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited.

The reason for including the above-mentioned reference to identity is my belief that gender and identity are inescapably linked and entirely co-existent. A person’s identity cannot exist without a gender. Both are social constructs and both are governed by so-called social ‘realism’: Due to conditioning, assumptions and expectations are formed about certain cultures, minority groups, or sexes. For instance, women as a group are assumed to share characteristic features, common conditions, experiences or criteria that define their gender.

All women are thought to be different from *all* men in this respect – a belief-system that is generalizing and insubstantial. The same goes for identity assumptions unrelated to gender (if such a thing is possible): *all* engineers are thought to have similar personality traits that differ from *all* tattoo artists, as an example. (Mikkola 2011: 8.)

Nancy Chodorow (1995) developed an interesting theory of feminine and masculine personalities which links identity and personality with gender. According to her, gendered personalities develop because of women's tendency to be the primary care-takers of small children. The psychic development of infant males and females differs, because mothers (or other prominent females) tend to have predominant care over them. Mothers are more likely to identify with their daughters than with their sons, which unconsciously prompts the mother to encourage her son to psychologically individuate himself from her. This then later leads the son to develop well-defined and rigid ego boundaries. On the other hand the mother however *discourages* the daughter from individuating herself, thereby leading the latter to develop flexible and blurry ego boundaries. The gender conditioning which the children are then exposed to later in childhood eventually produce feminine and masculine persons, reinforced by the pre-existing subconscious ego boundaries set by the mother. Chodorow, however, states that these feminine and masculine personalities, even though they are formed unintentionally, contribute greatly to women's oppression since they make females overly emotionally dependent and attentive to the needs of others, and males emotionally detached and self-involved. This is problematic in that these gendered personalities conveniently suits and reinforces women's subordination, leading women into socialised subordinate roles: domestic, passive, and dependent. (Chodorow 1995: 202–206.)

There are other theories in the field of gender studies that are more concerned with the interplay between gender and sexuality and how it influences people's actions. An example is the analysis of sexual perversion, discussed by Estella Welldon in her book *Mother, Madonna, Whore: The Idealization and Denigration of Motherhood*. Welldon's theory links with that of Chodorow in that it is based upon the infant/mother relationship. According to Welldon, the source of both male and female sexual perversion most likely lies in a disturbance between the perverse person's relationship with his/her mother during the years of infancy and early childhood. Women will attack the mother who neglected, abused or deprived them; however, this "mother" is internalized in their own female bodies or within

their own motherhood. When the woman then bears a child, the hated mother is identified with, or lies *within*, the baby thereby extending herself, just like the perverse woman was once her own mother's extension. Therefore, the typical perversions of women entail child abuse or self-mutilation (masochism). (Mitchell in Welldon 1988: Foreword).

According to Welldon, perversion in males is different in the sense that it is the result of an unresolved Oedipus complex with castration anxiety as its central and main component. Genital primacy with a person of the opposite sex is an impossibility for the oedipal male, since his mother is still very dominant in his subconscious, and he experiences extreme anxiety of being castrated by his father. Differentiation of the sexes are then denied by him and he creates a phallic mother. Consequently the core of perversity lies within the male's penis, which then becomes the main object through which perversity is executed. Perverse acts in men are almost without exception performed on others (sadistic), women being the most popular victims (Welldon 1988: 5). Since Welldon is a female herself, it is however a great possibility that her theory is fuelled by feminism and subjectivity.

In the following quote, Welldon uses the pronoun "she", although she describes feeling and behaviour that apply equally to both sexes committing perverse acts (Welldon 1988: 8–9):

The perverse person feels that she has not been allowed to enjoy a sense of her own development as a separate individual, with her own identity; in other words she has not experienced the freedom to be herself. This creates in her the deep belief that she is not a whole being, but her mother's part-object, just as she experienced her mother when she was a very young infant. From early on in her life she felt unwanted, undesired, and ignored, or alternatively a very important but almost unidentifiable part of her parents' lives (usually her mother's). In this last case she will feel smothered and 'overprotected' (which actually means totally unprotected). Both situations create enormous insecurity and vulnerability, and induce an intense hatred of the person who inflicted this on her, and who was the most important person when she was a baby – her mother.

Welldon is of the opinion that the main aspect of perversion is that the individual, through his/her perverse actions, tries to overcome an overwhelming fear of losing the mother (Welldon 1988: 9).

Putting gender in an entirely different context is Karl Guthke's *The Gender of Death: A Cultural History in Art and Literature* which is a historical analysis of death and its various gendered portrayals. According to Guthke (1999: 4) it was not only the classical mythological tradition that inspired gender relations to death throughout history, but also the Bible. The inspiration behind many beliefs and portrayals of death being female arose, understandably, from Genesis's Eve who, with her eating from the Tree of Wisdom brought death to the world. On the other hand, death tended to be identified with the devil during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. This also makes biblical sense if we take the Book of Wisdom (2:24) into consideration in which the devil, rather than Adam *or* Eve, is the culprit as regards the Fall of Man. However, it is naive to assume the devil as being male-gendered, because of its appearance in both male and female shape in folklore and art. This gender-duality is comparable to the gender ambivalence regarding death during the Romantic period.

Again, similar to the ambivalence of nineteenth-century gender roles discussed in Chapter 4, representations of death during this century seem to have taken on different, contrasting forms: A prevalent notion developed of portraying death as the gentle, friendly youth – almost a “domesticated” friend; whereas on the other hand death as a woman, whether mistress, seductress or mother, became a very popular representation especially in Spanish, French and Polish cultures. The longing for death as a return to maternal love was a feeling experienced by many men of the nineteenth-century, the French historian Jules Michelet, best known for his monumental *Histoire de France* (1855), being an example. The final hymn of *Hymnen an die Nacht* (Hymns to the Night, 1800) by the German poet Novalis is also proverbial with regards the return to the mother, additionally containing very interesting, insightful forms of gender referring to religion (Novalis in Guthke 1999: 162):

For the longing for death is not only one for home, not only for the father's bosom *and* the womb of the earth, but is also the loving yearning for the dead bride *and* for a bridal Jesus Christ.

I believe it to be a beautiful contradiction: the womb is here related to death, although it is in essence life-giving.

3.3 Application of general gender theories to the characters in Gounod's *Faust*

It is quite evident that gender is a very complex concept, perhaps more so than we realise. It is a culturally-constructed force that has an enormous influence on our identities, our relationships and our psychological development and eventual formation. For the greater part, we are not able to inhibit, prevent or discontinue its control over us, since it is a process of conditioning that already starts at birth.

I argue that there are many correlations between the general theories on gender discussed in Chapter 3.2, and the gender issues in Gounod's *Faust*. Marguerite's femininity is essentially an embodiment and performance of the femininity advocated by her family, community, culture, religion and era. However, I believe there is a duality in her femininity. Until her seduction, Marguerite is everything a nineteenth-century young woman ought to be: pious, domesticated, nurturing, caring, humble and modest. We, as spectators, are given a glimpse of her independent streak when she, during her very first appearance on stage, refuses Faust's proposal to escort her. This personality trait later manifests itself when she succumbs to Faust's advances, something which was viewed as totally taboo for an unmarried Catholic girl like Marguerite. Her independence can be seen as the performance of the *other* side of the ambiguous nineteenth-century female situation: the growth of independence, and a rise in the questioning of authority. However, the latter side of her performance is not supported by her community, and consequently she is judged and rejected to the point of madness and death.

Her freedom of identity is an illusion, because she is a product of her milieu. Her character at the outset of the opera is a construction of the woman she ought to be, the femininity that is both forced upon, and expected of her. When she then breaks through the constraints of her "assigned" identity in an effort to attain freedom, this "freedom" quickly reveals itself as imprisonment, figuratively and literally.

It is however not just Marguerite who falls prey to the unavoidable control that societal constructs exert on individuals, but also the male characters in *Faust*. From the outset of the opera it is visible that the nineteenth-century model of the ideal man – masculine, strong, heroic, patriotic, pugnacious, authoritative – is performed by the majority of men. Valentin is

a perfect prototype of this model: he is a patriotic soldier, easily motivated to use physical strength and violence, and also highly authoritative and controlling of his sister. The gender conditioning in him is possibly the most visible/successful, judging from his extreme reaction when learning of Marguerite's "misconduct". The acting out of his ascribed gender is of such importance to him, that he cannot even find mercy on his own flesh and blood. The extent of the conditioning on him is thus so far developed that it governs his moral make-up, regardless of emotional ties.

Interestingly, one can even argue that the character Faust is to a certain degree influenced by the gender constructs that governed the nineteenth century, although he himself is not an embodiment of the male norm. Faust is not a Christian, he is not active in defending and protecting his family, he is never referred to as a man of physical strength (it is only through the help of Méphistophéles that he successfully defeats Valentin), and the "real" Faust (the Faust at the outset of the opera) is in essence the opposite of what a man ought to have been according to the society of that time. He is hopeless, depressed, passive, and the picture of a person with very low self-esteem – in short, pathetic. Therefore, the nineteenth-century gender construction somehow did not succeed in the transmittance of male gender symbols onto Faust himself; rather, the *female* gender symbols managed to enter and condition his mind to govern his mental framework regarding "woman", "womanhood", "motherhood", and anything female-related.

The stereotypical nineteenth-century "woman" is therefore what he searches for, and expects to find, in his pursuit of love. The Marguerite that he falls in love with is, as discussed above, the embodiment of this female model with the added bonus of her being strikingly beautiful. I believe Faust then essentially "uses" the stereotype to his own selfish gain: he takes advantage of Marguerite's gender conditioning by making her succumb to the authority of a man – something that both her society and her religion proclaims. Faust did however not bargain on Marguerite's unique independence, hypothetically influenced by the other pole of the nineteenth-century female situation, and that he would ultimately be outwitted by the one person he assumed he would have control over.

Siébel is a fascinating character as regards his performance, or rather, *lack of* performance, of the nineteenth-century male model. Siébel is shy, insecure, non-assertive, non-violent, and

humble (made visible by his choice of flowers, as opposed to Faust's jewels, as a gift to Marguerite). He also takes on an apathetic, perhaps even sympathetic stance over Marguerite's plight – in contrast to the other men. One can argue that he actually embodies many of the female nineteenth-century characteristics. Gounod's decision to make this character a breeches role is therefore so befitting, because Siébel is in essence performing a "woman".

Apart from Butler's performativity theory and its relation to Marguerite, it is a possibility, that our leading lady can be an example of a perverse individual, as described by Welldon. The latter states that it is either an absent, negligent, abusive mother, or, paradoxically, one that is over-protective and over-involved in the child's life, who may actuate future perverse behaviour in her offspring. Unfortunately we as spectators of the opera are given little information on Marguerite's mother and their mother-daughter relationship. However, what we can deduce is that her mother had to have taken up a central place in Marguerite's day-to-day life, considering that Marguerite had to step in as her mother's carer during the latter's fateful illness. Marguerite was then forced to fulfil the same role toward her ailing sister who also passed away.

Although it is speculation, I find it important to consider Welldon's theory in relation to Marguerite. It is a great possibility that Marguerite perhaps felt smothered and inhibited in enjoying the carefree freedom that youth offers, because of her duty to nurse and assist her dependent mother. She might also have felt abandoned and neglected, caused by her mother's inability to care for, nurture and protect her. In effect Marguerite had to take over the role as "mother" to both her own mother and her sister. She was thus robbed of a great part of her youth, and it is possible that this, together with her feelings of abandonment, could have provoked anger and resentment toward her mother for "forcing" this situation onto her.

Considering Welldon's theory that perversion in women are typically either characterized by self-destructive behaviour (self-mutilation), or abuse toward their offspring, this anger that Marguerite possibly fostered toward her mother, could have transferred into perversion once she fell pregnant. Marguerite murdered her unborn child – an action that can be regarded as not only destructive toward the child, but also self-destructive.

The character Faust is a plausible candidate for Chodorow's theory on the cause, development and establishment of a so-called masculine personality. Taking into account that Faust was born with the sex of a male, his mother most probably detached herself from him at birth, since she is of the opposite sex and therefore cannot identify with him. This detachment, according to Chodorow leads to males establishing stronger egos, self-confidence, independence, self-involvement, and emotional disconnection. Faust, to my mind, exhibits all of these character traits: he is fearless and overtly confident in his pursuit of winning Marguerite's heart; although he is for the most part connected to Méphistophéles, there are many instances where he stands his ground independently – for example when he orders Méphistophéles to take him to Marguerite's prison cell; at the outset of the opera it is clear how self-involved he is when his greatest wish is of a selfish nature (to enjoy the decadencies that youth has to offer), and after his transformation he proves that he is even willing to murder in order to satisfy his own needs; lastly, his emotional detachment is clearly visible when he abandons Marguerite after seducing her and learning of her impregnation.

As regards death and its relation to gender, Marguerite again portrays two different, contrasting notions. On the one hand it can be argued that her death is symbolic of her own sinful gender – as suggested in the story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. In accordance with Christian dogma, by eating from the tree of wisdom Eve was the first human to sin. It is believed that due to this act of selfishness and disobedience, followers of the Christian faith have been punished with the Fall of Man: suffering and sin during believers' time here on earth, followed by death – with either redemption or eternal hell as outcome, depending on one's piety. Furthermore, Eve is regarded as a seductress in the sense that she persuaded Adam to follow her lead. Thus, according to Biblical belief the woman is inherently connected to sin and death.

Marguerite can easily fall into this belief-system, because, similar to Eve, she could not resist temptation. Her act of sin then also affected and caused death unto other Christian believers and *possible* believers (in the context of the opera), like her brother Valentin and her unborn child.

In a more positive light, death in the opera *Faust* can again be linked to the female gender, but this time taking the theory of dying as a return to the womb/mother, as basis. A very

significant innovation that Gounod made to the denouement of the opera, was the incorporation of an Easter chorus accompanying Marguerite as she dies. In Christian belief Easter represents hope and newness of life as a result of Christ's death for believers' sins. The Easter egg, a symbol used during Easter in Christian cultures, furthermore stresses this belief of birth and life. Ironically, the latter two concepts are, however contradicting it might seem, very closely connected to death: if a believer is redeemed, his/her death essentially means birth – the sinful, earthly existence is parted with in order to be replaced by the beginning of a new, pure, sinless, painless “life” in heaven.

The popular notion in French Christian culture of the nineteenth century adds on to the aforementioned belief of death actually symbolising birth: death can be seen as a return to the womb/mother. Taking this into consideration, death, and specifically Marguerite's death in the opera, can be related to the female and the mother, especially when one regards the Easter chorus in the finale as a symbol of birth and life – concepts not only linked to death, but symbolically also to the female, due to her ability to give life. The ironic life/death union is even more underlined with Marguerite's murdering of her unborn foetus. She is both the life-giver *and* the life-taker. (Guthke 1999: 162.)

The consideration of an association between death and the devil is perhaps more obvious, because of the devil's intrinsic evil nature to wreak death rather than life. In this sense it is quite easy to view Méphistophéles (the devil) as the one responsible for death in the opera: it is due to his powers that Marguerite was seduced by Faust and consequently rejected by her community and driven to madness, murder, imprisonment and finally death. Similar is the fate of Valentin – if it were not for the interference by Méphistophéles in the dual between the soldier and Faust, Valentin would perhaps still have had the privilege to see the light of day.

Lastly, Méphistophéles is portrayed in the opera as your everyday gentleman, least of all as a frightening unearthly creature of sin. This corresponds with the nineteenth-century view of the devil as a “domesticated” friend. (Guthke 1999: 162.)

3.4 Gender on stage and in music

The gender theory of performativity discussed in the previous sub-chapter attains an ironic, yet complex meaning when it is analysed in the field of theatre, which is itself a genre of Performance.

According to Gladhart (1996: 63) gender as a performative act is even further complicated when the performance, always present in ‘real’ life, occurs on stage. Due to an actor’s concern with *not* conveying his/her personal code of gender, he/she compensates by transmitting a set of signals that are simultaneously more abstract and more graphic than those prevalent in standard social discourse. Consequently, ‘authenticity’ with regard to gender representations is even more unattainable on stage than it is in everyday life. Since gender performed in reality is already represented as non-referential, an act of which its appearance is the only substance, representations of gender on stage is doubly distanced from any essential “reality”. Senelick furthermore notes that gender performed by “performers” never merely reproduce the genders we encounter in real life: they are either more articulated, or more empathically presented. As a result, both an “ideal” gender is represented, and, perhaps contradictingly, the social gender norm is critiqued. (Senelick 1992: ix–xi.)

This duality is especially prevalent in the actress’s experience since performing on stage is a liberating act of claiming public space that was for centuries reserved for men. It allows women to escape the confines of their private spheres and communicate in ways formerly forbidden or restricted. However, when a woman performs on stage, her private identity is discarded and she becomes an exposed, public woman – open to ridicule. In other words, an actress makes a spectacle of herself. This effect of making oneself a spectacle is of course a viable actualization for performers of either gender. However, it is possible to argue that the woman, due to her enforced absence from the stage, is more exposed and at risk for ridicule and derision. Although the idea of a created gender spectacle might immediately be interpreted as a derogatory epithet, one must take into account that the self is *already* a spectacle. The selves that we project to others (and sometimes even to ourselves) are predominantly performances of selves that we have been conditioned to regard as socially and culturally acceptable. One’s “original” self is covered and replaced by “masks” portraying acceptable social and cultural traits, making us the products of our context. The

result is yet another performance, show, spectacle. Therefore, it is inevitable for a woman to make a spectacle of herself: to make herself is to make a spectacle, regardless of theatre or reality. (Gladhart 1996: 64.)

Transvestite performance and/or the female breeches role is also ambivalent when considering female empowerment. On the one hand a woman dressed as a man is again liberating because such roles often embody independent, strong-willed characters, as opposed to the passive, subordinate, non-developing characters that actresses (dressed in female attire) usually have to portray. But on the other hand, Rogers (1982: 248) comments that “it was attractive actresses who were given the chance to play breeches parts – that is, women who had been found attractive to men” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Female legs, ordinarily concealed by long skirts, are revealed through male costuming which leads to the sexualisation and objectification of the actress: “The display of leg enhances the sexual display of womanhood even as it pretends to mimic manhood.”

Berlanstein (1996: 351) argues that it is nevertheless important to take into account that the rise in popularity of the female breeches role in the nineteenth century encouraged society to broaden their understandings of the body and of sexuality. The spectacle of the stage served as a cover for homo-erotic pleasures that would otherwise have been suspect. The breeches role allowed audiences to enjoy the sight of two women embracing or exchanging longing gazes. Transvestite performance therefore had the opportunity to raise thought-provoking questions and strong statements about society and governmental practice. It is viable that such performances questioned the exclusive acceptance by authoritative institutions, such as the church or government, of a gender–sex correlation in a person, as well as the established heterosexual relationship. The extent of the influence and effect that transvestite performances could have had on such sexuality-related issues is however difficult to determine – especially if we take into account that male actors hardly ever masqueraded as women in nineteenth-century Europe. In France, Napoleon’s militarization of society and the ensuing defeat in 1815 most probably had an effect in making it offensive to effeminize the male status in such a public manner. Hence, the contribution of the female breeches role to women’s liberation and gender equality in stage performance remains ambivalent. (Berlanstein 1996: 339–342.)

In her article “Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris” (1997) Katharine Ellis gives insight into the very present gender hierarchies that governed piano performance in the nineteenth century. The most noticeable pianist in Paris, until the mid 1840s was the male composer-virtuoso, whose reputation was mainly built upon performances of his own virtuoso pieces. Narcissistic and competitive, he flourished when having both complete control over and ownership of his works. Reviews and descriptions of audience reaction to performances by such players, make clear how a quasi-sexual possession of the audience was an integral part of the pianist’s playing. Control-issues are at the heart of this so-called “sexual tension”: control of the audience by the performer, and control over the music by the composer (also the performer) himself. It was thus of the utmost importance for a male pianist to emphasise and showcase his masculinity. (Ellis 1997: 356–357.)

For female pianists there were however not much space in this performing norm. Women were for one not able to conform to the virtuoso-composer paradigm, because as a result of women’s limited opportunities to be trained as composers, few composed. They faced similar challenges in mere performing, considering that many conservatories, including the Paris Conservatoire, barred women from competing in professional competitions – the gateways to a career. Inexplicably, the years 1844–1845 saw a huge upsurge in professional piano performances by women, such as Louise Mattmann and Marie Pleyel. Critics who praised stereotypically masculine qualities were now faced with a problem, since such qualities were directly opposed to those praised in women – advocated in, among other European political manuscripts, the Napoleonic Code of 1804. A lady conducting a public piano performance were consequently regarded as directly challenging government policies. Perhaps influenced by Rousseau’s views of women, a piano performance by a woman raised many questions in French bourgeoisie thought about her personal conduct. According to Rousseau female display (the aberrant woman), as opposed to female modesty and domesticity (the true, natural woman), bordered on hermaphroditism since women in the latter category adopted masculine behaviour. But more concerning for Rousseau was such women’s potentially effeminizing effect on the men who watched them on stage. (Ellis 1997: 361–362.)

Another challenging and inhibiting aspect for female performing pianists in the nineteenth century was the gendering of repertoires, most prevalent in the second half of the century. Beethoven was implicitly gendered male, whereas Baroque music, Haydn, Mozart and even

Hummel were regarded as female. Consequently judgment was inevitable for any women daring to play Beethoven, or any man Haydn or Mozart. (Ellis 1997: 363–364.)

When a female pianist eventually succeeded in conquering the above-mentioned obstacles and gave a public performance as a pianist, it was often not her piano-playing that was elaborately critiqued on, but rather her appearance (Blanchard in Ellis 1997: 367):

Her pink dress, in the style of Classical nymphs, revealed the entire naked length of a very pretty arm, something which, however, does not detract from the quality of her playing.

Hence, even in a branch of performing arts where a gender is not deliberately being acted (as is the case in a play or an opera), gender is indeed very much being “performed”, due to the inhibition, and on the other hand encouragement, produced by societal norms. One can almost go so far as to say that the predominant “piece” performed in nineteenth-century concert halls was in fact gender.

A big advocate for the undeniably huge role that gender plays in music, is the musicologist Susan McClary. In fact, the latter is so passionate about this concept, that she claims that, together with literature and visual art, music is almost *always* concerned with the construction of gender, the organization of sexuality, and the arousal and channelling of desire. Since music is such a mysterious force (few listeners are able to determine precisely how it creates its effects), it gives the illusion of being independent from cultural mediation. It is often received as something which connects with our private, most intimate feelings and emotions. Music is, thus, able to contribute greatly to the shaping of identities – by supplying a means through which we can experience our own desires, emotions, and even our bodies (especially in dance); it socializes us. (McClary 1991: 53.)

As an example of the influence of gender constructs on music, McClary uses the opera *Carmen* (1875) by George Bizet. According to her, the opera is a portrayal of the traditional Western dichotomy between proper and improper constructions of female sexuality: virgin and whore. Don José’s childhood sweetheart Micaëla represents the stereotypical submissive, sexless ideal of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. In general her musical language is diatonic, characterized by lyrical, simple, sweet melodies – free from any sexual references.

The opera is however driven by Carmen who is the complete opposite of the aforementioned virgin. Carmen is the “dissonant Other”, her music marked by its chromatic excess and provocative rhythms. It is clear, articulated in the music and the text, that this seductive gypsy is very much aware of her body. Moreover the distinct rhythms assigned to her character are so contagious that they make both José and the listener aware of not only *her* body, but also of their own. She thus arouses desire and becomes José’s, and the listener’s, desire. (McClary 1991: 54, 56, 57.)

One can however argue that it is not Carmen but rather Don José who is the central character in this fable of morality: *his* story organizes the narrative, and it is *his* fate that lies in the hands of either the virgin or the whore. But perhaps most importantly he represents the stereotypically-represented heroic male of the nineteenth century – not only through his textual characterization, but also through his musical discourse. His music is sentimental, giving the impression that, in stark contrast to Carmen, he has true, pure intentions. However, McClary notes that Don José’s music is, for the most part, self-absorbed monologues – leaving no room for another voice. (McClary 1991: 58–59.)

Interestingly, the latter point is both literally and figuratively true in the sense that there is no women’s voice in this legendary work: Carmen is a male construction, a product of nineteenth-century male patriarchy. She is at once what men desire, and what they condemn. But most importantly: she is ultimately controlled and defeated by a man. (McClary 1991: 59.)

In her article “A Material Girl in Bluebeard’s Castle”, McClary focuses more on aspects of gender in music itself (referring to sheet music as opposed to, for instance, hermeneutics of cultural or psychological concepts in music performances). She comments, among other topics, on the following entry of masculine and feminine cadences in the 1970 edition of the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Apel 1970: 506):

Masculine, feminine cadence. A cadence or ending is called “masculine” if the final chord of a phrase or section occurs on the strong beat and “feminine” if it is postponed to fall on a weak beat. The masculine ending must be considered the normal one, while the feminine is preferred in more romantic styles.

According to McClary this differentiation is based on relative strength, with the binary opposition masculine/feminine transferred to strong/weak. The definition also implies that, if the masculine version is normal, the feminine must be abnormal; and if it is in “more romantic styles” in which the feminine is preferred, then the masculine must be associated with the more rational, more objective of musical discourses. It is thus clear that the author of the entry did not fail in incorporating Western beliefs concerning sexual difference: the “masculine” is strong, normal and objective, while the “feminine” is weak, abnormal and subjective. (McClary 2007: 120.)

Such discriminatory stereotyping of masculine/feminine distinctions are however not restricted to cadences. Georg Andreas Sorge, an eighteenth-century theorist, used terms he regarded as both natural and God-given to explain the hierarchical differentiation between major and minor triads (McClary 2007: 121):

Just as in the universe there has always been created a creature more splendid and perfect than the others of God, we observe exactly this also in musical harmony. Thus we find after the major triad another, the minor triad, which is indeed not as complete as the first, but also lovely and pleasant to hear. The first can be likened to the male, the second to the female sex. And just as it was not good that the man (Adam) was alone, thus it was not good that we had no other harmony than the major triad; for how far would we come in a progression from one chord to the other? And just as the womanly sex without the man would be quite bad, thus with music it would be in a bad way if we had no other harmony than that which the minor triad gives. We could not once make an authentic cadence.

Examples like the above two, as regards gender distinctions in music are therefore highly useful in understanding, and believing, McClary’s notion that concepts of gender are inescapable and unavoidable aspects in music. They also serve the purpose of revealing the gender constructs of the particular place and time in which a composition was written – making music a platform for social commentary.

Although Elizabeth Eva Leach’s article “Gendering the Semitone, Sexing the Leading Tone: Fourteenth-Century Music Theory and the Directed Progression” (2006) refers mainly to gender aspects in music of the Renaissance period, her argument is based upon general gender theories of Greek antiquity. In my view the latter can also be connected to any other era for that matter – therefore I shall make use of it in this study.

According to Leach (2006: 2) many ancient Greek theories on music implied that music rich in intervals smaller than a tone is feminine, effeminizing, and of a morally suspect nature – thereby either referring to women or cross-dressed men. Because an equal division of a tone was seen as ill-favoured at the time, semi-tones were forced into being different sizes. Even the note B-flat was seen as less regular, round in shape, ‘soft’, and ‘sweet’. Thus, the prefix “semi” in semi-tone, had a patriarchal feminine metaphorical association. The earliest of many theorists who indirectly associated the semi-tone with cross-dressing, was Johannes, the eleventh-century glossator of Guido of Arezzo. In connection with the semi-tone, he writes (Palisca in Leach 2006: 2):

because it is not a full tone, but an imperfect one, not, as some ignorant people say, because it is exactly half of a whole tone. Thus Vergil speaks of *semiviri Phryges* – that is, incomplete Phrygian men – because they garb themselves like women.

The mention of Phrygia in the above quote is fundamental, because this region was infamous for its “sinful” sexual behaviour: Ganymede and Jupiter represented homosexuality, with the latter abducting Ganymede to be his cupbearer and lover (described as “the Phrygian youth”); and adultery was embodied by the tale of Troy’s downfall at the hands of the adulterous love of the “Phrygian” Paris for Helen. Thus, the Phrygian mode in music was believed to represent such sexual “abominations” as mentioned above. Fearing for its power of leading men into an abyss of lust and sin, the mode was banned during a time in Greek Antiquity. (Leach 2006: 4.)

The leading note was a particular source of fear. Since the progression of a leading note resolving to the tonic is built on a semi-tone, the contrapuntal tension implies an imperfect sonority “seeking” completion in a perfect sonority. The theoretical belief of semi-tones as feminine and feminizing, together with the clerical and philosophical opinion that regarded women as particularly sexual beings (more susceptible to sexual desire and likely to evoke it), created a panic about this “directed progression”. The leading note was believed to not only lead astray the musician (who now is forced to depart from “normal” musical rhetoric), but also the listener (whose morality would be numbed by such unethical semitones). The predominant danger of the semi-tone was thus that of seductive, female-evoked sexual desire. (Leach 2006: 5.)

Although the above beliefs date back to Greek Antiquity, Taruskin (2010: 528) argues that music composed in the Romantic period evoked much similar emotions to that believed to be experienced by listeners in ancient Greece and fourteenth-century Europe.

In referring to artistic endeavours of the time, the tonal art music of the Romantic period played an interesting role concerning individual emotional experiences: not only did it try to capture and represent the emotions felt by Romantics, but when listening to it (even today), one's own emotions are determined through the harmonic and melodic structures. During the nineteenth century, many composers (for example Wagner), contributed by changing harmony as it was used until and during the Classical era. One distinct characteristic of this new harmonic framework was the tendency to create strategic harmonic delays, which meant that leading notes were used for very long passages before they finally resolved to the tonic. (Taruskin 2010: 528.)

According to Taruskin (2010: 529), the leading note's "need" to resolve is actually the listeners psychological need: the fluctuating musical tension becomes a mirror of our (the listener's) psychological, emotional and sexual tensions experienced in our lives. Harmonic forecasts and delays play directly upon the listener's expectation, or, to put it more strongly, on the *desires* that the music creates in the listener. Thus, the musical events, relative to listener expectations, are translated directly onto the intensified emotion that the fulfilment, or frustration, of desire produces. On this topic, the musicologist Karol Berger states (Taruskin 2010: 529):

What I actually experience, when I experience the tonal tendency of a sound, is the dynamics of my own desire, its arousal, its satisfaction, its frustration. It is my own desire for the leading tone to move up, the satisfaction of my own desire when it so moves, the frustration thereof when it refuses to budge or when it moves elsewhere

Along with the above theoretical and harmonic aspects in which gender seems to surface, musical instruments with their various sizes and ranges, also provoke sex and gender stereotypes. In one of the earliest gender and instrument studies using both music- and non-music majors as respondents, Abeles and Porter (1978: 68) concluded that the violin, the flute and the clarinet are regarded as the three most feminine instruments, with the trumpet,

trombone and drums as most masculine. Conway (2000: 1) did a similar study over 20 years later, only to conclude that the same stereotypes that dictated musical instruments in 1978 were still mostly unaltered. Both of these studies were conducted in the United States.

In my opinion these stereotypes concerning instruments are highly symptomatic of the age-old gender constructs that in many instances still seem to prevail. Note that the violin, flute and clarinet are three small instruments with high-pitched ranges, in comparison to many other instruments. The intensity and volume-capacity of their sound is significantly lower than that of the trumpet, trombone and drums. The latter three instruments are also often associated with importance, and/or, war: significant announcements (drum-roll and trumpet call), military parades, and national anthems (to name but a few). The violin, flute and clarinet are popular choices for love/romance-related music – often used in love arias and soundtracks to films with a romantic subject matter.

It is thus deducible that even in something seemingly remote from anything, gender-related musical instruments also convey the conditioned, discriminatory notion that men represent importance and power, while women are restricted to the roles of carers, nurturers and lovers – being (if compared to the instruments) literally too “small” to have an authoritative voice, so to speak.

Apart from the philosophical and social issues that the gender- and sex-stereotyping of instruments may cause, it can have implications regarding performance exposure, opportunities, and consequently finances (Abeles & Porter 1987: 65):

The association of gender with musical instruments can, as can stereotyping of any kind, serve to constrict the behaviour and thus the opportunities of individuals. Stereotyping is particularly a problem when it is based on characteristics irrelevant to the function of a group of objects, such as the association of maleness with playing the drums and femaleness with playing the violin. The sex-stereotyping of musical instruments, therefore, tends to limit the range of musical experiences available to male and female musicians in several ways, including participation in instrumental ensembles and selection of vocations in instrumental music.

Moving back to the field of theatre as a whole, a more philosophical viewpoint, the theory of “female absence” by Rob Baum claims that a “real” woman or female is for the most part

absent in theatre. In her place a metaphorical Woman is created, often constructed by male playwrights for (predominantly) male audiences. This norm has its origins in ancient Greek theatre with Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, one of the most famous plays in early Western literature, contestably being the best example. (Baum 2003: 22–23.)

Since the theatre is a space in which physical action takes place, the body plays a crucial part. But for women this bodily aspect has for the most part had negative, discriminating effects. Historically, women have been defined as well as *confined* by the body through the traditional belief that the mind is the man, the body is the woman. The repercussions of this belief, however, not merely end with the consequent association of women with motherhood, nurturing and caring, but in fact extends to the woman herself as being absent, when taking the equation of woman equals body into consideration. In other words, woman has not ceased to exist, but rather has not been *seen* to exist, another thing entirely: the whole woman as a perceptible entirety has become outweighed by the image of the female body. Woman is thus a metaphor for a system of social, cultural, political and economic forces over which she has little or no control. (Baum 2003: 31.)

It is however not only the body that leads to female absence on stage. Compared to the active, spatially full roles given to men, women's roles are often of such a nature that they are confined to the home (Mulvey in Baum 2003: 37):

[The home's] emotional reverberations and its [female] gender specificity are derived from and defined in opposition to a concept of masculine space: an outside, the sphere of adventure, movement, and cathartic action in opposition to emotion, immobility, enclosed space, and confinement.

Thus, associated with the home, women only start to feature when the male character (often a heroic figure) returns home from a journey (either metaphorical or real). It is expected of the woman to *be* there, and to be *there* – serving as both a trophy for male heroism and exploration, and representing the place of domestic compensation and sexual gratification. (Baum 2003: 37.)

In theatre tradition, the mask is, rather ironically, known to represent truth as opposed to the general assumption that its purpose is to hide something or someone. Although this idea has

great philosophical value and is undeniably true in many ways, it contributed to the oppression of women as actresses. The mask of the woman replaced her ‘real’ voice as spokes piece. In other words the mask became the representation of “woman” – reducing her reality to a fictional epithet and male-created idea. (Baum 2003: 38.)

For fear of generalising it is important to note that, apart from the above-mentioned oppressions, a tradition of powerful, exemplary female roles in which woman are portrayed as real, fully-articulated human beings, *have* existed and also continue to exist today. However, often such roles have a dominant negativity connected to them – an example being that of the “monster”. Famous characters like Fury, Medusa, Crone and Lady Macbeth are sexualised, monstrous females who initially may give the impression of authority and strength, but whose fate are then inevitably sealed by madness and death. (Baum 2003: 157–158.)

Although I believe Baum has a strong argument, I do acknowledge that he is subjective to the extent that he ignores (whether purposefully or not) many examples of theatrical works in which the contrary of his deductions are dominant. Ironically, his theories also have the possibility to contribute to the female’s gender-subordination, because he continually portrays her as a victim of patriarchal control.

Until now I have only discussed the one half which constitutes theatre, the performers. However, theatre cannot exist without its spectators, who are ultimately the ones who decide what they see and don’t see. The illusionist tradition that has dominated, and to a certain extent still dominates theatre practice, advocates the idea that performers and spectators are separated by a fictitious fourth wall (a “wall” that separates stage from audience). Blinded by a curtain of light, the performers experience the audience as a singular mass, their differences disguised by anonymity. However, similar to marketing, the apparatus of a performance intends to constitute that formless, anonymous mass as a particular subject. In other words, the *mise-en-scène* is manipulated so that the performance’s meanings are intelligible to a particular spectator. Traditionally this spectator has been assumed to be heterosexual, white, middle-class and male. An ideal spectator is thus created who is believed to represent the ideology of the dominant culture. (Dolan 1988: 1.)

According to Dolan (1988: 2) most performances are directed to a gender-specific spectator. This utilizes gender codes that are culturally determined and the fuel behind cultural conditioning. Usually the male spectator is targeted as the active subject who is encouraged to identify with the male hero in the narrative. Unfortunately for women the opposite is mostly the case: female performers are objectified and the female audience members are assumed to be passive, invisible, mute subjects. (Dolan 1988: 2.)

The theory of the “male-gaze” encompasses much of the above. Although the theory has its foundation in psychoanalysis, the concept has grown to be mainly linked with media, which includes cinema and theatre. The feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey is widely known as the expert in this field, setting the bar with her 1975 essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. Similar to what was mentioned above, the male-gaze occurs when the audience is put in the perspective of a heterosexual man as active, objectifying spectator projecting male fantasies onto the female figure on stage or on screen. The series of “looks” built into the script of a film or play (the gestures, mannerisms and costumes, as well as the invisibly constructed gaze assigned to the spectator) all position the male spectator to identify with the male protagonist on stage and in film. According to Mulvey this is predominantly enforced by scopophilia (the pleasure derived from looking), voyeurism and fetishism, that leads to the objectification of women. The pleasure in seeing a person as an object may lead to perversion, in which sexual gratification is obtained through watching an objectified other in an active, controlled way. (Dolan 1988: 13; Mulvey 2000: 485–487).

The identification of the male spectator with the protagonist allows him access into the film’s subject position, his position leading to increased sexual differentiation in gender representations. The male spectator’s position is also the point from which the text is most comprehensible. (Dolan 1988: 13).

The female spectator, on the other hand, is placed in an impossible relationship to representation. She places herself in a masochist position if she identifies with the narrative’s passive, objectified woman. And if she were to identify with the male hero, she becomes an accomplice to her own indirect objectification. She would also participate in her own commodification were she to admire the represented female body. Within the borders of

theatre and film, these are the only available positions for the female spectator to assume. (Dolan 1988: 13.)

Again we encounter a rather one-sided view of the spectator in performance. I am prone to believe that many counter-arguments and examples can be given to defend other theories that stand in contrast with that of Dolan's.

3.5 Gounod's *Faust* as a gendered performance

Gender performativity *in* a performance is, as mentioned in Chapter 3.4, an ironic, obscure concept, because of the multiplied acting present in such an endeavour: both the actual acting involved in portraying a character and his/her gender identity, and also the actor's *own* gender and identity acting – something that he/she is not in control of, though. The latter is inevitably present in any acting sphere including *Faust*.

Therefore, performances of *Faust* will always contain differences in the representation of gender, since the same performers (with their own unique gender traits) are not consistently used. For example, an Islamic, Indian-born soprano will most probably deliver a disparate rendition of Marguerite's femininity, compared to a Mormon of Texan-American descent.

Senelick's notion that the gender performed by "performers" is either overtly honest (as regards its representation of the gendered social and cultural milieu) or diminished to a camouflaged/sugar-coated version, is also applicable to *Faust* (Senelick 1992: ix–xi). In other words (depending on the country, regime, culture, religion, media laws, director, and finally singer) portrayals of gender (especially gender inequalities) in the opera may either be blatantly exposed and critiqued on, *or* minimized/camouflaged. The gender representations that the spectator thus receive and perceive, are manipulated by the milieu in which the specific production takes place. Therefore, the "original" gender message that a composer and his librettist(s) might have wanted to convey, is inevitably blurred by the gender convictions of the time, place, and people governing the production of an opera.

Although directors and producers usually attempt to construct their production as close as possible to what they believe the composer and librettist(s) desired with the work, it is still a rather relative endeavour. Thus, in order to come to a closer understanding of the composer's and librettist(s) intentions with their presentation of gender symbolization, it is wise to analyze more than one production and then make deductions from the similarities found between them. In Chapter 6, I will therefore evaluate three different productions of *Faust*: a 1985 Austrian production, a 2004 British production, and a 2005 Italian production.

When analyzing Siébel, the breeches role in *Faust*, a unique view emerges – not only by default (encountering an operatic breeches role in the nineteenth century was fairly rare), but also merely by means of the very nature of the character. In the above discussion I mentioned that breeches roles often embody strong-willed, independent characters, as opposed to passive, non-developing ones. In the case of Siébel there is however an interesting ambivalence present. Siébel is independent in his thinking, considering that he is the one character who does not judge Marguerite's act of sin, regardless of his feelings toward her, and regardless of risking social isolation. In this sense Siébel is uniquely independent – intellectually he is the master of his feelings and opinions, rather than being governed by societal pressure to conform. Counteracting this though, is Siébel's lack of character development and growth. This is especially visible in his pursuit of Marguerite: apart from the bouquet of flowers that he gives her, he is otherwise mostly passive in attempting to win over her heart. He is also easily intimidated by Faust and immediately steps back once he sees the aforementioned has beaten him in seducing the leading lady.

Nevertheless, I do believe that Gounod's decisions to firstly make Siébel a breeches role, and secondly, to enlarge the original role of Goethe's play, can possibly be seen as a deliberate means of emphasising the female in all her different contexts. I realise that my use of the word *female* might be confusing considering that we are dealing with a male character. However, this is something I find quite striking and unique about Siébel: I am of the opinion that perhaps it was exactly Gounod's objective to create a role that embodies a “real” woman – in other words, a woman disparate from the ideal Catholic femininity prescribed by Siébel's community. “She” is a representation of the ambiguous nineteenth-century woman: on the one hand a portrayal of the new female emerging in this era – more independent-minded and intellectually individual – but on the other hand still constrained by “her” conditioning to be

shy, unassertive, stagnant and passive. In this sense Siébel, as a performative gender act, is very ironic: through performing a male character, the female singer actually reveals her true, or desire for a true, femininity. “She” is also a representative for the nineteenth-century French woman, indirectly giving voice to women in that milieu, whilst simultaneously commenting on the gender injustices suffered by the “fairer” sex.

In the specific case of Siébel in Gounod’s *Faust* I am however not too confident of Berlanstein’s notion of homo-eroticism with regard to the breeches role. Although I take note that his argument could hold merit in other cases like the relationship between Count Octavian (a breeches role) and the Marschallin in Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911), the interaction between Siébel and Marguerite is so limited that there is little to no opportunity for any sexual innuendo. Whether audiences of the nineteenth century received it otherwise is open for consideration. (Murray 1992: 43.)

The reason I included Ellis’s research on female pianists in the nineteenth century is to highlight the struggles women faced when pursuing performing careers in music. I believe there to be many correlations between female pianists of the time and their operatic counterparts – the latter both as singers *and* characters. Take for instance Berlanstein’s observation of the breeches role and how male audiences of the time received and perceived such a performance in a sexualizing, objectifying way because of the revealing nature of the male costuming. This corresponds with the appearance-based reviews given to female pianists in the nineteenth century, focussing more on attractive bodily assets and fashion than on the actual musical rendition given by the performer.

However, when considering Gounod’s *Faust* I would like to argue that the composer broke away from the nineteenth-century gender norms governing performances by females. In his shaping of roles like Marguerite and Siébel (when considering my theory of him actually representing a “real woman”), Gounod contributed to broadening women’s performance repertory. When compared to Ellis’s account of female pianists’ limited performance opportunities and repertory scope in the nineteenth century, Gounod aided the liberation of rigid gender ideas in opera by creating the platform of *Faust* in which female opera singers could embody unconventional femininities – femininities perhaps coveted by many a nineteenth-century woman.

Although I am limited to a simplistic comparison, one is given an idea of Gounod's originality when *Faust's* Marguerite is compared to the characters Micaëla and Carmen in Bizet's *Carmen*, as analyzed by McClary. Although the Marguerite we first encounter resembles the submissive Micaëla who represents the nineteenth-century model female, Marguerite sheds this conditioned persona and becomes a woman who finally gains independence. Where Micaëla is a stagnant character who stays in her submissive, dependent, naive state of being throughout the opera, Marguerite undergoes a disillusionment, which at first seemed very dire but later revealed itself to be positive – she adopts a new, independent nature and is forced to think and act individually. She finally refuses Faust's advances and dismisses his empty promises of a future together.

Compared to Carmen, Marguerite is again very different, in my opinion. Carmen's entire character is based on her sexuality. In other words, her attainment of self-assurance and confidence, is, in my opinion greatly rooted in her overt sexuality and use of her body towards men. Without this she is nothing. Ironically, this actually reveals that she is *dependent* rather than *independent*, because if it were not for the sexually-based attention and praise that she received from her male admirers, she would in effect be a non-entity. "She", Carmen, thus actually *is* "body", nothing else. Her character is therefore to a great extent one-dimensional, and the fact that she is finally defeated by a man further exposes her essential submissiveness – the latter previously covered-up by the illusion of independence that her sexuality emits.

The character of Marguerite differs from that of Carmen in the sense that Marguerite does not, in my view, come across as a woman whose persona is based on her sexuality and body. On the contrary, although Faust *does* emphasise her physical beauty, I (as a spectator), am never given the impression that she is necessarily objectified sexually. Faust's great love aria "Salut, demeure chaste et pure" is proof that Faust not only respects her purity, but also regards her nature and being as part of the attraction he is experiencing. I recognise that the text of this aria has the potential to provoke a counter-argument of Faust as the typical nineteenth-century Frenchman who both expects and praises the female stereotype of chastity ("Salut! Demeure chaste et pure": I greet you, chaste and pure dwelling) and subordinate docility ("C'est là que cette enfant / a dormi sous ton aile": This is where this child slept under your wing), and therewith also participate in another type of objectification. But, since

Marguerite does not remain in this role of the stereotyped female that she initially embodies and undergoes a transformation to a woman of independence and inner-strength, such an argument is not of great value. (Singher 1983: 57.)

Therefore, Marguerite *is*. In other words, she *is* not (like Carmen) her body or her sexuality, but rather she *is* Marguerite: a being with individual inner worth and value, not just a sexual object. She has a developing, evolving personality, and she is the central character in this opera: all the action is in some way influenced by her.

Moreover, with Siébel's character, Gounod managed to portray another unique, avant-garde woman, freed from nineteenth-century gender constraints. Although it might be true that "she" shares certain traits with Micaëla – a part of "her" is very selfless (to the point that it is detrimental to "her"self), "she" lacks in confidence, and "she" is a non-developing character – "she" is different in another important respect, independence. Siébel's uniqueness and independence is not only evident in "her" appearance (if he is considered as a "she", as argued above, "she" is highly unconventional as regards "her" choice of attire), but also in "her" thought constructs. Siébel individuates "her"self from the rest of her community when "she" refrains to conform to the town's negative and judgmental stance towards Marguerite's behaviour. "Her" thought-constructs are liberal in that "she" does not believe and follow the nineteenth-century Catholic gender "requirements" ascribed to women – this is visible both in "her" own acts and presentation of "her"self, and in her reaction, or lack-of, for that matter, towards the Marguerite-debacle.

It is actually not even necessary to explain the differences between Siébel and Carmen, since they are quite obvious. Siébel is in entirety distanced from the sexually-overt Carmen: "she" (Siébel) does not once use "her" body or sexuality for personal gain. Never is "she" referred to as a visibly sexual and seductive individual, and by observing "her" personality and temperament it is deducible that "she" is extremely shy and reserved – the opposite of Carmen. Unlike the latter, Siébel's character is not governed by the amount of attention "she" evokes. "She" is a side-character whose plot development takes second place to that of Marguerite and Faust, whereas Carmen is literally (she is the main character) *and* figuratively (her character always strives to be in the spotlight) the centre of attention.

In my opinion it is a possibility that Gounod perhaps purposefully ascribed Siébel (a side-character) “her” unconventionality in order to suggest that the power for gender development with regard to the “fairer” sex freeing themselves from societal constraints lies in the average middle-class woman – not necessarily in those who attract attention with their stereotypical beauty and sexuality. This notion is of course highly appropriate when one brings it in context with the milieu in which *Faust* was created. The rise of the middle-class, and together with it the underdog, was a very important aspect in nineteenth-century French culture, stemming from the French Revolution.

Interestingly, the theory of *female absence* by Baum can be used to furthermore shed light on certain differences between Bizet’s *Carmen* and Gounod’s *Faust* and how they affect the relevant gender aspects. As argued above, *Carmen is her body*. In context with Baum’s theory, *Carmen* is thus absent, because a “real” her is not present. She is in actual fact confined by her own body, because it inhibits her from expressing her internal substance as, not only a woman, but also a person. *Faust*’s Marguerite can however be differentiated from this “absent woman syndrome”. To my belief, she is not confined, to such an extent, by her body or sexuality that it robs her of becoming a “real” self. I use the term “becoming” because I do acknowledge that the Marguerite whom we first meet is an embodiment of a woman governed by societal, cultural and religious forces, moulding her into the stereotype of what can be regarded as an “absent woman”. But after the seduction she undergoes an enlightenment of some sort, which leads her into becoming the “real” Marguerite: self-defined, uncompromising, and independent.

When one considers Baum’s and Mulvey’s notions of the home and its symbolism when related to women, Gounod did not fail to portray the nineteenth-century gender ambiguity with regards to female empowerment. The most critical event in the unfolding of the drama, the seduction-scene, takes place in Marguerite’s home – immediately suggesting a context of domesticity as well as sexual gratification. Furthermore, the spectator is informed that Marguerite was the carer for her sick mother and sister, a position which is essentially home-based. And emulating the exact concept described by Baum (2003: 37), Marguerite domestically awaits the return of her heroic brother, Valentin, from the war. Again this relation between Marguerite and her home is prevalent until and during the seduction – after this, a change of scenery occurs with the action of Marguerite moving to other spaces like the

church and the prison. Even though it might be argued that the latter two spaces are indicative of yet more stereotyping and subordination, they are in my opinion symbolic of her redemption which ultimately signifies independence and freedom.

When again considering the idea of Siébel as a symbol of a “real” woman rather than the representation of a man, one can observe yet another contribution made by Gounod to gender discourse, as regards Baum’s notion of the mask. Where the mask has traditionally been used to represent a collective/fabricated “truth”, Gounod’s use of the mask (the breeches role, in this case), counteracts this practice by actually managing to reveal a deeper essence. With Siébel’s character a portrayal of a unique, uncompromised individual is given – one that does not conform to an “expected” femininity. “She” is not domesticated, male-governed or influenced by any societal stereotype; in other words, “she” is a *real* she, a *real* woman.

Gounod’s contributions to a more truthful portrayal and understanding of gender, can additionally be observed in *Faust*’s spectators. The fact that this opera is one of the most popular and most performed works in its genre does not come as a surprise to me. Gounod did not conform to the theatre tradition of regarding the whole audience as one identity, rather, he acknowledged the different “selves” that an audience is made up of. These different “selves” are then portrayed in the opera in order to present to the audience-members real-life characters to whom they can relate. In other words, the characters are not gender stereotypes, and a variety of different gender identities are being portrayed: there is, for instance, a big difference between the masculinity of Méphistophéles and Siébel (if one regards him as intended, male), and the femininity of Marguerite and her neighbour Martha (or any other townswoman, for that matter). This is noteworthy to me because it is also noticeable in the main female character, Marguerite, in whom unconventionality is evident. Hence, the women in the audience are not forced to relate to a passive, dependent subject, but rather to one that is evolving and ultimately the victor in the tale. The popularity of *Faust* can therefore greatly be ascribed to Gounod’s accommodation of substantial, relatable identities.

The gender theories referring to score analyses and musical instruments by McClary, Leach, Taruskin, and Abeles and Porter, will be incorporated in Chapter 6 where I shall discuss representations of gender in the score of *Faust*.

3.6 Gender and Christianity

To connect gender with an assumed patriarchal concept like Christianity might seem like a fruitless endeavour. The different Christian denominations have, for the most part, always been governed by men, not to mention the predominance of the male in the Bible, with God, Jesus Christ and the Devil being the most obvious and fundamental examples. However, in recent years researchers and academics have challenged the norm of this male authority by proposing a more gender-balanced theology.

In *Die Weiblichkeit Gottes: Matriachale Voraussetzungen des Gottesbildes* (1983), Christa Mulack assigns a gender duality to the biblical God by proposing Yahweh as the patriarchal God and Elohim as his matriarchal equivalent. Yahweh and Elohim are two of the three Divine Names (the other being “El”) assigned to God during the process of creation. It is important to understand that Yahweh and Elohim are merely two different *names* ascribed to one concept/being (God). These two names are used in different contexts to differentiate between various characteristics of God. Manley (1974: 478) defines the two terms as follows:

Yahweh (YHWH)

The Hebrew word *Yahweh* is usually translated as ‘the Lord’ (note the capitals) and sometimes ‘Jehovah’ [...]. In particular, Yahweh was the God of the Patriarchs, and we read of ‘Yahweh the God (Elohim) of Abraham’ and then of Isaac and finally ‘Yahweh, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, concerning which Elohim says, ‘this is my name for ever’ (Ex.iii.15). Yahweh, therefore, in contrast with Elohim, is a proper noun, the name of a Person, though that Person is divine [...]. A study of the word ‘name’ in the Old Testament reveals how much it means in Hebrew. The name is no mere label, but is significant of the real personality of him to whom it belongs. It may derive from the circumstances of his birth (Gn.v.29), or reflect his character (Gn.xxvii.36), and when a person puts his ‘name’ upon a thing or another person the latter comes under his influence and protection.

Elohim

Though a plural form, Elohim can be treated as singular, in which case it means the one supreme deity, and in EVV [English versions] is rendered ‘God’. Like its English equivalent, it is, grammatically considered, a common noun, and conveys the notion of all that belongs to the concept of deity, in contrast with man (Nu.xxiii.19) and other created beings. It is appropriate to cosmic and world-wide relationships (Gn.i.1), because there is only one supreme and true God, and He is a Person; it approaches the character of a proper noun, while not losing its abstract and conceptual quality.

According to Mulack, whose theory is based on the original Hebrew text, Yahweh is a jealous, revengeful God who will not hesitate to punish his people with the most dreadful of plagues and curses if ever they should stray in their devotion to Him. His patriarchal (male) nature is especially visible in His pre-occupation with violence and punishment.

Contradictingly, Elohim is forgiving, loving, understanding and supportive – female-associated characteristics that are made clear in the case of Sarah in Genesis. (Mulack 1983: 144.)

When the Pharaoh takes Sarah as his wife, unaware of her marriage to Abraham, his entire household is struck by a destructive plague. Elohim's reaction in a similar situation is however entirely different: when Abimelech makes the same mistake by allocating the married Sarah to himself, Elohim protects Sarah by merely inhibiting Abimelech's access to her, without the use of any violence. Elohim's affinity toward the female is also noticeable in his instruction to Abraham that the latter must take note of everything that Sarah says to him. (Mulack 1983: 144.)

A more philosophical, and perhaps less sexist, approach is used by Harper (1987: 686). The author states that because according to the Bible (Genesis 1: 27) we were all created in the image of God, God then must consequently be the perfect harmony of male and female (Holy Bible 1991: 2). God is thus both female and male, mother and father. Because of our conditioning to view God as father, hence male, it is perhaps more difficult to pinpoint the mother in God. Harper (1987: 687) proposes, rather controversially, that perhaps the mother in God is not only in life, but also in death: the mother is the birth-giver *and* the death-carrier. This is most clear in perceiving the ruthless laws in nature: death, decay, plague, illness, disease. Through organized, patriarchal religion our minds have been “disinfected” against these earthly realities, and we have been taught to view God only in his transcendent state of holiness, exclusiveness and purity. The consideration of ruthless life and bitter death have been excluded in our understanding of Him (/Her). However, it is perhaps exactly in these unpleasant realities that we find the mother in God.

But the Mother is not only found in the dark side of reality: also in life and light. Through accepting and entering this dark side of reality, believers walk through to light. The Mother is

found in nature, in rhythm and in warmth, and as part of her maternity she is the chief giver of nourishment and nurture. Still, her ruthlessness should not be overlooked, for she will not compromise the essence of reality – she is thus death as she is life. When believers engage fully in life, they will meet the Mother: in agony and in ecstasy. (Harper 1987: 688.)

The French feminist-philosopher Luce Irigaray rejects the accepted norm of a male God and instead proposes that woman is God, and God is woman. She does this by suggesting that God, similar to women, is also that which is suppressed, appropriated, denied and domesticated by a patriarchal symbolic order. Just as it is constraining, inhibitive and diminishing to speak or write of God, woman, too, is alien to discourse. Like God, “woman” is inhibited, diminished and constrained when she is brought into the symbolic order by language. This occurs not because woman is somehow divine; instead, language and discourse are dominated by masculinity, the sex and gender of the male: something which is in its entirety alien to “her”. Similar to when God is represented by human language, the “femininity represented in such discourses is in actual fact a lie, a mime, a masquerade from which something is always left out. (Priest 2003: 3, 5.)

“Woman” therefore occupies the “mystical” position of the unspeakable: in a language given over to the representation of the male sex, the female sex cannot be spoken (of), just as in a language given over to the representation of the human, the divine cannot be spoken (of). It is therefore not only “woman” who resembles God in her “true otherness” but also God who resembles woman in “his”. Consequently, God is allied with woman if he is understood as truly other. In no sense can “he” be reduced to, or seen as a product of patriarchy. (Priest 2003: 8, 23.)

Together with the idea of a female God, a female Jesus has also been a topic of interest for many theologians. Although it might seem a postmodern concept, feminine representations of Jesus already abounded centuries ago during the later medieval period. The humanity of Jesus began to enjoy more emphasis by medieval Christians, in reaction to the focus in the previous era on Jesus’ spirit and resurrection. This focus on his humanity led to the realization and belief that feminine characteristics were most expressive of the human nature of Christ. Motherhood was highly valued during the later medieval period, so it is a possibility that the

emphasis on, and interest in, Jesus' femininity, could have been influenced by this. (Bledsoe 2011: 34.)

The feminized Jesus of the later medieval period was based upon physiological theories of the biological functions of the "feminine". According to spiritual writers the medieval woman or mother had three distinct characteristics (Bynum 1982: 131–132) :

The female is generative (the foetus is made of her very matter) and sacrificial in her generation (birth pangs); the female is loving and tender (a mother cannot help loving her own child); the female is nurturing (she feeds the child with her own bodily fluid).

The idea of associating Jesus with these "feminine" attributes was due to medieval medical theory which connected the spirit with the male, and the body (flesh and blood) with the female. This theory, in turn, was based upon Aristotle's classical medical theories in which the mother is believed to provide the matter of the foetus, and the father its spirit. Jesus was thus literally part of Mary's blood and body. Since Christians partake of Christ's blood in the Eucharist, and therefore being incorporated into his body, they essentially partake in a female (Mary's) body. Consequently Christ is the embodiment of all of humanity. (Bynum 1986: 421; 1993: 161.)

During the late medieval period, all bodily fluids were seen as bleedings according to the physiological theory of the time. Bleeding was seen as cathartic and as a symbol of cleansing – ideas transferred to the representation of Christ bleeding (Bynum 1982: 132–133):

In medieval devotions milk and blood are often interchangeable, as are Christ's breasts and the wound in his side. What writers in the high Middle Ages wished to say about Christ the saviour [sic] who feeds the individual soul with his own blood was precisely and concisely said in the image of the nursing mother whose milk is her blood, offered to the child.

These medieval images of Jesus may however not be very contributive towards a feminist understanding of a female Christ, because of the fact that the above theories were developed by male church leaders in a patriarchal medieval society in which being "female" referred mainly to physiological aspects. Consequently, modern-day theologians have attempted to present a more authentically feminine Jesus. An example is Katherine Jefferts Schori (the then bishop-elect of the US Episcopal Church) who closed the 2006 General Convention with

a sermon highlighting a less sugar-coated image of Jesus as mother (Schori in Bledsoe 2011: 55–56):

That sweaty, bloody, tear-stained labor of the cross bears new life. Our mother Jesus gives birth to a new creation – and you and I are His children. If we are going to keep on growing into Christ-images for the world around us, we are going to have to give up fear.

In my opinion, regardless of the male-produced, contestably “inauthentic” representations of a female Jesus in the late medieval period, I still believe that any view of Christ as a female instead of the conventional male, is in itself progressive, since it goes against years and years of male-Jesus conditioning. Considering that Jesus is indeed the saviour of all believers, and his resurrection a corner-stone in Christian theology, he is the ultimate strong, heroic figure. A female/feminine Jesus (whether inauthentic *or* authentic) should in essence be viewed as beneficial to gender equality and the development of positive female representation in society and culture.

The Virgin Mary is another figure in theology, specifically Catholicism, who cannot be ignored in having a gender influence on believers. In Christian devotion, Mary’s predominant role has been that of the mother. She is not only important as the mother of Christ or the Mother of God (Theotokos), but also the mother of all Christians and regarded as a role model of the ideal Christian to be emulated. Using Freud to interpret the theology and symbolism of Mary in Catholicism, Harrington (1984: 204) suggests that Mary creates a dependence and receptivity in the Christian believer, similar to that prevalent in a child. In her motherly role as protector, comforter and nurturer, the femininity that Mary represents serves to inhibit full psychological maturity, and thereby ironically maintain patriarchy in society.

“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.” Although this statement was made by the feminist-existentialist Simone de Beauvoir (1952: 301), a similar assertion could have been made by Freud. Freud’s belief was that women were not born “feminine”. For instance, a little girl is as active and “masculine” as her male counterpart – its only through a complicated process in psychological development that she learns to become passive, childlike and dependent: in a word, “feminine” (Harrington 1984: 205). Femininity is in

essence attained through a deep-rooted inferiority complex present in a girl, once she realizes that she is not a male. This penis envy leads to a girl's repression of her active sexuality and rejection of her love for her mother, the latter replaced by the father as main object of love (Freud 1965: 113):

The girl's turning to her father is accomplished principally with the help of passive instinctual impulses. You can see that a wave of development like this, which clears phallic activity out of the way, smoothes the ground for femininity.

Only when the wish for a penis is replaced by the wish for a baby from the father, the feminine situation is fully established. Freud believed that the general female (with the exception of homosexual women) will remain in this reversed Oedipal situation for the rest of her life. Thus, a sense of inferiority, repressed sexuality, passivity, and an Oedipal attachment to the father or father-figure is what ultimately characterizes femininity. (Harrington 1984: 205.)

These gender views of Freud are also present in his writings on religion. A clear link exists between the relation of the believer to God, as Freud describes it in his book *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), and his description of psychological femininity. A common dynamic of illusion and wish-fulfilment is present in Freud's views on religion, which Harrington (1984: 207, 211) connects with Marian devotion. According to Harrington, a regressive and infantile attitude on the part of the believer could be encouraged by the Catholic perception of Mary as our mother who consoles and comforts us. She represents femininity and embodies the feminine attitude (for both men and women) as one of passively receiving protection and love from a father figure. Hence, identification with the Virgin could create in the believer a passive relation to God, which Freud characterized as a feminine function. In this sense, Mary reinforces the church structure and patriarchal culture in which fathers (priests, bishops and the pope included) rule over their passive women and children.

An entirely different, and more positive take on the Virgin, is the view of her as so-called "Co-redemptrix". This idea states that the Blessed Virgin Mary has an important, although indirect and unequal, role in Christian redemption: by freely consenting to give birth to the redeemer Jesus Christ; by granting his life to all creatures on earth; by sharing in his suffering under the cross; by offering him as living sacrifice to God, the Almighty Father in order for

mankind to be redeemed; and lastly, by way of intercession, to account for all post-assumption graces. (Miravelle 1993: 11.)

I believe that in viewing the Virgin Mary as co-redemptrix, she is not only put in a more positive light as opposed to her representation in Harrington's theory, but she is also elevated to a female with power – therewith debunking her passive, meek stereotype. Again, we observe a sense of ambiguousness in the Blessed Virgin's femininity.

In stark contrast with the above, many a culture have throughout history connected the female with evil, and even the Devil. This idea was especially dominant between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, because of the popularity of witchcraft during this period. However, Christian writings from as early as the first century C.E. suggests woman as being the Devil's incarnation. It was generally assumed that it is woman's "weakness" (in comparison with man's) that makes her easily accessible for evilness to take control over her. (Denike 2003: 12.)

Even King James VI of Scotland defended this belief (Denike 2003: 12):

The reason is easie: for as that sexe is frailer then men is, so is it easier to be intrapped in the gross snares of the Devil, as was over well proved to be true, by the Serpents deceiving Eve at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with that sexe ever since.

A consequence of this connection of woman with evil and the Devil was the belief that anything related to sexuality (especially female sexuality) was also purely inspired by evil. When Leviticus 18 and 20 outline all the ways by which man's soul is made impure and sinful, the majority is sexual-based. A "pure" body must avoid all prostitution, female nakedness, adultery and sexual relations with a menstruating woman. According to the scripture, the religious community must be "cleansed" by imposing a sentence of death on those who dare engage in homosexuality, incest, bestiality, as well as on those who are wizards and witches. (Denike 2003: 20; Holy Bible 1991: 129–132.)

The sexualized demonology empowered by Christian asceticism is quite ambivalent toward femininity and female sexuality, though. On the one hand it ensures that woman was to

remain the feeble, weaker, “other” sex – an embodied passivity, prone to seduction and deception. But on the other hand she was the representation of a destructive force and malevolent power: in her partnership with the Devil, woman became dangerous enough to pose an unceasing threat to man, and to the world. (Denike 2003: 23, 24.)

It is a great possibility that this fear of the female originated because of the early church’s campaigns against pagan, maternal cults – most notably that of Diana. Although associated with growth, fertility and harvest, this goddess of hunting grew to be widely detested, given the blame for impotence, drought, infertility, disease and famine. The church fathers of the early Renaissance period demonized her as God’s enemy, to the extent that she was directly affiliated with devil-worship and the Devil. By some she was even viewed as the Devil herself – evil incarnate. (Denike 2003: 21.)

3.7 Gounod’s *Faust* and its representation of gender in the context of the Christian religion

Although God does not have an embodied portrayal in the opera *Faust*, there are numerous direct and indirect references to Him, and one cannot escape the fact that Christian faith plays an unavoidable part in the unfolding of the plot. The Christian God that Marguerite and her fellow believers worship, is, to my mind, an example of Mulack’s theory of gender duality in this theological icon. The patriarchal, revengeful Yahweh is clearly visible in Marguerite’s suffering throughout the opera. After her seduction, Yahweh immediately steps in and “punishes” Marguerite for the sin that she has committed: she falls pregnant out of wedlock; she is abandoned by Faust; rejected and ridiculed by her community; cursed by her own brother, Valentin; in her desperate attempts to pray to God for forgiveness and peace, she is continuously interrupted and tormented by Méphistophéles; and lastly, she is driven to madness, murder and imprisonment.

Although the entrance of the “female” God in the plot of *Faust* is rather late, Elohim’s participation in Marguerite’s fate is an incredibly important aspect of the opera. After almost an entire lifetime of suffering and punishment, Marguerite is forgiven of her sins and redeemed to an eternal life in heaven. True to Mulack’s theory, Elohim, in his (/her) act of deliverance, embodies female-associated traits of forgiveness, love and care. One can draw a

connection between Elohim's motherly role in Marguerite's death, and the deductions made in Chapter 3.2 in which the idea of death as a return to the mother is discussed. Elohim's femininity and maternal characteristics, and the fact that his (/her) intercession in the opera is exactly correlated with Marguerite's passing away, again *makes* the previously discussed theory of death as female, highly relevant.

This then also links with Harper's view of the Mother in God: She is both in life *and* death, agony *and* ecstasy. She both gives life and takes it away. Interesting how Marguerite's own situation in terms of creating life (falling pregnant) and then ending life (committing infanticide) also shows a connection to her feminine gender and the idea of death and its female association.

Connecting Marguerite to the female God brings us to Irigaray's notion of "God is woman, and woman is God". From a Christian believer's perspective one cannot ever sufficiently verbalise the enormity of what the concept of God entails. And if such an attempt is made, as is the case with the Holy Bible, God's entirety is inhibited and constrained by man, specifically men, since only this gender was allowed the endeavour of summarizing His being in the medium of a literary text. In essence then, a pretentious and untruthful account of God is proclaimed. According to Irigaray, the female (in this case specifically Marguerite) is in a similar position in that her "femininity" is false, because it is the male gender who constructed its definition.

Up to her seduction, Marguerite is portrayed as the "ideal" woman according to the societal and cultural expectations governing her day and age: domesticated, reserved, pious and attractive. These attributes imply the one sphere of the classification of "femininity", as constructed by male patriarchal culture of the nineteenth century. Her seduction and its consequences, however, gives meaning to the other sphere of "femininity" which is defined by sexual promiscuity, disrespect, immorality and wickedness. She is viewed by her community (male-dominated) as a shameless sinner and perpetrator who, for her own selfish needs, casts humiliation and even death onto her people.

But these two spheres of the male-constructed, nineteenth-century "femininity" are superficial and generalizing of what the concept of "woman" encompasses. Women,

including Marguerite, are therefore put in a similar, belittled, restricted position as God, the two concepts joined by the common denominator of being ruled by male patriarchal language. Irigaray goes as far as to say that the two respective concepts are so similar, they “are”/“become” each other. In this sense, one can therefore argue that God in the opera “is” woman.

To consider the representation of Jesus as female-gendered in the opera *Faust* is not such an unlikely proposition as one might think. I base this notion predominantly on the authentically Gounodian incorporation of an Easter chorus at the denouement of the work, during which Marguerite dies. In Christian belief Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which serves as the foundation for Christian faith. By giving them His son, God has given Christians “a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (Holy Bible 1991: 275).

In my opinion there is a clear link between Marguerite and Jesus: it is exactly during the culmination of Marguerite’s journey that a reference to the Messiah is made by means of the deliberate inclusion of an Easter chorus. It is also striking that Marguerite herself is given “life” after death, as Jesus’ crucifixion symbolizes, because of her final redemption. This redemption signifies a “new birth” and freedom of the “death” (emotional and physical suffering) that she experienced on earth.

In connection with the Virgin Mary, Harrington’s belief that this Catholic icon contributes to female discrimination and stereotyping in Catholic communities and cultures is justified when relating it to the context of the opera *Faust*. Not only is it clear by merely watching the opera that Marian devotion plays a central role in the lives of the characters, but Gounod’s own unshakeable Catholic faith, as well as the predominance of Catholicism in nineteenth-century France (the milieu in which the work was created) confirm the influence that this belief-system had, and still has, on the opera.

It is assumed that most of the characters in this work, including the townspeople, are followers of the Catholic faith – with the exception of Faust and, needless to say, Méphistophéles. Therewith, this faithful community have inevitably been conditioned to the “femininity” that the Virgin represents. This “femininity” is however unrealistic, idolized,

unattainable, stereotyped, and a symbol that merely exacerbates the pre-existing male-created construction of femininity which governed the nineteenth century. Marguerite is initially introduced to the spectator as a virginal, nurturing, domesticated, pure, selfless, maternal and deeply devout young woman – a quintessential embodiment of the femininity that not only nineteenth-century French society proclaimed, but also of the femininity that the Virgin Mary represents. Marguerite had to step in as her mother's carer when she fell fatally ill, and after the latter's passing away the young girl was left with the maternal responsibilities of the household. Similar to their mother, Marguerite's sister fell incurably ill and died – Marguerite not only had to repeat her role of nurse, but this time she had the added responsibility of being a mother to her sister. Valentin, her brother, is consequently the only family member she has left, and again it is clear in their relationship that Marguerite feels the need to fulfil the lack of a maternal influence in his life.

All these characteristics and traits that Marguerite displays show strong correlations with the Virgin Mary's representation of femininity. The Holy Virgin is the giver of life to the Christian saviour Jesus Christ, and she also fulfils the role of mother to all believers. Similar to Marguerite she is therefore characterized by altruism, purity, nurture and maternity. One can also argue that she is domesticated (as again is the case with Marguerite), in the sense that she does not have any aspirations or pursuits other than spreading maternal love.

Valentin, a devout Catholic who has been exposed to the "femininity" that the Virgin Mary embodies, has, in all probability, been conditioned to view this as the prototype of the femininity that all respectable women, including his sister, should possess. Valentin is indeed blessed with a sister who complies with all the necessary "requirements" that would make of her a replica of the Madonna. Here I do not only refer to her purity and chastity, but also to the childlike-dependence that she promotes in Valentin. It is important to note that this dependence does not translate to Marguerite (or the Virgin Mary, for that matter) being a strong-willed, individualist, active, female role model – on the contrary, Valentin's dependence is on her domestic, selfless and affectionate attributes from which he benefits.

That is, until her seduction. After this incident, Marguerite symbolises the polar opposite of what she ought to be as a woman: sinful, immoral, lustful, impure, selfish, evil, and mad. Consequently, Valentin, as well as the community he and Marguerite are part of, is

completely disillusioned when learning of her misdeeds. Due to the strong Marian conditioning in Catholic faith, this “other” femininity that Marguerite introduces is almost unfathomable to Valentin and the townspeople. This disillusionment is however quickly replaced by condemnation and judgement, with Valentin incapable of showing empathy or forgiveness – on the contrary, with his last breath he curses her. The community’s strong belief in the Virgin Mary and the femininity she represents, contributes to, and feeds, the patriarchal norm governing both their religious and their secular lives.

Faust, a non-believer, ironically also benefits from the community’s Catholic and subsequent Marian conditioning, considering the Marguerite whom he first encounters is for the most part an easy victim regarding seduction. Because of the all-encompassing, inescapable influence that the Virgin Mary exerts over Catholic believers’ thought-constructs and actions, female believers (Marguerite as example) see it as one of their religious obligations to emulate her femininity and incorporate it as best possible in their daily lives; while male believers in turn, unquestionably expect and assume their wives, daughters, and fellow townswomen to comply with these “perfect” Marian attributes. When Faust meets Marguerite, she is the personification of the Holy Virgin’s femininity: as mentioned, she is selfless, respectful, and obedient to male authority, maternal, and domesticated. Although she shows a rather unconventional hint of independence in declining Faust’s offer to escort her home, this resolute mindset is very easily swayed when Faust launches his pursuit of her.

Marguerite’s thoughts become fixated on him – exemplified by the ballad she sings in Act 3 of the opera, describing the romantic feelings she is experiencing toward the stranger she has just met. After Marguerite’s discovery of the jewel box, Faust arrives at her house, and with very little persuasion needed, Marguerite declares her love to him. Even her insistence that Faust should leave, is short-lived: Faust easily manipulates her into spending the night with him.

Thus, although Marguerite on two separate occasions showed some unconventional traits for her sex, she easily gives in to demands made by men. In my opinion this behaviour is incited by Marguerite’s Catholic upbringing which advocates obedience toward patriarchal structures, and exposure to the femininity that the Madonna represents. It is not even part of Marguerite’s frame of reference to question or resist a man’s intentions or advances.

Therefore, Faust greatly benefits from this Marian femininity that Marguerite emulates, in the sense that he easily succeeds in making her succumb to his desires.

An entirely different perspective as regards a Marian correlation with the character Marguerite is the theological concept of the Virgin Mary as co-redemptrix. In her role as the latter, the Blessed Virgin is a symbol of inner strength, individuality and matriarchy. She has an irreplaceable role as mediator between believer and God, hence leading the faithful on their path towards redemption. The Marguerite who reveals herself after the seduction share certain traits with this co-redemptrix Madonna. I believe Marguerite need not necessarily be viewed as immoral, sinful and shameful, but rather as a woman who individuated herself by acting against an oppressive patriarchal secular and religious system. Although her counter-normative actions caused her great distress and judgement, it is through her redemption that she is liberated. Metaphorically one can argue that her actions and subsequent redemption symbolise the freedom that her co-townswomen and all nineteenth-century French women for that matter, could attain provided they dare act against the male-constructed “femininity” created in their milieu. Marguerite thus essentially “leads” her fellow townswomen to feminine liberation by inciting feminist thought-constructs through her own journey. In this sense she shows a strong correlation to the co-redemptrix concept of the Virgin Mary, because she is both a powerful individual and a liberator.

Moving on to the Devil and its (I purposely make use of this unisex/sexless pronoun) connection with the female, it is rather simple to draw a comparison with Marguerite. It is deducible when watching *Faust* that Marguerite’s brother and community condemn her to be the personification of evil and sin after they learn of her “immoral” behaviour. Together with this, one again has to take into consideration the strong Catholic faith that dictates the townspeople’s thought constructs. I would assume them to be adherents of Leviticus’s decree of what constitutes an “impure” soul: prostitution, promiscuity and adultery among others.

Marguerite’s sexually “immoral” acts correspond with these soul-corrupting factors stipulated in the Holy Bible. Also, if one were to acknowledge the theories dating from between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, Marguerite could well be regarded as an incarnation of the Devil. This is due to her gender being “weak” and easily susceptible to

sinning, since evil can gain effortless “access” to her soul. It is especially viable considering that until her seduction she *is* a rather weak character – easily manipulated and submissive.

On the other hand, the ambivalence present in this female demonology is visible in the Marguerite we meet after the seduction. She is transformed from the arguably “weak” female explained above, to a *femme fatale* who wreaks havoc in her community and family, with the most destructive act being that of murdering her unborn child. Furthermore, the fact that Marguerite becomes mad, in turn correlates with the theories of pagan times in which madwoman were often labelled as witches for which they were imprisoned and/or executed.

To add on to the aforementioned, Diana, the goddess of hunting, shares evident traits with Marguerite. Similar to the goddess, Marguerite is a symbol of fertility and growth exemplified not only by her pregnancy, but also metaphorically, through the maternal, nurturing nature she portrays before the seduction. After this “sinful” incident however, Marguerite becomes the object and representation of all wrongdoing. Hence, it is justifiable to argue that Marguerite was viewed as an enemy of God, a threat, and even perhaps evil incarnate, by her fellow townspeople.

In Act 5 of the opera *Méphistophéles* is accompanied by beautiful matriarchal figures of the past. The idea of the goddess Diana can be linked with this scene, in the sense that she is both a matriarchal figure, and also associated with evil. In my opinion the opera *Faust* in many instances exemplifies a relationship between femininity and evil, and femininity and the devil.

3.8 Summary

It is quite evident that gender is a very complex concept, perhaps more so than we realise. By referring to the performativity theory of Butler, we have learnt that gender is a culturally constructed force that has an enormous influence on our identities, our thought-patterns and also our position in society. The psychological cause and effect of gender is brought to light by the views of other theorists like Chodorow and Welldon. Through these theories it can be concluded that gender is perhaps not only a culturally fabricated construct, but also an inevitable psychological one – influencing our relationships as well as our psychological

development and eventual formation. For the greater part, we are not able to inhibit, prevent or discontinue its control over us, considering that it is a process of conditioning that already starts at birth.

Gender portrayals in theatre or opera performances are in my opinion a largely indefinable factor – the gender portrayed on stage is highly dependent on, and influenced by, the specific actors' and directors' own gender identities, sexualities, cultural and societal milieus, as well as personal convictions and morals. It is therefore impossible to portray a character authentically, because the actor's own gender "acting" interferes with representing a character as a unique self. It has to be added, though, that the actor is not entirely accountable for the gender portrayals and how they are received. Baum's argument on the absence of the female in theatre history notes that the construction of plays often controls the genders presented. Mulvey also views the audience as key role players in gendering a certain production, arguing that the male spectator contributes to female objectification due to the process of "male gaze".

Lastly, it has become evident to me that an identity is not necessarily restricted to a fixed, unchangeable, one-sided gender (although societal norms force this belief-system onto individuals); rather, multiple genders can exist in one being. This we have observed in the gender duality present in Christian identities or concepts like God, Jesus Christ and the Devil. Mulack promotes the idea that one should distinguish and respect the masculinity and femininity that the Biblical God expresses in the two personas ascribed to him – Jahweh and Elohim. Throughout history many cultures have also recognized a femininity in the devil, some deriving it from the fateful first sin committed by Eve, a woman, as stated in Genesis in the Bible.

These gender theories have, in my opinion, come to the fore in interesting and unconventional ways in Gounod's *Faust*.

4 GENDER IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH SOCIETY

4.1 Gender roles in secular life

The French Revolution has many a time been hailed as the war of the liberation of the human race. It can even be argued that never before in the history of Western Civilization has there been such a triumph for traditionally oppressed groups. Old ideas about tradition and hierarchy were replaced by new Enlightenment principles of equality and democracy. However, was this *really* the case for all of society? Did women also enjoy these new privileges?

The Declaration of the Rights of Man, instituted in 1789, was a fundamental document of the French Revolution, defining the individual and collective rights of all citizens. It has proved to be an enormously influential political text, providing the blueprint for modern liberal culture (Jones 1994: 196). However, although it established fundamental rights for French citizens and “all the members of the social body”, it did not include any references to the status of women or to slavery. This was despite the fact that after the March on Versailles on 5 October 1789, women presented the Women’s Petition to the National Assembly in which they proposed a decree giving women equality. Law, politics and the economy were regarded as male domains, whereas women were confined to a private sphere of sexual virtue, obedience and maternity. (Lauren 2003: 18–20; Schama 1989: 460–462.)

The realization that they still had little to no rights fuelled many women to be more politically active, regardless of their restrictions. Hence, the status of women did undergo significant fluctuation in the years between 1789 and 1804, and at one point (late 1792 until early 1793) they had even managed to obtain the legal right to marry without parental consent, initiate divorce, name the father of an illegitimate child and secure compensation for the seduction, and own property. Primogeniture was abolished and equality of succession laws insured that female heirs would be allowed to inherit. These rights were obtained by the workings of female political groups like the *Confédération des amis de la vérité* (The Confederation of the Friends of the Truth, 1790) and *Les Citoyennes republicaines revolutionnaires* (The Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, 1793). (Clark 1992: 116, 120–122.)

However, in October 1793, after a series of female-driven protests and riots, the National Assembly together with the Jacobins dissolved all women's political organizations. After this defeat, women were back to where they were before the Revolution: at home cooking, cleaning, sewing, and acquiring knowledge from their fathers, husbands and sons. (Clark 1992: 121, 122.)

In 1804 the *Code Napoléon* (Napoleonic Code) was instituted. Although this set of laws entailed more democracy and freedom for men, its relation to women was largely negative and oppressive. By reinstating the unjustified authority of fathers and husbands, the laws preserved a gendered division of private and public spheres. Married women lost their civil and legal status by being deprived of power over property, and authority over children. Marital infidelity of women warranted severe punishment whereas that of men, with some exceptions, received none. A wife could only divorce her husband by reasons of adultery if he committed the deed in the matrimonial home. Paternity searches were now made illegal and the plight of the unmarried mother was thus made increasingly financially difficult. (Doy 1998: 23; Valenze 2004: 466.)

In 1815 Napoleon was defeated and the monarchy was restored in the period between 1814 and 1830, known as the Bourbon Restoration. All the pre-revolution problems returned, and although there were huge economic developments, the lot of women stayed mostly the same. It was only after the July Monarchy of 1830 (the institution of a liberal constitutional monarchy under King Louis-Philippe I) that issues regarding gender started to receive more attention. However, this "attention" merely meant that people were more observant of gender constructs, and not necessarily that these gender constructs were soon going to change.

In the era of reform starting in the 1830s, greater middle-class participation reinforced the gender hierarchies still apparent in political life. Historians have used "separate spheres" to describe the organization of gender roles within this period. At the heart of this division lay the heterosexual couple and the family, embodying the domesticated ideal. During this time much emphasis was put on male honour: physical bravery, courtesy toward other men, gallantry toward women, and security toward the family. But, honour for a man depended on the sexual honour of the woman under his control. Women were therefore in a sense more

respected (prostitution decreased significantly), although they mostly served as a means to raise a man's reputation in society. (Margadant 1999: 4, 5; Valenze 2004: 470.)

The July Monarchy ended in 1848 with the commencement of the Second Republic. The latter refers to the republican government of France between 1848 and 1851. This period initiated more radical feminism in France and the rest of Europe, although feminist groups were still highly restricted. Arguing that all women and men shared the same needs and rights, Utopian Socialists gave birth to two terms that had an immeasurable influence on the world: socialism and feminism. The Scottish industrialist Robert Owen influenced thousands of Europeans to gain knowledge of gender equality by means of his activism. He attacked the stereotyping of women and the so-called "nuclear family", encouraging Europeans to create a "new view" of society. (Valenze 2004: 468.)

After the February Revolution of 1848 in France, a group of Parisian feminists succeeded in publishing a daily newspaper, *La Voix des Femmes* (The Voice of Women), devoted to women's political concerns and interests. In this they demanded, among other issues, suffrage, labour unions and equal education. But after the worker-riots of June 1848, the Assembly placed political groups under police surveillance and prohibited women from membership of women's movements on the grounds that women's proper place was in the home. Notwithstanding the fact that women were already being denied the national vote, prohibited from joining clubs, barred from candidacy, and imprisoned for political activity, they suffered additional political discrimination in 1851 when the assembly denied them the right to petition. (Moon 2004: 1–3.)

Interesting, however, is the theory of Anderson (1998: 9) that despite all the set-backs, international radical feminism achieved its greatest impact in the aftermath of 1848. When women's movements were suppressed and women's political participation forbidden in France, Austria and Prussia, international feminism briefly flourished as exile and immigration created new cross-border connections.

During the period that followed, known as the Second Empire (1852–1870), feminists persisted to fight for equal rights, despite governmental restrictions. The right to vote, to own property and to claim equal protection under the law still preoccupied their struggle.

However, from 1850 onwards the demand for higher education and wider job opportunities became their main focus of concern. And it seems that by the end of the century women were eventually starting to bear the fruit of their efforts. Male workers faced a rapidly changing composition of forces in the world of work: over two million women were entering the working sphere. There were now women in clerical positions, women working in banks, department stores, and as telephone and telegraph operators. Furthermore, the expansion of municipal institutions drew large numbers of middle-class women into waged employment, as teachers, nurses, government administrators and librarians. It would nevertheless still be a long time before women's demands regarding political rights were to be met. (Valenze 2004: 474.)

After the above discussion one can observe that gender inequality and discrimination against women were everyday practice for the majority of the nineteenth century in France. I feel it necessary to mention though, that the gender representations of this time were not *always* negative or necessarily derogatory toward women. According to Wenk (2000: 63) women's responsibilities were articulated not merely in terms of reproduction and of caring for those wounded in battle, but also with regards to cultural responsibilities. Women were assigned the responsibility of preserving and conveying traditions in a symbolic way.

During the French Revolution gender representations acquired a decisive and historically new function in political iconography. Images of the feminine filled the empty space caused by the dissolution or overcoming of absolutism, and the symbol of the female gradually replaced the image of the king's body. This process can be traced to the concrete example in 1792–1793 during which the image of the masculine ruler's body was replaced by *La liberté triomphante*: a seated enthroned female. This new feminized statue formed a central point in the procession of the festival of Republican Unity in 1793. Female personifications now served as the embodiment of the new order, which no longer had the figure of the father as an exclusive centre. (Wenk 2000: 69, 70.)

4.2 Gounod's *Faust* as a portrayal of secular nineteenth-century gender roles in France

Interestingly, the ambivalence prevalent in French nineteenth-century gender constructs and developments can also be observed in the unfolding of Gounod's *Faust*. The opera is put together by an array of contrasting, contradicting gender ideas, especially concerning the female/feminine. At the outset of the opera a rather ironic entrance by Marguerite is made in which she rejects Faust's invitation to escort her. The irony lies in the fact that not long after our initial encounter with her, we see how easily Marguerite is manipulated and seduced by the philosopher. After the seduction, though, we are again exposed to a much more independent-minded, uncompromised Marguerite who, until the denouement, fights her own battles and eventually triumphs.

In a metaphorical sense, similarities can be drawn between the history of gender and women's rights in France, as discussed above, and our leading lady's own character development in *Faust*. The French Revolution of 1789 gave French women the false hope of gender equality – a promise they however quickly learned was not going to be kept. Although attempts were made to protest, women were inhibited by years of subordination and objectification at the hands of their own fathers, brothers and husbands. It was only after several years of struggle that women eventually gained more rights and freedom. Similar is the case with Marguerite. She started off by giving the spectator the hope of being an independent female character, equal to her male counterparts. But as the plot progresses the spectator helplessly watches how she is objectified, silenced and judged by a male patriarchal system. Although her struggle is long and lonely, she eventually meets freedom in independence.

It is probably the character of Siébel that portrays this gender-ambivalence best, since a breeches role is in my opinion by default an embodiment of contradiction. In Chapter 3.3 I argue that the character of Siébel could be viewed as the symbolisation of an authentic nineteenth-century *female*, rather than the male character that is assumed by this role. When we consider this notion as justifiable, Siébel gains newfound importance as the character who, arguably, delivers the most social commentary on the gender constructs of Gounod's time. On the one hand "she" (Siébel) represents the muted voice of the typical French

nineteenth-century woman; a voice that is overruled by male patriarchy. This can be derived when one considers the part of Siébel's character which is shy, unconfident, unselfish (to the point of it being pathetic, and detrimental to "her"self), reserved, and on the side-line.

However, when viewing this character from a different angle, a sense of independence and individualism is evident. "She" is unfazed by "her" community's disapproval and judgment of Marguerite's actions, making it clear that "she" is the bearer of an independent mind and capable of deciding for "her"self whether something is good or bad. Furthermore, "she" does not fit "her" gender's expected stereotype and is not dependent on any social structure – "her" character is not directly associated with any specific institution or religious stance. This side of Siébel's character therefore embodies the nineteenth-century French woman who refused to settle into "her" "prescribed" position in society, and fought the norms to finally live as an authentic, independent contributor to "her" community and culture.

With Gounod shifting the male focus in the original text to that of the female in his opera, he portrays yet another aspect of French nineteenth-century culture – the female as icon and symbol. This idea is already visible in the first act of the opera when a vision of Marguerite at the spinning wheel appears to Faust. He is immediately enamoured by Marguerite's vision. This fascination is however purely based on outer appearance, since he does not yet know her. Although this vision is thus a suggestion of female objectification, it is the symbolic foundation of the entire plot: Marguerite. In my opinion Marguerite serves as the most valuable, undeniable and important component of *Faust*. Although the opera is named after the character Faust, I believe Marguerite is the protagonist, with all the action in some way developing around her. She is the influencer, the binder, the motivation and, finally, the conqueror; without her there would be no plot. Furthermore, it is also through her that most of the cultural, social, political and religious aspects of her milieu are brought to light. She can be viewed as the representative of her time and place – in other words, a symbol.

Although Marguerite enjoys the central position in this epic tale of good and evil, there still is an ambivalence present in her character. Similar to the irony and ambivalence rooted in the abundance of female iconography in nineteenth-century France (the female as a symbol of strength were propagated, despite the still prevalent subordination and discrimination of women), Marguerite is also the representation of female weakness. This is especially visible in the "initial" Marguerite whom we meet: a naive, gullible, shy and conformist young

woman. Interestingly, in the case of the opera the symbolic female “roles” are exchanged when compared to the ones present in the real French culture of the nineteenth century. In the latter, powerful female icons of strength and leadership were being propagated, while the actual female predicament was one of subordination and a struggle for rights. In the opera, however, I believe it is rather female weakness combined with an unstoppable inner strength that later reveals itself, develops and finally conquers. In my opinion it is a possibility that Gounod created this symbolic exchange as a means to elevate the female gender by portraying its potential to one day enjoy equality with men, and by doing so delivering a message of hope to all nineteenth-century female audience members.

4.3 Gender roles in the Catholic Church tradition

After the former era of rationalism, nineteenth-century Europe saw the beginning of a renewed interest in religion. Following the French Revolution, Napoleon’s social and legal design was strengthened by the power of the restored Catholic Church. Although a predominantly conservative and patriarchal influence was exerted by religious institutions on French society, religion became the domain of women. Some historians even go as far as to say that during this century, religion became “feminized”. Theology moved away from a rational foundation of belief, to a greater dependency on feeling and emotion. This movement in religion developed alongside a counter-movement in political culture shaped by Enlightenment values: while the importance of family and community were being emphasised, the political sphere demanded rationalism and individual autonomy. The binary oppositions of religion (female) and politics (male) created a gendered division in the labour force. Nineteenth-century women flourished as philanthropic volunteers and community workers, encouraged by the increase in social issues brought about by urbanization and industrial development. (Valenze 2004: 467.)

Apart from the growth in social work done by women, there was a tremendous swell in women’s religious orders. In fact, in the second half of the century these female orders came to outnumber the men of secular and regular clergy combined. Nearly 400 successful new female orders were established in the first 80 years of the century, and an estimated 200,000 women entered the religious life. A possible reason for this major rise in women’s religious participation can be assigned to the increase in Marian devotion in the nineteenth century,

which gave them a matriarchal figure to relate to. The Virgin was also becoming the main focus of Catholic iconography, her piousness, femininity and maternal virtues greatly emphasised. (Gibson 1989: 182.)

This feminization even led a few liberal nineteenth-century theologians to experiment with the idea of God as a female or maternal figure. In his work *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, Saint François de Sales introduced the image of a child at his mother's breast to suggest a Catholic relation to God. Later, in 1829, this idea was used by the bishop of Perpignan (1854–1864), abbé Philippe Gerbet (1798–1864), who stated the following (Gerbet in Gibson 1989: 182–183):

Just as a child receives his life, and attaches himself, by an instinct of self-preservation, to his mother's breast, before opening his eyes to the light, so man nourishes himself from God before being able to see him.

We live by the breast of God, as a child lives by the breast of its mother. We are suspended at that breast, avidly, our eyes closed, without even knowing that a little above our heads, so very close, the Face is watching over us.

But, the church's views in terms of gender constructs and the role and representation of the female were not as liberal as it sometimes seemed. Comments like the ones above were shunned as “sexual dimorphism” by patriarchal clergy. This was most probably fuelled by the belief that sexuality and the body should be condemned as the basis of sin. Priests had a contempt for their own bodies, and the mere act of taking a bath was forbidden as it was seen as preoccupying oneself with the flesh, which is the root of sexual lust. Even more to be despised were women's bodies as they were the representation of seduction and hedonism. So, maternal metaphors connected to God was regarded as highly blasphemous. (Gibson 1989: 92–93.)

Furthermore, despite the rising prevalence of female influence in religion, the church itself was, ironically, one of the most ardent supporters of role differentiation according to gender. In priests' eyes men were associated with power, dominance, authority and wisdom, and women with docility, domesticity, tenderness and love (Gibson 1989: 186). The following quote by Napoleon serves as an example of the sexism and intellectual naivety that controlled and dominated the view of the female gender (Napoleon in Jones 1994: 198):

The weakness of women's brains and the mobility of their ideas mean that their social destiny can only be achieved through religion.

Although it is justifiable to believe that the Marian cult with its increased exposure of the female (as a supposed leading figure) in a religious context, was a positive element of nineteenth-century Catholicism, this adornment of the Virgin aided in subordinating the female. Mary was both honoured as virgin and mother, thereby enhancing the status of both of these womanly conditions. As is still the belief today, a girl was expected to stay a virgin until wedlock whereafter her main role and purpose ought to be that of mother and wife. Hence, if a lady did not have these attributes, she was immediately condemned as being sinful and impious, a shame to the Catholic tradition. (Gibson 1989: 186; Knight 2008: 173.) Middle-class Catholic men believed that women had greater leisure for contemplation, and by being shielded from the knowledge and temptations of the world, they were expected to be more devout. Women were believed to be "naturally" predisposed to be religious because of the contemporary Catholic views of feminine faith, gentleness and passivity. Not only did this serve as a comfortable excuse for many men's absence of church attendance in the nineteenth century (the male psyche was not as religiously "equipped"), it also created a domesticated stigma connected to the "fairer" sex. (Knight 2008: 176.)

The growth in female philanthropists and charity workers also gave birth to another theory of the religious woman in nineteenth-century France: that of suffering. According to Burton (2004: 19) the spiritual function of a woman in post-revolutionary France was to "weep, bleed, and starve for the salvation of others, to offer herself up as a holocaust to appease a revengeful male deity". Catholic women viewed the poor as an unavoidable, even necessary element in society, due to the natural inequality of humanity caused by the fall of sin (Fortescue 1997: 60). Consequently women actually contributed to the believed gender divisions of the time, by putting themselves in the position of selfless, but suffering, carer and nurturer: characteristics that can easily be interpreted as submissive.

The other point that has to be raised is that women were becoming so active in church-life that the patriarchal political structure of France actually used women's loyalty to the church as a pretext to exclude them from the political sphere. Even though they were fulfilling more roles in the church, these roles were still of a "womanly" nature: they were charity workers, teachers of basic Sunday school and domestic-related specialities like cooking and lace-

making, and looked after the elderly and sick. They were therefore still not “adequate” enough to enter the political sphere. (Lösel 2008: 285–286.)

4.4 Gounod’s *Faust* as a portrayal of the nineteenth-century Catholic gender divisions in France

Again, it is striking how many of the gender issues of the nineteenth-century Catholic Church tradition, discussed above, are visible in Gounod’s *Faust*. In my opinion, the feminization of religion which became the norm during this era, is clearly portrayed by both Marguerite’s character and the predominance of Marian iconography and references in this work. Taking the many references, by Marguerite, to faith, prayer, the church, and the Madonna into consideration, it is not invalidated to presume that Marguerite is a devout Catholic girl with a great respect for, and fascination with, the Holy Virgin. This is significant because the male characters, of which Faust is probably the most noteworthy, are either apathetic or opposed to the Catholic religion, as is the case with Méphistophéles. The librettists in collaboration with Gounod altered the original text by Goethe in such a way as to elevate Marguerite to the central position. He also highlighted the religious theme, and then combined these two aspects to suggest the idea of a “feminized religion” – similar to what was being experienced in actual French nineteenth-century life. (Valenze 2004: 467.)

Perhaps, from a more controversial perspective, one can argue that in order to give a symbolic representation of his religious milieu, Gounod’s Marguerite is in essence a portrayal of the extreme Marianology prevalent at the time. However, this portrayal also includes social commentary since the character falls prey to sin. In other words, one can interpret it as follows: Marguerite before the seduction can act as both the model Christian woman as well as an embodiment of the Virgin Mary herself. She is altruistic, selfless, caring, docile toward male figures, and a respected and admired individual in her community. After the seduction however, she is either the representation of the sinful believer who strayed from the path of the straight and narrow, but were freed from sin by redemption; or she might be a symbolic portrayal of what dire consequences (extreme societal judgment which eventually can cause individual madness) might arise when a society is so catechized and conditioned by an iconic construct, such as the Blessed Virgin.

The nineteenth-century notion that women are naturally more “predisposed” to be religious is another aspect abundantly portrayed and commented on in *Faust*. Marguerite’s gentle, caring nature fits the supposition that women are by default in a likelier position to have religious faith, considering that these attributes are praised, as well as expected, in Christian theology. Traits like altruism and nurture also lend themselves to more domestic settings – this is clearly visible with Marguerite’s character who finds herself, for the most part, in her home or at the church. Furthermore, Marguerite’s tale of suffering is another aspect that corresponds to the nineteenth-century theory which states that the function of a devout woman should be one of pain, in order to save others from their sins (Burton 2004: 19).

I propose that the struggle which Marguerite endures is a symbolic struggle for all nineteenth-century women. In my view, the gender stereotyping of the church is commented on through Marguerite’s redemption. In other words, despite Marguerite straying and sinning, she is nevertheless given redemption and freedom. Metaphorically, this can indicate to French women of the time that, irrespective of the church’s dogma, they shall receive liberation and redemption, even if the nature of the sin is sexually-based. Interestingly, in the case of *Faust*, Marguerite’s fate serves an added purpose of gaining redemption for *herself*. This is again an instance in which female empowerment, as well as societal and religious commentary, is suggested. Where the suffering of faithful nineteenth-century Frenchwomen ought to have been endured purely for others, Marguerite shows that redemption and freedom may also be gained for oneself. This aspect gives an impression of heroism to female audiences, which is a concept often neglected when referring to this gender.

As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, women’s overt activity in church-life led to patriarchal structures using it as an alibi to exclude them from political issues, the reason being that women would be too pre-occupied to be of great value in politics. Also, the nature of women’s activity in church were mainly domestic-related, implying that they would be “inadequate” to give sufficient political input. However, what makes *Faust* so powerful is that the plight of Marguerite can be viewed as also giving political commentary. Marguerite’s character portrays how a woman’s religious trials can give voice to other secular issues like gender discrimination. Subsequently, it can be argued that Gounod perhaps wanted to use the opera to show religious female audience members that their own religious predicaments and roles in the church do not make them inadequate in bringing political issues to the fore.

4.5 Summary

From the discussion presented in this chapter we can derive that the nineteenth century was ambiguous in various respects of gender and women's roles in France. It is extremely hard to make a general deduction of what this specific time and place really entailed for women, since there were many developments, but also many set-backs with regards to their social and religious status. These ambivalent, and in some cases even contradictory, happenings are articulated in the plot and characters of Gounod's *Faust*.

The inhibitive gender stereotypes of the first half of the era, the consequent emergence of an *avant-garde*, more independent femininity, the “feminization” of religion, and the rigid dogma propagated by the Catholic Church regarding gender identities and sexuality, are all aspects evident in the different predicaments the characters in the opera face. Gounod successfully and innovatively managed to contextualise his opera in order to make it relevant to its milieu. This did not only contribute to making *Faust* more accessible to its first audiences, but added significant and unique value to the historical research field concerning the dominant gender constructs of circa 1789–1859 in France.

5 GENDER INFLUENCES IN GOUNOD'S LIFE

5.1 Victoire Gounod, née Lemachois (Gounod's mother)

Gounod's mother can contestably be regarded as a person, and a woman for that matter, who had a considerable influence on the composer's life. Not only did she essentially raise Gounod as a single parent (his father passed away when he was only five years old), she was also the first person to offer him significant exposure to music, as well as the person who was the driving force behind his life-long obsession with religion. Most importantly though, the fact that she was a woman *and* a mother made of her a unique female figure in Gounod's life, which most probably served as inspiration for his treatment of gender issues in his works. (Huebner 2001: 215.)

When Gounod's father died, Lemachois (1780–1858) established her own piano teaching studio in Gounod's hometown of Paris, in order to support her two sons. Gounod showed immense interest which led to him receiving lessons from his mother. Later his interest shifted to composition, and although at first reluctant, in 1836 Lemachois arranged for him to leave school one day each week for private lessons in harmony and counterpoint with the Bohemia-born, later French composer Antoine Reicha (1770–1836). From there on, Gounod's career went from strength to strength, reaching a pinnacle in 1839 with him winning the prestigious *Prix de Rome* at the young age of 21. In the years that followed, he travelled between Rome, Vienna and Leipzig, returning to Paris in 1843. As previously mentioned, Lemachois's welcome to her son reminded Gounod's friend, the Abbé Gay, of “the Holy Virgin receiving one of her children into heaven after his earthly journey.” (Curtiss 1952: 52; Davin 2011; Huebner 2001: 215.)

During his absence, Gounod's mother had moved to the headquarters of the *Séminaire des Missions Étrangères* (Foreign Missions Church). The house next door was shared by the curator, Abbé Dumarsais. Even prior to her son's return, Lemachois had through the help of the Abbé arranged that Gounod should become musical director of the Chapel. In 1843 Gounod accepted the position, which turned out to be a predominantly negative experience, due to many clashes with the vestry and parishioners, whom he experienced as restrictive and intervening regarding his choice of music. Interestingly though, the time at the Chapel

contributed to the composer's bold decision to replace his life as a composer and musician with that of the priesthood. In October 1847 Gounod formally entered the Carmelite monastery where he devoted himself to reading, translating and commenting on Biblical and clerical texts. But due to reasons which are not clear, the composer abandoned his theological studies at the outbreak of the February Revolution of 1848. This did not affect his Christian beliefs – his affinity toward his religion continued to be very deep-seated throughout the course of his life. (Curtiss 1952: 52–54; Huebner 2001: 216.)

In 1850, the 32-year old Gounod met the soprano Pauline Viardot (1821–1910) who was to become his life-long friend and presumed lover. She also served as the persuasion and motivation behind his first opera, *Sappho*. The opera was composed at Madame Viardot's château, Courtavenel, to which he and his mother were invited. The composition took place in an all-female environment consisting of Gounod's mother, Viardot's mother, as well as Viardot's daughter; Viardot herself was however away on tour. Lemachois was therefore present at another important milestone in her son's career. It is also important to mention that Gounod's brother died in April of that same year, leaving him with very few male influences. (Curtiss 1952: 58.)

Due to Gounod's marriage to Anna Zimmermann in 1852, the composer ceased to live with his mother. This did not affect the strong mother-son relationship, as they remained extremely close until Lemachois's death in 1858, a year prior to the première of *Faust*. It is also clear that Gounod's mother played a much more important role in his life than did his wife: Zimmermann is not even mentioned by name in the composer's incomplete memoirs, in contrast to the majority dedicated to his mother. (Baker & Tiersot 1919: 48; Huebner 2001: 217.)

I believe it is a strong possibility that Gounod's obsession with catholicism, which has the Virgin Mary as a central maternal figure, could most probably have been bolstered by the inseparable bond which he had with his own mother. In a brochure entitled *L'Allaitement Musical*, Gounod stated that (Bennett 1893: 713):

I had the happiness – happiness which seems to be more and more rare – of being nursed by my mother. Maternal nourishment contains more of education than is supposed. If it does not, like language, transmit ideas, it is, very probably at least, the

vehicle of instincts aptitudes, and inclinations which add so many traits the more of resemblance between child and mother.

In this regard it is possible to argue that Lemachois's influence can even be seen in the characterization of female characters in his operas, a very clear example being *Faust*.

5.2 Pauline Viardot

Although Gounod briefly met Viardot in 1840 during his stay in the Villa Medici in Rome, it was only in 1849 that the singer really entered the composer's life. Together with his mother, Viardot had a fundamental influence on Gounod – both personally and professionally. After abandoning his theological studies in 1848, Gounod's longing for the theatre was awakened by the reunion with Viardot, who had by now established her own salon. Desperate to test his skills in the theatre, the composer spoke to Viardot who encouraged him to write an opera. After assigning one of the foremost librettists of the time, Émile Augier, and offering to sing the leading part herself, *Sappho* was born, greatly by the hands of this gifted singer. Many scholars are of the opinion that Viardot was immeasurably influential in launching the composer's career. (Marix-Spire 1945a: 193–194.)

It was through Viardot that Gounod, who lived with Viardot and her husband, was exposed to other legendary artists of the time, including the Russian novelist Turgenev and the French novelist George Sand whom Viardot claimed to be “the woman whom she loved the most in the world after her mother”. Although there does not exist clear evidence to suggest a romantic relationship between Viardot and Gounod, the partnership between them ended quite suspiciously after Gounod married Zimmermann in 1852 (Curtiss 1952: 66–67).

From the moment the question of marriage came up (wrote Madame Viardot to George Sand in the summer of 1852) Gounod behaved like an ingrate towards us. In all his show of having a heart, that *heart* which he talks about so incessantly and in such fine phrases, he is nothing but a bag of egotism, vanity and scheming [...].

It is believed that Gounod was manipulated into ending the friendship with Viardot due to the jealousy of Zimmermann and her mother. The latter paid the expenses for engraving the full score of his second opera *La Nonne Sanglante* (1854). It is thus possible that the composer might have felt obliged to please his mother-in-law. (Curtiss 1952: 66.)

Nevertheless, Viardot's short stay in Gounod's life could not have gone without a gendered influence on the composer. It is generally accepted that Viardot was an exceptionally independent woman for her time, and even in her relationship with Gounod I get the impression of her fulfilling the role of leader. Also, she was a woman with a very successful career, comparable to that of Clara Schumann (1819–1896) – something that was not the norm for the “fairer” sex of the nineteenth century. It is to my mind important to regard these characteristics as possible contributors to the composer's portrayal of the female gender.

5.3 Fanny Hensel (née Mendelssohn)

Gounod first met the acclaimed pianist and composer in 1840 (at the same occasion he met Viardot) during his stay as prize-winner at the Villa Medici in Rome. According to Cooper (1940: 51) Hensel (1805–1847) can be regarded as one of the most important musical influences on Gounod, since she played a central part in his exposure to German music and literature – the latter of which included Goethe. Apart from Bach and Beethoven (whom Hensel adored), Gounod was inevitably also introduced to Hensel's brother, Felix Mendelssohn. The French composer only met Mendelssohn in 1843 in Leipzig, having been greeted with “So you're the madman of whom my sister told me”. Mendelssohn arranged a special concert of the Gewandhaus Orchestra playing his *Scottish Symphony*, and in the Thomaskirche Gounod listened to works of Bach played on the organ. (Citron 2001: 388; Curtiss 1952: 52.)

The composers' music which Hensel exposed Gounod to, became highly influential in his musical style. During his time serving as musical director of the Mission Chapel in Paris, he stated that “Palestrina and Bach are my gods”. Gounod also later confessed (after an initial disliking) that it became very challenging to escape the “imperious influence of the idea of Beethoven”. That influence would later be quite evident in his Second Symphony. The signature of Felix Mendelssohn's style would emerge often in Gounod's later career, for example in the second movement of his First Symphony, the instrumental offertory in the *Messe solennelle de Sainte Cécile* and in the third act of the opera *Mireille*. In 1870, due to great political unrest leading to the Siege of Paris by the Prussian army, Gounod fled to England where he stayed for four years. It is believed that during this time he also experienced a revived admiration for Mendelssohn and the whole attitude to music which he

had learned from Hensel. There he found a taste for choral and religious music which led him to compose works like the elegiac cantata *Gallia*. (Cooper 1940: 54, 55; Curtiss 1952: 53; Huebner 2001: 216.)

Although it might seem as if Hensel *herself* did not directly influence Gounod, it is worth mentioning that she holds a prominent place in the development of female composition during the nineteenth century in Europe. Throughout her life she fought a gender-battle: due to her being a woman, her piano-playing and composition were expected to be mere hobbies and not the bases for a career, for her duties as mother and wife had to enjoy priority. But between 1846 and 1847 she took the bold step to publish some works under her own name, and not under that of her brother. Unfortunately her promising career was cut short by her early death in May 1847. It is uncertain whether Gounod ever heard any of her compositions, or whether he was aware of her attempts to establish herself as a composer, but I would like to think that it was indeed the case. If not, Hensel did nevertheless contribute greatly to his style and exposure to music. (Halstead 1998.)

5.4 George Sand (pseudonym of Amandine Aurore Lucile Dupin)

As mentioned, Gounod's connection with Pauline Viardot did not only lead to musical successes, but the singer also enriched his social life by introducing him to legendary personalities like the French novelist and playwright George Sand (1804–1876). Viardot and Sand had an extremely close friendship, and even long before Sand was introduced to Gounod she was already the recipient of many a letter with the promising composer as main subject. In 1851 during rehearsals for *Sappho*, Sand was in Paris for the first performance of her play *Claudie*, which was a great success. Gounod was introduced to her by Viardot, and from a letter written to Sand in 1851, it is clear that the composer was in awe of the rather unconventional writer (Marix-Spire 1945a: 203; Grochowski 2005.)

I am very happy to have seen you, to know you, to love you, to be also a little loved by you. My memory of you is to me what very few memories are; it is a companion and I am the better for it.

Later in this letter, Gounod suggests the idea of a professional collaboration between the two of them, which Sand, with much enthusiasm, immediately reciprocated. An opera about the

province of Berry – for which Sand would have then written the libretto – was being planned. However, due to many unplanned problems (like the inability to find adequate singers and a theatre) the proposed plan fell through. Gounod and Sand continued to support each other's careers, but with the breach of trust between the composer and Viardot after his marriage to Zimmermann, Sand and Gounod's paths also split. (Marix-Spire 1945a: 203–208; Huebner 2001: 217.)

Again I feel it necessary to give some background as to why I think Sand's presence in Gounod's life might have had an impact on his works. In 1831, after a nine-year marriage, Sand left her husband the baron Cisimir Dudevant, and adopted a very free, liberal lifestyle with regards romantic relationships. She conducted affairs of various lengths with the likes of Jules Sandeau, Alfred de Musset, Franz Liszt, Frédéric Chopin, as well as a presumed relationship with actress Marie Dorval. After the ending of her marriage she started to show her preference for men's clothing which she publicly showcased, but continued dressing as a woman for social occasions. With her new male attire she was able to circulate more freely around Paris, and increased her access to venues that were usually denied to women. She also smoked publicly, something that was regarded as highly inappropriate for a woman at that time. (Grochowski 2005.)

Not only did Sand visibly (by her controversial appearance and lifestyle) challenge patriarchal authority, she was also a strong activist of feminism. She was much upset by the outbreak of the 1848 Revolution in Paris, which led her to start her own newspaper, giving her free reign to publish numerous articles regarding humanism and women's rights. (Grochowski 2005.)

It is therefore a great possibility that Gounod's exposure to such a strong-willed, liberal, independent, but also eccentric woman like Sand could have served as a contribution to his treatment of female characters in his operas. Many of Gounod's representations of females are somewhat unconventional to the time in which it was written: similar to Sand who did not fit the "prescribed" gender norms of the time.

5.5 Anna Zimmermann (Gounod's wife)

One might assume that a man's wife would be an obvious strong female influence in his life. Interestingly, this was not the case with Gounod. Very little information is available on Gounod's marriage of 1852 to Zimmermann (1839–1906). As already mentioned, the latter is not even mentioned by name in the composer's autobiographical writings, in contrast to many pages dedicated to his mother. Furthermore, despite his wife's life-long devotion, he rarely acknowledged any creative or intellectual stimulation from her. The marriage also led to the ending of many significant artistic relationships that Gounod had built up during his younger years. (Davin 2011; Huebner 2001: 217.)

Zimmermann was the daughter of the well-established piano professor at the Paris Conservatoire, Pierre-Joseph Zimmermann. He enjoyed a very influential position in French musical circles, so much so that promising pianists, French or foreign, would have given anything to be granted the opportunity to play for him. Pierre-Joseph was very supportive of Gounod's career: together with his wife, he helped to finance the publication of the *Ulysse* (1851) score, as well as of *La Nonne Sanglante* (1854). Because the professor was rather old and often ill, Gounod was occasionally given the opportunity of taking over his classes at the Conservatoire. As a result, Gounod was introduced to the young Bizet who was then a promising counterpoint student of Pierre-Joseph. (Curtiss 1952: 60; Huebner 2001: 217.)

I am not convinced about Gounod's appointment as the director of the Orphéon, together with that of singing teacher in public schools of Paris, since these appointments coincided with the time of marriage to Zimmermann. It is thus that these posts could have been handed to Gounod on a silver platter because of his newly established relationship with Pierre-Joseph. Many believe the composer's marriage to Zimmermann was merely for opportunistic reasons, since he gained status and financial support through the connection with his esteemed father-in-law. (Huebner 2001: 217; Marix-Spire 1945b: 304.)

From what I can gather of the little information on Zimmermann, she did not work or pursued a specific career. I would assume that she occupied a mainly domestic role as wife for Gounod and mother to their children – embodying the mainstream nineteenth-century female. It is thus possible to speculate that Zimmermann might have been a source behind the

prevalence of conflicting dualism in Gounod's female characters. It is a possibility that she was the only woman in his life who fully characterised the domestic, passive, motherly, altruistic female, whereas the other women (even his mother) embodied the strong, active, independent female. After learning that Gounod devoted little to no writing or references to his wife, and taking the theories of an opportunistic marriage into consideration, his preference for the strong, active, independent female (as regards the characterization in his operas) might be explained.

5.6 Gounod's character

After learning of Gounod's uniquely female-dominated support system, I find it intriguing and noteworthy that his character and personality traits were noted for being very effeminate. According to Curtiss (1952: 49–50) the composer had a notably charming personality with a weakness for hugging and kissing. Even his letters to male friends beamed of romanticism and feminization (Baker & Tiersot 1919: 52):

Was I fated to be the slave of the thousand details which are the bane of existence, to prevent me from writing you even once since that blissful time when we dwelt in affectionate intimacy? Why am I no longer there, in that paradise of Provence which was a real heaven for me?- a heaven wherein you, my great and well-belovèd poet, were the most beautiful and brilliant star!

In an interesting article by Bennett (1893: 713), the author proposes that Gounod's inclination to pietism was driven by his feminine character. Beauty was a concept that the composer was much fascinated by – again, something that is usually associated with the feminine. Bennett is of the opinion that these effeminate traits are highly visible in the composer's music, comparing it with the gracious body of a woman:

It revels in luscious harmonies, slow moving and languorous, decked out with all the voluptuous colouring that a modern orchestra affords; it is rich in melodies o [sic] sensuous charm – chaplets of flower laid at the feet of Venus or the chastity of Diana, or the Christian embodiment of feminine purity.

5.7 Specific women's influences on Gounod's life and on *Faust*

It is quite obvious to observe that the female played an immense part in Gounod's life. What is furthermore noticeable is the predominance of educated, independent, influential women with whom he had close relationships. In my opinion *Faust* can in many ways serve as a representation of Gounod's own experiences regarding women. As discussed above, Gounod had an exceptionally close relationship with his mother who played an active role in his life until her death. I believe the predominance of the Virgin Mary in *Faust* could perhaps be a symbolisation of not only his devout Catholic faith, but also the inseparable mother-son bond prevalent in his life.

The Virgin Mary is an ever-present "character" in the opera. Although she is not actually performed or embodied, she nevertheless exerts great control over the thought-constructs and actions of the characters. She is independent, unaided and perhaps enjoys even more theological importance in the opera than her patriarchal Catholic counterparts, Jesus Christ and God. In this sense the Virgin can be viewed as a leader. Together with these attributes, though, she is still very much a maternal figure: she is a refuge for sympathy, guidance and hope, and a symbol of nurture and love. To my mind, Gounod's mother shares many of these traits with the Blessed Virgin. She was a pillar of support and guidance for her son and the embodiment of unconditional maternal love. She was almost always present in his life – perhaps not consistently as a "main character" but she could, in some way or the other, be connected to most of his life-experiences. Her maternal role was alternated with another role of leadership in which she managed a lot of Gounod's affairs. Hence, it is deducible that Lemachois could be symbolized by the Virgin Mary in *Faust*.

Another highly possible notion is that the duality in Marguerite's character (maternal and domestic on the one hand, and independent and individualist on the other) might also be indicative of a correlation between Marguerite and Gounod's mother.

In my view, Pauline Viardot's strong female identity had, in more ways than one, an influence on *Faust*. Viardot was an active, independent woman who was not governed by any type of patriarchy. She also had a decisive role in Gounod's life by being the driving force behind noteworthy triumphs for the composer. If one chooses to believe the suggested

romantic affiliation between Gounod and the singer, it serves as another of his life-spheres in which Viardot played a part. Her independence and self-governing nature can be compared with the change which occurs in Marguerite after the seduction. After this incident Marguerite changed from mainly fulfilling an altruistic, maternal, domestic role to one in which her actions are more autonomous and unconstrained by stereotypical expectations. She finds herself completely isolated in her suffering, with little support of family, friends and her community (Siébel being the only understanding character) – she is thus left to her own devices and forced into a position in which independence and characteral strength is required.

Marguerite is ungoverned by men, and her refusal of Faust's last offer, as well as her ultimate redemption, is telling of a sovereign, unconstrained identity. Similar to Viardot's unavoidable influence on Gounod, Marguerite too is at the heart of the plot, in some way or the other connected to most of the action evident in the lives of her fellow characters. She is also the romantic lead – a possible connection that can be drawn to Viardot and Gounod's suggested romance.

Fanny Hensel's influence on *Faust* might not be observable in a single character. Rather the notion of female strength and independence, highlighted by her prominent place in the history of composers, is in a holistic sense visible in the opera. Marguerite's redemption can be seen as a message to all female audience members that liberation, and a positive outcome to suffering, can be attained irrespective of your gender. Similar is the predicament of Hensel: the latter struggled throughout her life to earn recognition as a composer, due to her gender. Nevertheless, after her death, Hensel gained the reputation of being one of the most important figures in the history of female composition. It is furthermore also highly likely that the musical input that Hensel contributed to Gounod's compositional style is evident in *Faust*.

I am of the opinion that George Sand's influence on *Faust* is most clearly visible in the character of Siébel. This notion is justifiable when my theory of Chapter 3.3 is taken into consideration, that Siébel is in essence an embodiment of an authentic *female* rather than a male. Sand was a highly controversial individual with a unique liberal, independent mindset. For her day and age, her way of living and the manner in which she dressed went against all stereotyped labels and expectations governing French nineteenth-century gender constructs.

Taking her own direction in life, she did not fall prey to social conditioning. She lived an autonomous life, relying on her own faculties to make judgments and decisions.

Many of the above-mentioned traits of Sand can be correlated to Siébel. When one regards the latter as an authentic female, Siébel, just like Sand, challenges societal norms by dressing in an entirely unconventional manner – choosing male attire over dresses and skirts. Apart from “her” sense of fashion, Siébel as an individual does not seem to easily fit in with the rest of her community. “She” is not really affiliated to either the male or the female social circles: “she” is not a member of the army like the rest of the men, and there are no specific references indicating that “she” is domestic or a religious church-goer, as is the holistic message one receives when observing the female side of the *Faust* community. A speculative, but logical deduction can also be drawn between Sand’s presumed lesbian relationships and Siébel’s (when viewed as a woman) love interest in Marguerite.

Most noteworthy though, is the similarity of independent-thinking shared between Sand and Siébel. Similar to Sand, Siébel does not conform to the sheep-mentality propagated by “her” environment. When the community stands firm in rejecting and judging Marguerite, Siébel individuates “her”self by relying on “her” own knowledge and convictions to establish a conception of Marguerite’s actions, rather than blindly supporting the belief advocated by the masses. By not judging Marguerite, it is clear that Siébel has insight in the main character’s situation, which shows that “she” is capable of acknowledging and understanding an action that challenges cultural and societal norms.

Anna Zimmermann is noticeable in the sense that she was the only woman in Gounod’s life whom we have discussed, who entirely (Lemachois doing so partially) fulfils the image of the stereotypical French nineteenth-century domestic female. Zimmermann is not noted to have pursued a career or of having any sort of professional ambition. She is presumed to have been a housewife, her day-to-day life consisting mostly of doing domestic chores and looking after her and the composer’s children. It thus is an obvious deduction that Zimmermann can be compared to the “initial” (before the seduction) Marguerite in *Faust*. As already discussed, the Marguerite who is presented to us, the audience, is a domesticated, pious woman who is respected by her community for her pureness of heart and caring nature. She does not pursue a career and it is evident that her main duty in life has been that of caring and looking after

members of her family. She does not often venture out of her home and does not expose herself to many people, except the ones in her community. Consequently, her belief-system is very limited and her thoughts and opinions are predominantly based upon societal constructs and ideas propagated by her community and church. She, similar to Zimmermann, fits the female gender stereotype of her milieu perfectly and does not challenge any authority by being unconventional or controversial.

As we have observed in our discussion of Gounod's character, the composer seems to have had an affinity for the female, highlighted by his own effeminate traits and characteristics. Gounod's feminine nature could most probably have served as a holistic influence on the opera as a whole: characters as well as music. His choice of creating a breeches role for Siébel, as well as his input in shifting the main focus of the plot from Faust to Marguerite can be seen as telling instances in which Gounod's love for the female and the feminine contributed to the originality of his work.

5.8 Summary

Considering the findings in the above chapter, I believe it is a logical deduction that the array of femininities featured in Gounod's life and the divergent female roles portrayed in *Faust*, share significant correlations. Where Siébel characterizes the unconventional and controversial Sand, the singular character of Marguerite is, in my view, the combined embodiment of Lemachois, Viardot, Zimmermann and, more indirectly, Hensel. By arguing that Siébel is female rather than male, "her" physical and intellectual independence as well as "her" "otherness" are strikingly comparable to the specific femininity that Sand exhibited. Marguerite portrays both the nineteenth-century stereotype femininity, characteristic of maternity and domesticity, as well as an independent and liberated female model – these being traits noted to be dominant in Gounod's mother, colleagues, or wife.

In my view, Gounod's own supposed "feminine" temperament is another aspect that most likely had an influence on the holistic prevalence of the female in *Faust*, since I believe it is naive and unjust to disregard the identity of a composer and its subsequent effect on his/her work.

Hence, this chapter furthermore proves that *Faust* is an authentic, uniquely Gounodian creation with an unavoidable and significant relevance to its gendered context.

6 PORTRAYALS OF GENDER IN *FAUST*

6.1 Aim of the chapter

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the libretto, score and three DVD productions of *Faust* in order to deduce possible gender symbolism present in the opera. As I base my deductions of the libretto on the English translation of the French text in Chapter 6.2, I have to consider the fact that my findings are inevitably influenced by the language interpretation of the translator. In analyzing the score, I shall use the theories of McClary, Leach, Taruskin, and Abeles and Porter, discussed in Chapter 3.4, as references to my findings. I am using both the *Bote & Bock* published score of 1869, as well as a 2009 CD recording by EMI as my sources. I did not go into great theoretical depth as regards chords, inversions, progressions, modulations and keys.

Furthermore, it is of value to take into consideration that my gender findings in the score are contestable and that other interpretations could also hold great merit. Due to the short, purely plot-informative nature of some of the scenes, I did not deduce gender symbolism from them, as their content is literal and non-metaphorical.

In Chapter 6.4 it is important to be aware of the differences in cultural contexts and historical frames in which the different productions were constructed, and how it, by default, will influence the gender messages conveyed. In some cases the producers altered the division of the different acts, as well as the order of the scenes. The reader should please take note that I consistently refer to the order of the scenes as presented in the score.

6.2 Libretto

Act I, Scene I

After the orchestral introduction, the opera opens rather gravely with Faust lamenting over his lonely and joyless existence, as age has caught up with him. His gender in combination with his longing for death contrasts with the suggestion of femininity when the choir of young girls sings of life and light: “*Ah! Paresseuse fille qui sommeille encore! Déjà le jour*

brille sous son manteau d'or. Déjà l'oiseau chante ses folles chansons; l'aube caressante sourit aux moissons; le ruisseau murmure, la fleur s'ouvre au jour, toute la nature s'éveille à l'amour!" (Ah! Lazy girl, who is still slumbering! The day already shines in its golden cloak. The bird already sings its careless songs; the caressing dawn smiles on the harvest; the brook prattles, the flower opens to daylight, all Nature awakens to love!) After praising creation, the harvesters, and later the young girls, sing the words, "*Béni soit Dieu*" (Blessed be God), thereby linking God with the creator and maker of life and light. It is therefore deducible that God is here connected with femininity. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 1–2.)

Act I, Scene II

The gender message at the beginning of this scene is predominantly male. Méphistophéles is portrayed as a true gentleman: "*Me voici! D'où vient ta surprise? Ne suis-je pas mis à ta guise? L'épée au côté, la plume au chapeau, l'escarcelle pleine, un riche manteau sur l'épaule; en somme un vrai gentilhomme!"* (Here I am! Why are you surprised? Is my attire not to your taste? My sword at my side, a feather in my hat, money in my purse, a splendid cloak over my shoulder; in short, a real lord!) It is, however, insightful to refer to Chapter 6.3 in which it is pointed out that the score creates ambivalence in this secure masculinity. When Faust voices his wish, it is clear that youth, which in the text is associated with pleasure and love, is connected to the female: after Méphistophéles's words, "*La jeunesse t'appelle; ose la regarder!"* (Youth is calling you, be bold enough to look at it!), he shows Faust a vision of Marguerite at the spinning wheel. Hence, desire, pleasure, youth and love are all embodied as female, in this case Marguerite. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 2–5.)

Act II, Scene I

When the students, Wagner, soldiers and burghers open the act, it is rather predictable that a sense of masculinity would be dominant. The text of this drinking song relates to the stereotype of manhood. There are references to liquor, the seduction of women and the latter's subordination to them, as well as war – aspects that are more than often associated with men, rather than women. When the ladies enter, surprisingly non-stereotypical deductions can be made of the text that they are singing:

Matrones

*Voyez après ces donzelles
courir ces messieurs!
Nous sommes aussi bien qu'elles,
sinon beaucoup mieux!*

Jeunes filles

*On voudrait plaire,
mais c'est en vain.
De votre colère
nous ne craignons rien.
Front qui se renfroge
rougit, voilà tout!
Un galant m'accepte,
je le prends au mot.
Certes, l'on doit croire
à vos beaux discours!
Un galant m'accepte, etc.*

Matrones

*Vous voulez plaire,
on le sait bien.
Le mot est fin!
Soyez sans vergogne,
comme ils sont sans goût.
Il faut être inepte,
je le dis tout haut,
pour se faire gloire
de telles amours.
Il faut être inepte, etc.*

Matrons

Look at those gentlemen
rushing after their hussies!
Aren't we just as fine as they,
not to say much handsomer!

Young girls

They would like to bewitch,
but they try in vain.
We have nothing to fear
from your wrath.
A lowering brow
merely grows redder!
Should a lad want me,
I take him at his word.
One must surely trust
all your fine speeches!
Should a lad, etc.

Matrons

You want to bewitch,
it's plain to see.
What a fine notion!
Be as shameless,
as they are tasteless.
One must be a fool,
I do declare,
to pride oneself
on such suitors.
One must be a fool, etc.

In my opinion it is evident that these women do not harbour feelings of inferiority toward their male counterparts. They are actually ridiculing the men's efforts of seducing them, and make it clear that they are proud, and will not be treated as objectified fools.

Act II, Scene II

The text of this scene does not imply much with regards to gender, but holistically it does lend itself more toward masculinity, as it refers largely to Valentin's departure to war. In his aria, Valentin's description of God is masculine, referring to Him as "roi" (King). On the other hand, it is a possibility to view the text as more female-dominated, since it is largely dedicated to Marguerite. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 8–9.)

Act II, Scene III

Again, the general gender-message conveyed in this scene is masculine. Méphistophéles is taking control by being the main attraction as he sings his song about the golden calf. The concept of the golden calf originates from the Bible. Exodus 32 tells the story of Aaron persuading the Israelites to give their golden jewellery to him so that he can create an idol (the golden calf) for them to worship, since Moses is absent. This idol is a personification of sinning, a desire for wealth and hedonism, and can even be viewed as a symbolic representation of Satan himself. Méphistophéles (or actually the French language) ascribes a male gender to the golden calf: “*Le veau d’or est toujours debout; on encense sa puissance d’un bout du monde à l’autre bout!*” (The golden calf is still standing, his might is celebrated from one end of the world to the other!) This deviates from what we otherwise often encounter in the opera – evilness represented as female. The rest of the scene involves references to drinking, war and conflict, issues that are stereotypically male-associated. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 9–12; Holy Bible 1991: 97.)

Act II, Scene IV

In this scene the female gender (specifically the stereotypical norm of it) reigns. The text consists mainly of references to Marguerite’s beauty, chastity, and piousness – characteristics that were, and in many cases still are, culturally expected from any respectable woman in nineteenth-century Europe. Important is the inclusion of the Catholic religion in this text. There is a close connection between the Catholic religion and the female here, considering that both chastity and piousness are faith-motivated. As also suggested in the score (see Chapter 6.2) it is possible that the Virgin Mary is symbolised: the female-related terms like “*chaste*” (chaste) and “*vertu*” (virtue) together with the term “*defend*” (protects), can be connected to the Madonna’s traits and purpose. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 12–13.)

Act II, Scene V

Again, the female steals the spotlight. However, it takes on a different form in comparison to the previous scene. The female has a sense of ambiguity. Stereotypical and objectifying

references are encountered in Méphistophéles's words, "*Vois ces filles gentilles! Ne veux-tu pas aux plus belles d'entre elles offrir ton bras?*" (See those charming lasses! Will you not offer your arm to the fairest among them?), as well as Faust's, just after the two prospective lovers have met, "*Par le ciel! que de grâce et quelle modestie! Ô belle enfant, je t'aime!*" (By heaven, such grace and such modesty! O fair maid, I love you!). Yet, the female is simultaneously presented as independent and individual. This we see in the young girls' presumptuous (for their milieu) behaviour towards Siébel in which *they* ask "her" for a dance, instead of the norm, which would be the other way around. The idea of independence is further articulated by Marguerite's decline of Faust's offer: "*Non, monsieur! je ne suis demoiselle, ni belle, et je n'ai pas besoin qu'on me donne la main!*" (No thank you, sir: I am neither a lady, nor lovely, and I really have no need for a supporting arm!). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 13–15.)

Act III, Scene I

This act which opens with a solo-scene featuring Siébel, is set in Marguerite's garden. I believe that interesting gender deductions can be made here. Although the character delivering the message in the text is male (Siébel), I am of the opinion that the gender basis of this scene is undoubtedly female. It is valid to say that the focus put on flowers gives, by default, a sense of femininity due to the general connection between these plants and the "fairer" sex. However, this femininity is not only limited to the actual flowers that Siébel picks. The fact that Siébel wants to use the flowers as spokes piece to declare love to Marguerite, "*Faites-lui mes aveux, portez mes vœux, fleurs écloses près d'elle*" (Confess to her for me, give her my wishes, flowers who bloomed at her side), can be indicative of a low self-esteem and lack of courage and confidence. These two traits are rarely found in male characters of nineteenth-century operas – rather, they are common under the ladies. Faust and Méphistophéles are but two examples of male characters who represent common stereotypes of manliness: self-confidence, self-assurance, pride and courage. Siébel's *otherness* can thus easily be connected to femininity. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 15–16.)

Another aspect indicating femininity, especially when considering Chapter 3.6, is the holy-water font which symbolises birth. Birth is related to the female in the sense that only females have the ability to give birth. In turn, a link can be drawn between this concept of birth to the

Virgin Mary who gave birth to Jesus Christ and who, to my mind, plays a significant role in the opera. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 15–16.)

Act III, Scene II

In my view this short scene does not contain any new gender references, except for the ones discussed in Act III, Scene I, as Siébel (with Faust and Méphistophéles now hiding in a thicket) is marvelling at “her” posy, ties it to Marguerite’s cottage door, and leaves. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 16.)

Act III, Scene III

Again, a very short less-important scene with no deducible gender symbolism (Barbier & Carré 2009: 16–17).

Act III, Scene IV

Here, we encounter a feast of gender stereotyping and femininity. In this aria by Faust, the philosopher objectifies Marguerite and puts her on a pedestal of holiness: “*Salut! demeure chaste et pure, où se devine la présence d’une âme innocente et divine!*” (Hail, chaste and pure dwelling where one can feel the presence of an innocent and holy soul!). It is her outward beauty that is of most importance to him, and a reference to nature can indicate more femininity since nature is often regarded as female (Mother Nature): “*Ô nature, c’est là que tu la fis si belle! C’est là que cette enfant a grandi sous ton aile, a grandi sous tes yeux! Là que, de ton haleine enveloppant son âme, tu fis avec amour épanouir la femme en cet ange des cieux!*” (O Nature, this is where you created her beauty! This is where the maid grew up beneath your wing, grew up under your gaze! Here, too, breathing into her soul, you lovingly turned this angel of heaven into a fresh-blooming woman). When taking this last text-reference into account, one can argue that Faust contributes to stereotyping and discrimination of the female, because Marguerite is portrayed as a dependent being (“grew up beneath your wing, grew up under your gaze!”). Thus, the characteristics described by Faust

of Marguerite join to give an impression of the “perfect” woman (in the eyes of nineteenth-century patriarchy): pious, pure, beautiful and dependent. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 17).

Act III, Scene V

The scene corresponds with Scene III of this act in that it does not, in my view, have great significance in terms of gender: Méphistophéles returns with the casket that he wants to use to seduce Marguerite and vows that he shall surrender his power if Siébel’s posy proves to reign over the jewels. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 17).

Act III, Scene VI

Here, it is difficult to single out one dominant gender. I do experience an inclination to the masculine in the first part of the scene (“*Chanson du Roi de Thulé*”), mainly because the text deals with Faust, a king and Valentin. Other more speculative references to masculinity include liquor, wealth and death. In the second part, “*Air des bijoux*”, I believe femininity to reign. Important to note, though, is that this femininity refers to the male-created construct. Marguerite is portrayed as vain in that she hardly pays any attention to the flowers left by Siébel and is in turn completely enamoured and “seduced” by the golden casket. After opening it and putting on the jewels, Marguerite is the perfect embodiment of the female governed by societal norms: only with the jewels on does she feel empowered, highlighted by her wish that Faust could see her now. It is thus clear that she feels more beautiful, attractive and self-confident wearing the jewellery than without it, suggesting the possibility of a subconscious inferiority complex and insecurity concerning her own authentic beauty (Barbier & Carré 2009: 18–19):

*Est-ce toi, Marguerite?
Réponds-moi, réponds vite!
Non! non! Ce n'est plus toi!
Ce n'est plus ton visage!
C'est la fille d'un roi,
qu'on salue au passage!
Ah! s'il était ici!
S'il me voyait ainsi!*

Is it really you, Marguerite?
Answer me, answer me quickly!
No, no, it is you no longer,
it is no longer your face!
This is the daughter of a king,
to whom everyone bows as she goes past.
Ah! If only he were here!
If only he could see me thus!

Act III, Scene VII

Gender-wise, this short scene is merely an extension of the previous one, in that it further articulates the control that societal norms of femininity have on the perception of beauty. When encountering the bejewelled Marguerite, Marthe's immediate reaction is one of astonishment over how beautiful Marguerite looks: "*Seigneur Dieu, que vois-je! Comme vous voilà belle, mon ange!*" (Good Lord, what do I see? How beautiful you look, my angel!). It is possible to speculate that Marthe would not have commented on Marguerite's beauty if the former was looking at an unadorned Marguerite. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 19.)

Act III, Scene VIII

In my opinion this scene can be viewed as representing a combination of both femininity and masculinity (the societal constructions of both). The two women, Marthe and Marguerite, both succumb (the former much easier than the latter) to the advances made by Méphistophéles and Faust, respectively. In a feminine context this points to submissiveness and obedience toward the male, and in a masculine context it establishes the man as the leader and dominator. Marthe is viewed and used as a mere object by Méphistophéles who seduces her only to distract her and lure her away from Marguerite's garden, so that the venue is appropriate for Faust's advance towards Marguerite. Other references to the masculine include the war, the army and Méphistophéles's independence: "*Sans ami, sans parents, sans femme! Ah!*" (With neither friend, kin, nor wife! Ah!). Femininity is portrayed in Marguerite's account of how she had to care and look after her ill mother, sister and now her brother Valentin – she thus had, and still does, fulfil a maternal role. The belief of naivety being linked to femininity is evident in Marguerite's little flower game: "*Un simple jeu! Laissez un peu! [...] Il m'aime! Il ne m'aime pas! Il m'aime! pas! Il m'aime! pas! Il m'aime!*" (A childish game! Please, allow me! [...] He loves me! He loves me not! Loves me! Not! Loves me! Not! Loves me!). Lastly, female subordination is evident in Marguerite's words "*Je veux t'aimer et te chérir! Parle encore! Je t'appartiens! Je t'adore! Pour toi je veux mourir!*" (I want to love and worship you! Speak again! I am yours! I adore you! I would die for you!). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 19–27.)

Act IV, Scene I

In this scene the stereotypical construction of the female is again at large. Marguerite is in her room, weeping over her sinful deed and Faust's abandonment. Marguerite's humiliation when she hears the young girls outside commenting on and judging her act of promiscuity shows the power that the accepted female stereotype (pious, pure, beautiful, submissive) has over the community, even on the women themselves. The theory of Baum, discussed in Chapter 3.4, arguing that female characters in theatrical works are often home-bound while their male counterparts enjoy spatial freedom, is definitely applicable here: "*Où donc peut-il être? Seule, à ma fenêtre, je plonge là-bas mon regard, hélas! Où donc peut-il être? Il ne revient pas!*" (Wherever can he be? Alone at my window I look far away, alas, as far as the eye can reach! Wherever can he be? He returns no more.). Female submissiveness is furthermore evident in Marguerite's choice of titles when referring to Faust: "*Mon seigneur! Mon maître!*" (My lord! My master!). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 27–28.)

Act IV, Scene II

I did not find significant gender symbolism in this scene.

Act IV, Scene III

Again, we encounter a scene in which it is impossible to highlight one singular gender as being predominant. The action takes place in a church – a venue which lends itself to masculinity due to the stigma of patriarchy attached to it. It is a possibility to deduce femininity and its connection with submissiveness in Marguerite's prayer when she uses the words "*humble servante*" (humble servant) to refer to herself. The idea of female evilness and sinfulness is another concept that can be derived here, since Marguerite's act of sexual sin causes her to be cursed by Méphistophéles and the chorus of demons. In terms of masculinity Méphistophéles succeeds in portraying God as merciless and revengeful – a reminder of the discussion in Chapter 3.6 of Yahweh, the argued male side of God's identity. Although the score might suggest otherwise, the gender message conveyed here as regards Méphistophéles

is, in my view, predominantly masculine in nature – he serves as the dominator, controller and leader of the scene. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 29–31.)

Act IV, Scene IV

For a change, we come across a scene that is almost exclusively governed by one gender, in this case, masculinity. The soldiers return home from the war and sing joyfully and proudly about their victory and their love for their country. The following is but one example in the text which obviously suggests masculinity: “*Pour toi, mère patrie, affrontant le sort, tes fils, l’âme aguerrie, ont bravé la mort! Ta voix sainte nous crie: en avant, soldats!*” (For you, fatherland, defying Fate, your warlike sons have faced death! Your holy voice shouts to us: forward, soldiers!). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 31–32.)

Act IV, Scene V

This scene is not indicative of any particular gender aspects.

Act IV, Scene VI

I believe seduction to be the main message here. Méphistophéles sings a mocking song of a suitor trying to get the attention of the one he desires, while she is pretending to sleep. As seduction is often associated with the feminine, I would rather suggest an inclination towards the latter than to masculinity, even though a male, Méphistophéles, is the narrator. This may furthermore indicate a link between the female and evil, and subsequently imply that Méphistophéles has a dual gender. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 33.)

Act IV, Scene VII

The rather camouflaged femininity of the previous scene is now exchanged for noticeable masculinity. Valentin, Méphistophéles and Faust join to give a portrayal of stereotyped masculinity: competitiveness, self-assurance and violence. It is valid to consider

Yahweh (see Chapter 3.6) in the references to God, since Valentin prays to God to aid him in killing Faust: “*Redouble, ô Dieu puissant, ma force et mon courage! Permets que dans son sang je lave mon outrage!*” (O mighty God, increase my strength and my courage! Allow me to cleanse this outrage with his own blood!). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 34–35.)

Act IV, Scene VIII

I believe the text to be male-dominated, although room for feminine interpretations is given. As Valentin is approaching death, he takes his last opportunity to voice his anger and disillusionment over Marguerite’s “sin” and how it contributed to his demise. Valentin’s male pride is very evident in his words “*De vos plaintes, faites-moi grâce! J’ai vu, morbleu, la mort en face trop souvent pour en avoir peur!*” (Please spare me your moans! Upon my word, I have faced death too often to be scared of him!). We again encounter a possible reference to Yahweh (see Chapter 3.6) when taking Valentin’s prayer for revenge and punishment towards Marguerite into consideration. In terms of femininity, an “evil femininity” is arguably present. Marguerite is marked as the source of all evil in this scene – her “sinful” deed being that which not only caused detriment to herself, but also contributed to the death of others. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 35–37.)

Act V, Scene I

In the score this scene is divided into Scenes I–IV.

The text of this scene lends itself predominantly towards the feminine (in an evil form or one of seductress). The following text-references serve as examples: “*je t’offre une place au festin des reines et des courtisanes!*” (I offer you a place at the feast of queens and courtesans!); “*Reines de beauté, de l’Antiquité, Cléopâtre aux doux yeux, Laïs au front charmant, laissez-nous au banquet prendre place un moment!*” (Most beautiful ladies of antiquity, soft-eyed Cleopatra, fair-browed Laïs, let us come and sit with you for a while); “*Déesse, par tes charmes se réveille le désir!*” (Goddess, through your charms desire awakes!); “*Que ton ivresse, ô volupté, étouffe le remords dans son coeur enchanté!*” (O voluptuous pleasure, may your rapture stifle remorse within his bewitched heart!). At the end of the scene female objectification towards Marguerite is again evident, when Faust is shown a vision of her by

Méphistophéles. Although it is not obvious, masculine symbolism can possibly be derived from the fact that Méphistophéles is the absolute dominator and controller: “*Dans mon empire! Ici, docteur, tout m’est soumis*” (In my empire! Here, doctor, everything obeys my commands). These characteristics were (and are still today, to a certain extent) generally associated with the male gender in the nineteenth century. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 37–40.)

Act V, Scene II

In the score this scene is divided into Scenes V and VI.

The last scene of this monumental opera is, needless to say, complex as regards gender. Gender ambivalence and/or duality is evident to a large extent – creating a very befitting ending to an opera which is, in my opinion, built on ambivalence when it comes to gender. The mere setting of the scene, the prison, already serves as a contradictory venue for Marguerite who was once viewed as the embodiment of purity, beauty and goodness. Although Marguerite’s current situation is evidence that she has failed to meet the standards of the “perfect” femininity that her milieu has expected of her, she is now representing a new femininity which was starting to emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century: a strive for independence, ownership of one’s identity, and a break from naivety, docility and submissiveness towards a male figure. This is evident in the numerous times that Marguerite resists Faust’s attempts to lure her back to him. Ultimately she is the one who conquers – she is liberated through her redemption by her Lord. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 40–44.)

Interestingly, the side of God that we encounter in this last scene is arguably Elohim, rather than Yahweh, in that Marguerite is not punished and doomed to hell because of her sins, but rather forgiven and “embraced”. I specifically use this term, because I believe her death is a return rather than a departure; a birth rather than a death. She is renewed and given a new “life”, freed from her past. The text which is sung by the angelic choir as the curtain closes is therefore very fit: “*Sauvée! Christ est ressuscité! Christ vient de renaître! Paix et félicité aux disciples du Maître! Christ vient de renaître! Christ est ressuscité!*” (Saved! Christ has risen again! Christ is born again! Peace and felicity to the Master’s disciples! Christ is born again! Christ has risen again!). As discussed in Chapter 3.6 this idea of death as “birth” has a strong

feminine inflection, as birth is given by a woman. In this sense, the suggestion of Elohim is highly relevant. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 40–44.)

6.3 Score

A gender-based analysis of the orchestral score now follows. I shall investigate the gender messages suggested in certain compositional techniques and applications. These will include orchestration, chromaticism, suspensions, cadences and rhythm.

Acte 1, No.1: Introduction

The prologue, or one may perhaps even call it a type of overture, starts with a *fortissimo* chord in F minor – the mood is unsettling and mysterious with the celli leading the listener into a strange, chromatic, low-registered *pianissimo* motive. The other strings follow, but no winds are used. This opening line is definitive of extreme chromaticism which can symbolize femininity, although there is in my opinion a strong duality prevalent due to the fact that the low registers of the strings are used – an aspect which point to masculinity. The motive also starts with the celli that are more often associated with maleness than with its opposite. When the winds do enter at the *a tempo* it is with a chromatic bassoon motive doubled by the violas. The starting motive of the strings is repeated in C minor at the *Andante*. After the whole orchestra has contributed to this section, a solo chromatic harp solo leads us into the *a tempo* in F major. In total contrast to the mysterious, almost macabre, motive that was used as opening material, a very light-hearted, *dolce* theme in F major is now heard on the flutes, clarinets and violins – in my opinion, undeniably suggesting the feminine. At the cadence of this section, just before the last *a tempo* of this *Introduction*, an harmonic delay is been used and the cadence ends on a weak beat, which is again symbolic of femininity. The last *a tempo* of the *Introduction* is merely a conclusion, and also suggestive of femaleness, in that the main motivic instruments used are the flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons and the 1st violins. Thus, in my view a sense of femininity is holistically dominant here. (Gounod 1869: 3–7; Gounod 2009.)

Acte 1, Scène I (Faust, seul. Le cabinet de Faust): No.2 Scène et Chœur

The scene starts in A minor with a fate-like motif (repetitive crotchet A) contributing to the atmosphere of death. This may be symbolic of death being viewed as male-gendered, although a chromatic (presumably female) motive is played by the woodwinds and higher strings. This chromaticism in the latter two instrumental groups is continued up till the *Allegretto*. The *Allegretto* gives way to a whole new mood with an uplifting melody in C major played by the oboe, and later followed by the rest of the woodwinds. This melody symbolises the break of dawn, which, when taking the instrumentation into account, might point to a sense of femininity – the latter then perhaps connected to life. A darker mood and a chromatic motive in the lower strings is however heard when Faust laments over his depression again. A gender duality is thus prevalent. A march-like rhythm is heard by the winds in the *Andante maestoso* when Faust sings his, “*Salut! Ô mon dernier matin!*”. This may suggest death as male. The following *Allegretto* is in my opinion undeniably feminine due to the melody being sung by a female chorus in A major. Here again life is symbolised – when he hears the beautiful voices of the young girls, Faust puts down the goblet of poison which he intended to drink. Although the next *Allegretto* can be seen as being predominantly male – it is sung by a male chorus and has a militarist mood due to a very strong first beat – it is in D major, uplifting, and again the text is about celebrating life and nature. The ensuing *Récitatif (No.3)* does in my opinion not contain significant evidence of gender aspects, hence I shall resume with *Scène II*. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 1–2; Gounod 1869: 8–25; Gounod 2009.)

Acte 1, Scène II (Faust et Méphistophélès): No.4 Duo

Interestingly, the entrance of Méphistophéles is immediately followed by a *piano* chromatic solo motive in the flute, creating a mystic atmosphere which may perhaps be received as more feminine than masculine. Gounod’s introduction contains gender ambivalence: after the chromatic line played by the flute, a short militarist effect is given with triplets in the bassoons. However, after the aforementioned, light, feminine motives are heard in the 1st violins followed by a descending chromatic line in the oboe. Faust enters with *forte* chords – the trombones used as only wind instruments. Faust’s *Allegro ben marcato*, where he sings of his desire to re-obtain youth and love, is representative of a more uplifting mood – supported

by the keys of G and D major. The lighter atmosphere and the context of love and life gives the impression of femininity. When Méphistophéles joins, the 1st violins and flutes are applied as accompanying instruments. A *forte* A minor chord played by the clarinets, horns and trumpets are however heard when the Devil mentions that in hell Faust's soul would belong to him. The ensuing *Andante* is in total contrast to the aforementioned. It is here where Méphistophéles shows Faust the vision of Marguerite at her spinning wheel. Light accompaniment by the harp is used as an introduction to the lyrical, peaceful melody played by the horn. The combination of the harp, horn and 1st violins creates an almost fantasy-like atmosphere which, in my opinion, might be symbolic of the female objectification Faust takes part in: he only sees a vision of Marguerite, and is immediately in love. His feelings are thus entirely based on her outer appearance. The ensuing theme of the duet (a repetition of the theme sung by Faust in the *Allegro ben marcato*) is light-hearted and uplifting, representative of the life-and-love-based text. Its accompanying melodic instruments are the first and 2nd violins and the flutes. There is also an interesting suspension and *ritardando* on the word "love" before the last *a tempo* – an indication of femininity. The act ends with the woodwinds and violins closing the curtain as main melodic instruments. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 2–5; Gounod 1869: 26–54; Gounod 2009.)

Acte II, Scène I (Wagner, jeunes filles, matrones, bourgeois étudiants, soldats): No.5
Chœur (Une kermesse)

The second act greets us with a very lively, up-beat *Allegretto* theme in F major, the main melodic instruments being the flutes, cornets and violins. The first to take part in this drinking song are the students who consist of the 1st basses. They are accompanied by the flutes, clarinets and violins. Wagner answers them with a short solo accompanied by the bassoons, after which the students continue singing. This is followed by a short militarist tune played by the cornets and the snare drum. The latter is to my mind a reminder of the connection between the male and the military – the military also a symbol of strength. The soldiers enter with the bassoons, violas, celli and double basses; the prominence of the lower range used here is again a reference to masculinity. Again the militarist tune played by the cornets and snare drum is heard. Interestingly, a lighter, perhaps more feminine texture is now created by the burghers (1st tenors) who sing new *pianissimo* melodic material with the 1st violins and flutes doubling the melody, and a smaller orchestra accompanying. It is

significant to point out that the militarist interlude of the cornet and snare drum is now substituted with four bars of a pastoral-like motive consisting of open fifths. I believe that this might be a preparation of femininity since the young girls are to enter next. The young girls' melodic material is doubled by the violins and a significantly smaller orchestra (only strings and later the flutes) accompanies their melody. The young students take over from the girls with the same melodic material, but this time the “manly” oboes and horns are added. The matrons are next in line, with, again, the same melodic material but they are accompanied by a much larger orchestra. All the voices now enter one after the other, with the young girls starting. All the thematic material of this scene is now combined with all the different voices singing different motives as well as texts. Although it might seem as if Gounod made reference to the stereotypical gender distinctions, it is important to note that towards the end of the scene (from where the matrons enter) the text of the libretto stays in the same context for the men (drinking) while for the women it shifts to ideas of independence. This is supported by the growth of the orchestra and the fact that the young girls start the coda-like section of this scene. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 5–8; Gounod 1869: 55–83; Gounod 2009.)

Acte II, Scène II (Valentin, Wagner, Siébel, étudiants): No.6 Scène et Récitatif

The scene starts with strong, but *piano* chords in D-flat major, played by the cornets and trombones after which Valentin enters in the same key. A state-like atmosphere is created by short repetitive chords in the strings. It is noteworthy that on the word “Marguerite” the key changes to F-sharp minor and chromaticism is prevalent, alternating between C-sharp and D. When Siébel then enters we return to A major. It is interesting that only on the word “Marguerite” the key changes – this can be indicative of how Gounod articulates Marguerite's importance as a character as well as her gender, as everyone else participating in this scene are men. (Gounod 1869: 84–86; Gounod 2009.)

Invocation (Valentin)

A lyrical flute and clarinet motive introduces us to the key of E-flat major. Valentin's part is very flowing and peaceful. Prominent instruments used are the flute, clarinet and oboe. The choice of using “feminine” instrumentation might be influenced by the main focus of the text, which is Marguerite. At the *Un poco più animato* the mood changes to a military style again

with short repetitive chords in the brass – the text supports this in that Valentin now sings about his plans to go and fight in the war. When the text returns to that of a prayer to God to keep Marguerite safe, the key interestingly changes to E-flat minor with the word “Marguerite” again sung slower (*poc. rit.*). We then return to E-flat major and the last time Valentin sings the word “Marguerite” there is again a fermata and suspension used. It is thus deducible that, similar to in the previous number, Gounod articulates her importance and gender. Wagner’s ensuing short song about a rat does not in my opinion contain any significant gender findings. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 8; Gounod 1869: 86–93; Gounod 2009.)

Acte II, Scène III (Méphistophélès, chœur d’hommes): No.7 Ronde du Veau d’or

This baritone rondo is very energetic and powerful. The entire orchestra is used and the opening motive, a repetitive semi-quaver idea, is played *fortissimo* by the flutes, oboes, clarinets and violins, with the rest of the orchestra setting a very strong duple metre with on-beat quavers. The message conveyed is immediately one of power and control, although the key of C minor combined with the rather intrusive semi-quaver motive, gives it a sinister feeling. No conclusive use of chromaticism, leading-note suspensions or feminine cadences are found, which leads me to believe that the general gender message here is masculine. The text is furthermore authoritative and narcissist – contributing to the masculinity. I believe the choice to use the so-called “feminine” instruments to play the main motives here, are merely because of their higher pitch and clear tone quality. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 9–10; Gounod 1869: 95–102; Gounod 2009.)

- *No.8 Récitatif et Choral des Épées (Chœur d’hommes, Valentin, Wagner, Méphistophélès, Siébel)*

Although this scene starts off quite cheerfully in F major with the students, Valentin and Wagner commenting on Méphistophéles’s song, the mood quickly changes to that of fear and darkness when the latter enters. Méphistophéles starts informing Wagner, Siébel and Valentin of their fate: Wagner and Valentin will be killed and Siébel will not be able to send Marguerite flowers anymore (which can either be interpreted as being a referral to her death, or to his unrequited love for her). This is executed with a lot of chromaticism in the baritone part as well as in the celli. Also, the first time a reference to death is made by the word

“*l’assaut*” (the attack), a G-sharp, the leading note, is used. This might indicate death or evilness in a feminine manner. When Méphistophéles calls upon Lord Bacchus to provide more wine, a very prominent descending chromatic line is played by the violins and violas, while the rest of the orchestra has rests. At the *Allegro moderato e maestoso* with the choir, Siébel, Valentin and Wagner singing, we are in B-flat minor. The text, referring to hell, and their weapons, together with a *tutti fortissimo* orchestra with prominent brass, might now again be indicative of masculinity. Very interesting however, is the key change to B-flat major when Valentin makes the first reference to the Christian cross. This key is sustained when Siébel, Wagner and the choir joins to sing “*C’est une croix qui de l’enfer nous garde!*” (It is a cross which protects us from hell!). This is clearly a reference to the Christian faith. Since the crucifixion is symbolic of hope and renewed life for Christians, the major key is very appropriate. Taking Chapters 3.5 and 3.6 into account the idea of renewed life can be viewed as a feminine concept. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 10–12; Gounod 1869: 103–117; Gounod 2009.)

Acte II, Scène IV (Méphistophélès, Faust)

The only gender-based deductions that I can make from this scene is the recurrence (now in E-flat major, though) of the *Allegro ben marcato* theme of Act I Scene II of which the text dealt mainly with Faust’s desire to enjoy youth and love again. I would therefore suggest that this theme could be seen as a type of *leitmotiv* for love (and Marguerite, for that matter), as the text now directly refers to the female lead. Furthermore, it is striking to note the obvious hymn-like mood of the *Andante*, evident in the simple woodwind melody in F major where Méphistophéles sings about Marguerite’s piety. There is thus a direct link made between her and the Catholic faith – supporting my argument that Marguerite might be a representation of the Virgin Mary. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 12–13; Gounod 1869: 118–121; Gounod 2009.)

Acte II, Scène V (Les Mêmes, Jeunes filles, matrons, étudiants, bourgeois. Puis Siébel et Marguerite): No.9 Valse et Chœur

This is a lively folk-like waltz in D major with the townspeople rejoicing over nature and music. I do not believe any specific gender references are hidden here – the fact that the

women sing together with the men might point to a sense of equality, though. After a change in the mood by a short staccato idea played *tutti fortissimo*, short recitative passages by Méphistophéles and Faust are introduced in A major. The original key of D major is returned to when Siébel enters. Different to his two predecessors, “she” (see Chapter 3.3 for my use of the female pronoun) has a very lyrical part, supported by a new, flowing waltz-motive played by the clarinet. In my opinion “her” femininity is articulated by this. Interestingly though, Siébel’s duality with regards to gender (created by the breeches-role) is still prevalent in that after the young girls ask “her” to dance (still in D major), “she” answers in A major (also the key of Méphistophéles and Faust’s recitative passages) that “she” is not interested, after which D major and the main theme is returned to. This can, taking the femininity prevalent in Siébel’s previous entrance into consideration, be a deliberate attempt to articulate the gender ambivalence present in this character as one might associate the A major with the men. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 13; Gounod 1869: 122–133; Gounod 2009.)

I believe Siébel’s third entrance is undeniably feminine, since “her” part is now again in D major. But apart from the key, the text “Marguerite!” is directly accompanied by an ascending chromatic line in the celli and basses. The *Andantino* in G major immediately sets a different mood which is apt, because Marguerite makes her first entrance here. Again, I believe the female gender is notable. It starts with an ascending chromatic line in the 1st violins after which Faust asks her for her hand. When she enters there are prominent suspensions on the words, “*demoiselle*” (girl) and “*belle*” (pretty) followed by a *ritardando* on the words, “*et je n’ai pas besoin qu’on me donne le main!*” (and I have no need for a supporting arm!). I believe Gounod aimed to articulate her innate independence by these musical techniques, as well as commenting on the female stereotype, since she makes it clear (by means of the suspensions) that she is neither a “girl” nor “pretty”. This can indicate that she *does* actually have insight into how she is unquestionably and immediately stereotyped by Faust, and that she is not content with his assumptions. In my opinion the rest of the scene does not contain significant gender ideas – it consists mainly of a recurrence of the initial waltz which served as opening material to the scene. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 14; Gounod 1869: 133–135; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III (Le jardin de Marguerite. Au fond, un mur percé d'une petite porte. A gauche, un bosquet. A droite, un pavillon dont la fenêtre fait face au public. Arbres et massifs.): No.10
Entr'acte et couplets

This is a short, solemn and mysterious *Entr'acte* in C minor. No noteworthy gender aspects stand out, except for the repetitive dotted rhythm motive on the dominant played by the horns. This gives a masculine feeling to this opening, supported by, initially none, and later very little, woodwind use. Rhythmical *pizzicato* lines in the strings add to this. However, the number ends with an intricate clarinet solo leading us into the first scene of this act with an ascending chromatic line. It is possible that the chromaticism might be indicative of femininity with regards to Siébel's aria which follows, considering the text of the latter is about Marguerite, and Siébel's infatuation with her. But it might also, viewing it in context with the rest of the number's mood, refer to evilness and death – in this case giving it a female form. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 15; Gounod 1869: 154–155; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène I. (Siébel, seul)

Gender duality is very much prevalent in this uplifting, energetic aria in C major. The first instruments to introduce the theme are so-called “masculine” instruments, the celli and basses. The theme is however very lyrical and flowing. Three bars before the *Andante* – where it indicates in the score that Siébel picks a flower – a prominent ascending chromatic motive is played by the celli and basses. This is quite unsettling and serves as preparation for the G minor *Andante*, where our student realizes that the flower has immediately withered and curses the devil. When “she” picks another one, which also turns out to die, the ascending chromatic motive is again played by the same instruments. It is deducible that death and the devil might be connected with femininity. Very interesting in the second *Andante* is the recurrence (but this time in C major) of the lyrical hymn-like passage that Méphistophéles sang in Act II Scene IV, where he referred to Marguerite's faith. Again here the text refers to Marguerite and her Catholicism: Siébel dips “her” hand in Marguerite's holy water font hanging on the wall, while “she” sings that it is there where Marguerite prays every night. After dipping “her” hand in the water “she” picks another flower which does not wither and “she” proclaims “her” victory over the devil in G major. The prominence of the

major keys when referring to the Catholic faith and a reign over the devil can, in my opinion, be viewed as life-giving (also taking the flower into consideration) which has both feminine and masculine possibilities: Christ, the basis of the Catholic faith is male, but the concept of new life is also feminine because of women's ability to give birth. The return of the main theme of this aria has added flute, clarinet and oboe solos – arguably feminine. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 15; Gounod 1869: 156–160; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène II (Faust, Méphistophélès, Siébel): No.11 Scène et Récitatif

After a four-bar introduction we again hear the *Allegro ben marcato* theme of Act I, Scene II which can, as already stated, be viewed as a *leitmotiv* for Marguerite and love. This time it is in A-flat major, played by the flutes and clarinets during which Faust and Méphistophélès enter the scene and sees Siébel there. The latter leaves a posy for Marguerite singing self-assuredly that by the following morning Marguerite will know of “her” feelings for her. This is sung with the main theme of Act III, Scene I played by a solo oboe in C major. Siébel leaves the stage and immediately thereafter a prominent ascending chromatic line with a *crescendo* and *sforzato* in C minor is played by the celli and basses. Méphistophélès then utters the word “*Séducteur!*” (Seducer!) directly after which a sequential return of the chromatic line is played by the same instruments. Taking the word “seducer” into consideration I believe the prominent use of chromaticism definitely has a gender connotation here. Femininity is here not only linked with evil (the chromaticism together with the change of mode occurs specifically when Méphistophélès enters), but also with seduction. Méphistophélès's reference to Siébel might also open the possibility of the chromaticism being a reference to the latter's “femininity”. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 16; Gounod 1869: 161–163; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène III (Méphistophélès, Faust)

An energetic *pizzicato* figure in C minor is played by the strings after which the music modulates to D major when Méphistophélès enters. However, when Faust appears we again encounter a solo chromatic line, ascending and descending, played by the celli. An echo effect is created when the ascending part of the line is sequentially repeated by first the 2nd violins and violas, and then the 1st violins. The basses play the descending part together with

the celli. In the very next bar a new solo chromatic line is again played by the celli, leading us into A-flat major with yet another new chromatic figure played twice by the 1st violins. These chromatic motives occur when Méphistophéles tells Faust to wait there while he fetches a “treasure even more wonderful and splendid than those she (Marguerite) sees in her dreams!” This refers to the jewel box that the two later leaves for Marguerite – a gift she is undoubtedly manipulated, or *seduced*, by. Seduction, the feminine and evil are thus again connected here. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 16–17; Gounod 1869: 164–165; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène IV (Faust, seul): No.12 Cavatine

This aria in A-flat major is one of the highlights of the opera and is well known in the tenor repertoire. The text is a salute to Marguerite’s beauty and purity, to the extent that she is compared to an angel of heaven. The music is very flowing and lyrical with a solo violin part, used in a conversational fashion, accompanying Faust throughout the aria. The use of the solo violin is important in giving the piece a sense of femininity and we encounter a feminine cadence at the first *fermata*. After a key change to E-flat major we return to the main theme in the original key, now with the flutes and clarinets doubling the melody. The aria ends with the solo violin replacing the latter two instruments as main melodic instrument, playing a *dolce espressivo* counter theme. Although the score does perhaps not contain excessive gender references, the tender mood together with the use of “feminine” instruments and cadences suggest an inclination towards the “fairer” sex. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 17; Gounod 1869: 166–171; Gounod 2009.)

Act III, Scène V (Méphistophélès, Faust): No.13 Scène

I did not encounter important gender references in this scene.

Acte III, Scène VI (Marguerite, seul): No.14 Récitatif

Again, this is a very short scene. The score is in A minor and has a dark mood. The only telling gender aspect that I can deduce is a prominent suspension in the recurring six-note main motive. It is first played by the clarinets, with the oboes and violins following. It also

leads us into No.14 with a sequential use by the oboes and clarinets of this suspended motive. The soprano part only consists of a repetitive E. Hence, I shall again suggest a connection to the feminine here. (Gounod 1869: 174, 175; Gounod 2009.)

- *No. 14(a) Chanson du Roi de Thulé*

The key of A minor is introduced. Due to the *Moderato maestoso* indication, the first entrance of the violas and celli, the pronounced, rhythmical *staccati*, and the use of accents the initial mood created is one of strength and authority. Also, taking the title of the aria and the text into consideration, I believe masculinity is prevalent here. However, much gender ambivalence is present, which can already be observed in the suspension and feminine cadence used to end the instrumental introduction. At the *Tempo I* on the words “*Nul trésor n’avait tant de charme!*” (No treasure had more charm!), Marguerite’s part has a noticeable chromatic suspension used sequentially. Considering the text, it reminds one of Scene III in which we encountered chromaticism when a reference to the jewel box was made. As “treasure” and “jewel box” can be viewed as related, a consideration of femininity and seduction holds merit here. Furthermore, this section ends with a descending chromatic line in the soprano part after which the “masculine” theme of the beginning is returned to. We then come across another *Tempo I* similar to the previous one. Again a sequential chromatic suspension is sung on the words “*Et puis, en l’honneur de sa dame*” (And then, in his lady’s honour) – the word “*dame*” directly indicative of femininity. A recurrence of the ensuing descending chromatic line in the soprano part is also again heard. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 18; Gounod 1869: 176–181; Gounod 2009.)

Supporting my argument that the jewel box is connected to femininity and seduction is a striking ascending chromatic line played by the clarinets, bassoons, violins and violas when Marguerite opens it. The phrase is also ended with a chromatic suspension. Where it is indicated that Marguerite puts on the earrings and looks in the mirror a fast ascending chromatic passage is played by the violins and violas – the only instruments playing at that time. This number ends with another chromatic suspension, leading us into the “*Air des bijoux*”. The femininity and also its connection to the jewel box (which is arguably an evil tool used by Méphistophéles to seduce and manipulate) is thus to my mind undeniable. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 18, 19; Gounod 1869: 182, 183; Gounod 2009.)

- *No.14(b) Air des bijoux*

This aria, very famous in the soprano repertoire, is in E major with an exciting and energetic mood. Melodic instruments used are the flutes, clarinets, bassoons and violins. An ascending chromatic sequence in the soprano part is sung on the words “*C’est la fille d’un roi*” (This is a daughter of a king) being a direct reference to the female gender. A similar idea is encountered a few bars later on the words “*Ah s’il était ici! S’il me voyait ainsi!*” (Ah, if only he were here! If only he could see me thus!), but this time the chromaticism is in the parts of the oboes and 1st violins. Here, I again would suggest a connection between chromaticism and seduction, as well as female objectification and stereotyping. A false sense of empowerment overcomes Marguerite when she puts on the jewels. The reason I state it to be “false” is because she is a victim of her society’s conditioning in which a woman is regarded as more beautiful and attractive when she decorates herself with items like jewellery or make-up. She has thus come to believe that her authentic beauty is not sufficient, and that men (Faust) would find her more desirable with such items. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 19; Gounod 1869: 184–186; Gounod 2009.)

The following *col canto* gives more evidence to support this argument: a descending *ritardando* chromatic line ending with a suspension is found in the soprano part. This occurs in conjunction with the words “*Comme un demoiselle, il me trouverait belle*” (He would find me as handsome as any young lady). When the theme (and the same text) is repeated all of the above-mentioned gender aspects are again used. The aria ends with the orchestra playing an ascending chromatic motive. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 19; Gounod 1869: 187–192; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène VII (Marthe, Marguerite): No.15 Scène

In this short scene in C major the only gender references that I could find is where Marthe tells Marguerite that she shouldn’t feel guilty about taking the jewels, because it now belongs to her. A descending chromatic line is played by the 2nd violins and celli, followed by chromaticism in the bassoon part. Again the text deals with the jewels, so the chromaticism is arguably used to highlight femininity and seduction, as mentioned earlier. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 19; Gounod 1869: 193, 194; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène VIII (Les Mêmes, Méphistophélès, Faust)

Chromaticism in the strings are noticeable towards the end of the scene when Méphistophéles tries to seduce Marthe with the words, “*Que ne serait heureux d’échanger avec vous la bague d’hyménée*” (Who would not be delighted to exchange wedding rings with you?) (Barbier & Carré 2009: 21; Gounod 1869: 194–198; Gounod 2009.)

- *No.16 Quatuor*

We are in A-flat major and a light atmosphere is created by flowing semi-quaver passages in the 1st violins, with the flutes and clarinets later joining. An ascending chromatic line played by the violas as well as a *tutti* suspension ends the orchestral introduction, suggesting a sense of femininity. For a change, I believe we encounter masculine ideas at the *Poco più mosso* with more distinction put on lower-register instruments like the bassoons, celli and double basses – the latter’s part being specifically active. *Fortepianos* and accents are also present, and all of this accompanies Méphistophéles as he sings of his independence. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 21–22; Gounod 1869: 199–211; Gounod 2009.)

Scene 9, No.17 is omitted, because it is not used in standard productions (Gounod 1869: 212–215; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène X (Méphistophélès, seul)

And so we encounter the scene with the most chromaticism as yet. The entire *Adagio* of five bars, which also serves as an introduction, is one long descending chromatic line starting on an A-flat in the baritone part and finally ending on a B. In the third bar the bassoons, 1st violins and violas start their own respective lines of descending chromaticism. This creates a very mysterious, dark mood, articulated by the text, “*Il était temps! sous le feuillage sombre voici nos amoureux qui reviennent!*” (Not a moment too soon! Beneath the dark boughs our lovers are wending their way back!). Darkness as well as love is referred to here, and since we are aware of Méphistophéles’s evilness, we can deduce that he is using the darkness to contribute to his plan of Faust seducing Marguerite. Seduction, evilness, love and the female

(Marguerite is the main object of his plan) are thus all incorporated here – the use of chromaticism therefore again connected to these concepts. The rest of the scene is in C major, very flowing and lyrical, with the woodwinds being the main supportive melodic instruments. Hence, it is also possible to suggest that Méphistophéles might be represented as female. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 21–22; Gounod 1869: 199–211; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène XI (Marguerite, Faust): No.18 Duo

Although the duo starts off leaning more towards the feminine side with Marguerite entering in combination with a solo violin, it is soon clear that Faust is in control. An ascending chromatic line played by the bassoons and violas leads us into F major with the main theme initially sung by Faust. The fact that he is first in introducing the theme, as well as the obvious use of chromaticism, is telling of Faust leading the seduction. He is accompanied by the bassoons, horns and celli as main melodic instruments, and the last four bars contain prominent suspensions in the voice part. Thus, a sense of gender duality is present: chromaticism and suspensions suggesting femininity, but the instrumental use and the fact that Faust leads the duo, points more toward masculinity. I believe this can be interpreted as Faust (male) being the one in control, but using a so-called “feminine” tool, seduction, to lure Marguerite. A call-and-response motive with Faust first entering followed by Marguerite, implies that Faust is the initiator and leader. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 24; Gounod 1869: 221–223; Gounod 2009.)

When it is Marguerite’s turn, the flute is used as main melodic instrument with the *cor anglais* and clarinets following. Suspensions are used in combination with the words “*Et je comprends cette voix solitaire qui chante dans mon cœur!*” (I listen and I understand this solitary voice which sings in my heart!) which indicates Faust’s seductive powers. After Marguerite plays the game of he-loves-me-he-loves-me-not with a flower, ending on the affirmative, Faust enters with a highly chromatic line, accompanied by similar ascending chromatic motives in the violins. The chromaticism is again indicative of seduction, because it is used while Faust sings the words, “*Oui! Crois en cette fleur éclosée sous tes pas! Qu’elle soit pour ton cœur l’oracle du ciel même!*” (Yes, I believe this flower, blooming under your feet! Let your heart hear it as the voice of heaven itself!) and it is indicated in the

score that he takes her in his arms. At the exact point where Marguerite gives in to Faust's charms, by singing together with him "*Éternelle!*" (Eternal), we encounter a distinct ascending chromatic motive in the woodwinds. When Marguerite ends the Andante, descending chromaticism and suspensions accompanies her on the words, "*Ah! je t'adore, pour toi je veux mourir*" (I adore you! I would die for you!). Hence, it is clear that chromaticism plays an undeniably important role in the musical portrayal of seduction. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 25; Gounod 1869: 223–230; Gounod 2009.)

A timpani roll followed by a loud chord in F minor serves as the start to this tense *Allegro*. Chromaticism is immediately present with ascending, sequential chromatic patterns in the strings and later in the winds, as well as an ascending line in Marguerite's part. The chromaticism here contributes to the tension of the scene and is in my opinion a representation of Marguerite's inner struggle to fight Faust's seduction. In a sense there is a battle of seduction/manipulation between Faust and Marguerite, in that she also tries to persuade him to leave. This is evident in the chromaticism used to each time accompany the words, "*Ah, partez!*" (Ah, you must leave!). The chromaticism is also indicative of fear, as it is used in combination with the words, "*Je tremble! hélas! J'ai peur!*" (I tremble! alas! I am afraid!). This corresponds with the connection between chromaticism and evil, which we also find numerous times in the opera. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 25; Gounod 1869: 231–233; Gounod 2009.)

When Faust enters, the chromaticism takes on a different form. An outstanding ascending chromatic motive is played by the violas and celli in combination with Faust's entrance. Together with the repetition of her name "Marguerite, Marguerite!" a descending chromatic motive with a suspension is sequentially used and played by the bassoons and 1st violins. When Marguerite then, with great urgency, sings, "*Par votre amour, par ces aveux que je devais taire, cédez à ma prière! Cédez à mes vœux! Partez, oui...!*" (By your love, by this avowal which I should not have spoken, give in to my plea, give in to my wishes! You must go, yes...), we find an array of chromatic ideas and suspensions enmeshed in the score: in the voice part, in the oboes, the 1st violins, the violas, the celli, and the double basses. Furthermore, the *Allegro* leads into the *Moderato* with a distinctive ascending chromatic line in dotted rhythm played *tutti*. I would therefore again suggest the idea of a "battle of the sexes" between Marguerite and Faust in this number, each trying to manipulate/seduce the

other – musically represented by the chromaticism. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 25, 26; Gounod 1869: 234–237; Gounod 2009.)

The *Moderato* is a rendition of Faust’s aria in Act III, Scene IV. The same key, A-flat major, is used, and the violas and celli play the theme with Faust singing a counter-theme in combination with them. Similar to Scene IV it is very lyrical and flowing and a complete contrast to the nervous nature of the *Allegro*. Considering we do not encounter much chromaticism, it is as if the idea is created that the “battle” is over and that the “fairer” sex has won. The text can corroborate this: “*Tu veux, hélas. Divine pureté! Chaste innocence, dont la puissance triomphe de ma volonté! J’obéis. Mais demain...*” (You want me, alas, to leave you. Divine purity! Chaste innocence, whose power triumphs over my will! I obey. But tomorrow...). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 26; Gounod 1869: 237–239; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène XII (Méphistophélès, Faust)

The listener is however disillusioned by a *fortissimo* ascending chromatic line played *tutti*, leading us into F minor. A contrast in mood to the previous scene is evident, this one characteristic of darkness and mystery. The end of this short scene, the *Larghetto*, is in my opinion the most telling though, as it consists of an unavoidable ascending chromatic line played *pianissimo* by the oboe. This occurs in conjunction with Méphistophélès’s words, “*Tenez! Elle ouvre sa fenêtre!*” (Look! She is opening her window!). I believe the prominent chromaticism together with this text indicates that Marguerite has eventually lost the battle against Faust’s advances. The opening of the window is symbolic of the seduction that is about to take place in the next scene. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 27; Gounod 1869: 240, 241; Gounod 2009.)

Acte III, Scène XIII (Les Mêmes, Marguerite)

This scene immediately gives the impression of femininity with the flute taking over from the oboe as main melodic instrument. The dynamic indication is *piano* and a tender mood is created by the inclusion of the harp and muted strings. Marguerite’s text is evidence that she is entirely won over by Faust. The words, “*Il t’aime!*” (He loves you!) are marked with a feminine cadence and suspension. The feminine cadence, which is symbolic of women being

“weaker”, is thus appropriately used here. It is however at the end of the singers’ parts (before the orchestral postlude) where obvious ascending chromaticism is encountered. This occurs first in Marguerite’s part at the *poco accelerando* on the words, “*Ah! presse ton retour, cher bien-aimé! Viens!*” (Ah! Hurry back dear beloved! Come!) – the text being evident of her complete surrender to Faust’s advances. In the latter’s part the chromaticism, as well as a suspension, is used on the word “Marguerite!” which he sings while he climbs up the window and takes her hand. Méphistophéles has the last say with a loud, repetitive laugh – his presence telling of the evilness behind the seduction. Seduction and evilness are thus linked and supports the idea of evilness taking a feminine form (chromaticism). Hence, Méphistophéles can be viewed as having a sense of gender duality: both male and female. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 27; Gounod 1869: 242–248; Gounod 2009.)

Acte IV, Scène I (Marguerite, seule): No.19 Marguerite au Rouet

The scene in E minor starts with a solo chromatic line in the cello. The other instruments soon follow with different motives, but we again encounter chromaticism when the flutes and clarinets enter. Femininity is thus evident – appropriate when considering Marguerite is the only character in this scene. The latter is mocked by the young towns’ maidens and when Marguerite hears it, she refers to them as “heartless girls”. This is sung in conjunction with a descending chromatic passage played by all the strings. In my opinion this can again act as referent towards the concept of the evil feminine. The rest of the scene does not contain much conspicuous gender aspects, except for the use of the flutes and oboes as doubling melodic instruments. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 27, 28; Gounod 1869: 249–263; Gounod 2009.)

Acte IV, Scène II (Siébel, Marguerite): No.20 Scène et Récitatif

No significant gender symbolism was found in this scene.

Acte IV, Scène III (Changement de scène: l'église. Marguerite, Méphistophélès, Chœur):

No.21 Scène de l'Église

This ominous scene in C minor is packed with gender duality. After a *forte* chord in the winds, a very prominent ascending chromatic line is played *tremolo* by all the strings, with the woodwinds immediately following with the same line. The chromaticism together with the gloomy mood again opens the possibility of evil femininity, also creating an interesting contradiction when considering the setting is in a church which would rather be connected with joy and patriarchy. The entrance of the organ, however, brings about a more conventional portrayal. Marguerite's first line is already indicative of femininity, and takes on a different persona when taking the text into consideration. The words "*humble servante*" (humble servant) in the line "*Seigneur, daignez permettre à votre humble servant*" (Lord, allow your humble servant) are chromatically sung. This does not only indicate femininity, but also stresses the stereotype of the female as being subordinate. An interesting contradiction follows, though: Méphistophélès interrupts Marguerite with an ascending chromatic line on the words, "*Non, tu ne prieras pas! Frappez-la d'épouvante! Esprits du mal, accourez tous!*" (No! You shall not pray! Strike her with terror! Spirits of evil, hasten here!), which I believe can be viewed as a portrayal of the evil feminine – awarding a femininity to Méphistophélès as well. In contrast to this, we are suddenly overwhelmed by a strong sense of masculinity – with the woodwinds absent, the full brass section together with the strings play a *fortissimo* dotted-rhythm motive which reminds one of the military. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 29; Gounod 1869: 268–271; Gounod 2009.)

After an attempt at prayer by Marguerite, she is again interrupted by Méphistophélès whose part is rich in chromaticism. The religious chorus, however, challenges Méphistophélès, and we, rather contradictingly with regards to its former use, encounter chromaticism on the words, "*Quand du Seigneur le jour luira, sa croix au ciel resplendira*" (When the day of the Lord dawns, his cross will shine in Heaven). This points to Gounod's unconventional and ambiguous means of portraying the different "personas" that the female can possess. When Méphistophélès enters, he is again accompanied by the militarist dotted rhythm in the strings, together with a pertinent call played by muted horns – this time perhaps stressing his power as a male. When Marguerite and the chorus attempts a last prayer, there are no signs of chromaticism or the military motive, and a lighter texture is created by the violins who serve

as main melodic instruments, while the key changes to C major. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 30, 31; Gounod 1869: 272–286; Gounod 2009.)

Acte IV. Scène IV (Changement de scène: La rue. A droite, la maison de Marguerite, à gauche, une église. Marthe, Siébel. Puis Valentin et Soldats): No.22 Chœur des Soldats

This joyful scene in B-flat major is excessively masculine. The tempo indication, *Allegretto di Marcia*, alone suggests a referral to the military, which in those days exclusively consisted of men. We also have a full orchestra with added snare drum (playing a typical military roll) and a stage band comprising of horns, cornets, trumpets and trombones. The scene is a patriotic celebration of the soldiers' return from the war, which is evident in the text. When the male choir first enters, no strings are used, only woodwinds and brass; hence the sound is full and powerful. The only obvious reference to femininity in the score is a repetitive chromatic motive played by the violins when Valentin asks Siébel about Marguerite. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 31, 32; Gounod 1869: 287–322; Gounod 2009.)

Acte IV, Scène V (Valentin, Siébel): No.23 Récitatif

I did not find noteworthy references to gender in this short scene.

Acte IV, Scène VI (Faust, Méphistophélès, une guitare sous son manteau): No.24 Sérénade

This quaint serenade in G minor is again evidence of Méphistophéles's role as seducer and how chromaticism is the musical means of portraying this. On the words "*N'ouvre ta porte, ma belle, que la bague au doigt!*" (Open the door, my pretty one, only for your suitor!) and "*Ne donne un baiser, ma mie, que la bague au doigt!*" (Grant kisses, my pretty one, only to your suitor!) there are a sudden use of chromatic figures in all the instruments used. The strings have an ascending pattern, whilst the winds and baritone play and sing descending ones. Its use in context to the text is indicative of seduction/manipulation. These are commonly seen as feminine attributes, and the abundant use of the woodwinds, especially the flute, contributes to stress a female theme. Since Méphistophéles is the bearer of this

femininity, his own gender duality is evident, as well as a suggested connection between the female and evil. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 33; Gounod 1869: 323–330; Gounod 2009.)

Acte IV, Scène VII (Les Mêmes, Valentin): No.25 Trio du Duel

Not only is this scene a physical duel between Valentin and Faust, but it is also a duel between genders. Already at the beginning of the scene with Méphistophéles's first entrance, he is (as we have found is often the practice) femininely characterized in the score by sequential suspension patterns. The brass that is used to accompany Valentin's parts is each time omitted when Méphistophéles enters, with the woodwinds and violins being dominant in the latter's parts. Obvious chromatic patterns are played by the woodwinds whilst the devil sings the words "*Vous le voulez? Allons, docteur, à vous!*" (Are you determined? Go on, doctor, play your part!) – again it is possible to deduce manipulation here, which, taking the chromaticism into consideration points towards the feminine. With Valentin's next entrance, a stately, authoritative dotted rhythm is introduced and the horns and trombones also feature, lending the part a masculine persona. This masculinity prevails when the three men sing together. As expected, Méphistophéles's next entrance is adorned by an ascending chromatic line played by the oboes and clarinets. Interestingly, the last words before Valentin meets his demise, is sung by Méphistophéles: "*Serrez-vous contre moi, et poussez seulement, cher docteur, moi, je pare!*" (Stand close to me and just thrust, dear doctor, I shall parry!). These words are accompanied by a noticeable descending chromatic line, played by the only instruments scored at that point, the strings. Acknowledging Valentin's death just after these words are sung, one can argue that an "evil femininity" has conquered. The recurrence of obvious chromaticism in the string parts accompanying Méphistophéles right *after* Valentin is fatally stabbed by Faust's sword, is further proof that such an argument holds merit. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 35; Gounod 1869: 331–343; Gounod 2009.)

*Acte IV, Scène VIII (Marthe, Valentin, Bourgeois. Puis Marguerite et Siébel): No.26
Mort de Valentin*

We reach the end of the fourth act with yet another gender-ambivalent scene, this time in D minor. The first reference to gender is a chromatically descending line played by the clarinets

while Marthe and the sopranos observe that Valentin is still breathing. The latter responds with the celli playing the main melodic material, and when he calls to Marguerite the trombones and timpani feature strongly – our soldier’s male sex is thus musically corroborated by masculinity. Siébel’s gender-duality as well as a possible feminine reference to God is suggested in the *Andante* in which the student’s part is generous in suspensions, “*Grâce, grâce! Grâce pour elle! Soyez clément!*” (Mercy, mercy! Have pity on her! Be merciful!). When Valentin then addresses Marguerite, his masculinity is again established with the bassoons, horns, trumpets, and trombones featuring strongly. Interestingly, very obvious and recurring chromaticism in the woodwinds is used to accompany Valentin as he curses his shame-ridden sister with the words, “*Va! La honte t’accable! Le remords suit tes pas! Mais enfin, l’heure sonne! Meurs! Et si Dieu te pardonne, sois maudite ici-bas!*” (Go! Shame now crushes you! Remorse dogs your footsteps. But the hour will strike at last! Die! And if God forgives you may you be cursed in this world!). After the chorus comments, Valentin, for the last time, curses Marguerite with the words, “*Marguerite! Sois maudite!*” (Marguerite! A curse on you!), and here we again encounter a similar use of chromaticism. It is possible that this might be a reference to either male dominance, or to the fallible, sinful nature of the female. Noticeable, however, is Valentin’s very last sentence, “*Moi, je meurs de ta main et je tombe en soldat!*” (And I die at your hands and fall as a soldier should!): When considering the reference to his profession, the use of (only) the trumpets, trombones and timpani is highly befitting, for the last time stressing his masculinity. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 35–37; Gounod 1869: 344–361; Gounod 2009.)

Acte V, Scène I (Les montagnes du Hartz): No.27 La nuit de Walpurgis

We enter the last act of the opera, being greeted by the diabolical “Walpurgis Night” – a witches’ sabbath. After a short, articulate orchestral introduction in C minor, a mysterious, gloomy atmosphere is created when the sopranos (who represent Will-O’-The-Wisps) sing *piano* staccato motives accompanied by the flutes, oboes and violins. Later the lower strings join, playing repetitive chromatic figures. The text refers to the souls of the dead, and considering the sopranos, together with “feminine” instruments and chromaticism, are used, a strong suggestion of the evil female is made. When Faust and Méphistophéles enter, there is however an obvious shift to masculinity. The indication *Maestoso*, as well as the addition of the brass and bassoons, suggests authority and dominance. And when we look at

Méphistophéles's text, our argument is corroborated: “*Dans mon empire! Ici, docteur, tout m'est soumis*” (In my empire! Here, doctor, everything obeys my commands). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 37; Gounod 1869: 362–392; Gounod 2009.)

Acte V, Scène II (La montagne s'entr'ouvre et laisse voir un vaste palais resplendissant d'or au milieu duquel se dresse une table richement servie et entourée des reines et des courtisanes de l'antiquité.): No.28 Scène et Chœur

F major is the key for this scene in which Méphistophéles enamours Faust with beautiful queens and courtesans of the past. Gender ambiguity is present: the tempo indications of *Andante maestoso*, and later, *Maestoso assai*, suggest dignity and authority; and although the woodwinds, harp, and sopranos have distinct roles, there is noteworthy use of the horns, trumpets and trombones. I believe this to be important in the sense that it indicates female power and influence, as opposed to the conventional assumption that only men have these attributes. Since Méphistophéles is the initiator and introducer of the matriarchal gathering, it is a possibility that a female gender for the devil is yet again suggested here. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 38; Gounod 1869: 393–405; Gounod 2009.)

- *No.29 Chant bachique*

The drinking song in B-flat major persists in the indecisiveness of establishing a singular gender idea. Similar to the previous number, we have an *Allegretto maestoso* tempo indication which normally reminds one of authority and is in turn often associated with patriarchy. When observing the title of this number (Drinking song), a male connotation is made if one considers the stereotypical connection between men and liquor, as opposed to women and liquor. However, the main recurring motive in the voice part is a camouflaged ascending chromatic line – a gender indication relevant to the text which is telling of the sexual desire and pleasure that the ancient female beauties evoke in Faust. A connection between chromaticism and seduction is again of significance. The ensuing *Andantino* is a reference to Act III, Scene XI, No.18, the love duet between Faust and Marguerite, in that it shares the same melodic material, only this time it is in E-flat major. Thus, it is another

suggestion of seduction that holds merit. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 38-39; Gounod 1869: 406–414; Gounod 2009.)

Acte V, Scène III (Changement partiel: La vallée du Brocken)

A sudden change of mood is created with a modulation to A minor, nervous tremolo's in the strings, and a *fff* timpani roll. The reason for this change is the appearance of an upsetting vision of Marguerite, magically created by Méphistophéles. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that almost the entire part of Faust is chromatic, along with chromaticism in the string accompaniment. This can be an indication of female objectification, or evilness, as she (Marguerite) is metaphorically connected with murder/death (arguably, the murdering of her unborn child) in the text: “*Un ruban rouge qu'elle cache! Un ruban rouge, étroit comme un tranchant de hache!*” (A red ribbon that she hides! A red ribbon, as narrow as the axe's edge). (Barbier & Carré 2009: 40; Gounod 1869: 415–420; Gounod 2009.)

Acte V, Scène IV (Changement de scène: La prison Marguerite, endormie, Faust, Méphistophélès): No.30 Scène de la Prison

Gender duality is omnipresent in this orchestral number in F-sharp minor. The tempo indication (*Moderato maestoso*) together with the *ff* snare drum roll, a recurring dotted rhythm in the winds, and heavy brass gives a masculine impression. However, we do encounter solo suspensions in the brass, descending chromatic lines in the clarinets, and the scene ends with chromatic 32nd-note figures in the violas and celli. This entwined use of masculine and feminine musical ideas may, in my opinion, be indicative of the gender-contradiction present in this scene and setting: a prison, which is more commonly associated with men, is now the home of Marguerite – a supposed embodiment of all that is good and pure. (Gounod 1869: 421–428; Gounod 2009.)

Acte V, Scène V (Faust, Marguerite)

The key of A minor and recurring suspensions in solo woodwinds, lead us into this scene. After nine bars the tempo indication of *Andante* changes to *Moderato*, and it is also here

where very obvious chromaticism is used, starting off with the oboe playing a solo descending chromatic line, which is then copied by the clarinet and bassoon. Marguerite's female gender is here articulated in contrast to the presumed "male" context she finds herself in, since this chromaticism corresponds with Faust's words "*C'est elle, la voici, la douce créature, jetée au fond d'une prison comme une vile criminelle!*" ('Tis she, here she is, the sweet creature, thrown in the depths of prison like some base criminal!). Interestingly, the ensuing *Allegro non troppo*, *Tempo di valse* and *Andantino* that Marguerite sing do not show any signs of gender ideas with regards to the musical text, but the woodwinds and violins are predominantly used as melodic instruments. In the *Adagio*, when Faust enters again, a significant use of chromaticism is noted in the tenor part when Faust sings the words "*Viens, viens, Marguerite!*" (Come, come, Marguerite!), and again on, "*Viens, viens, fuyons!*" (Come, come, let's escape!). In my view this may be indicative of chromaticism again used to portray seduction/manipulation. It is however interesting to note that it is not a female who is now the seducer, but rather a male – herewith Gounod breaks down the stereotypical norm and assumption that this characteristic is necessarily female. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 41–42; Gounod 1869: 428–438; Gounod 2009.)

Acte V, Scène VI (Les Mêmes, Méphistophélès): No.31 Trio-Finale

No obvious gender ideas are present in the introductory *Allegro moderato* section, but many interesting gender-deductions can be made once we enter the *Moderato maestoso* in G major. From the commencement of this section, it is clear, in my opinion, that Marguerite is finally the one in charge of the situation. The tempo indication (*Moderato maestoso*) immediately gives a sense of assertiveness and dominance, articulated by the steady, staccato on-beat chords played by the strings as accompaniment. It is significant that Faust's attempts at trying to interrupt her are not successful – she does not comment or react to his laments at all, and merely proceeds with her prayer: "*Anges purs, anges radieux, portez mon âme au sein des cieux! Dieu juste, à toi je m'abandonne! Dieu bon, je suis à toi, pardonne!*" (Pure and radiant angels, carry my soul up to Heaven! God of justice, I give myself up to you! God of mercy, I am yours, forgive!). When Faust and Méphistophélès join, Marguerite still sings the main melody of the *Moderato maestoso*, with the two men's parts being supportive, rather than leading. It is thus evident that Marguerite is eventually the victor in this tale: she receives

redemption and freedom while Faust is dragged to hell to serve as an eternal slave for Méphistophéles. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 43; Gounod 1869: 439–454; Gounod 2009.)

- *No.32 Apotheose*

The key of C major is very befitting when considering redemption and freedom, being the main and final ideas of the opera. The tempo indication is again *Moderato maestoso* and a full orchestra, harps, the organ and the choir are employed for this finale. “Feminine” instruments – the flutes, oboes, clarinets and violins – support the choir as melodic instruments. The predominant harp part further adds in creating a sense of femininity. Very symbolic is the bells played to announce the commencement of Easter morning – as argued in Chapter 3.6, Easter has a significant female connotation when one considers the idea of Christ’s death as symbolic of a mother giving birth, and thus life. As has been the norm for the greater part of the opera, gender duality is however still very much present: when the choir sings the words, “*Christ est ressuscité! Christ vient de renaître! Paix et félicité aux disciples du Maître! Christ vient de renaître! Christ est ressuscité!*” (Christ has risen again! Christ is born again! Peace and felicity to the Master’s disciples! Christ is born again! Christ has risen again!), we encounter a repetitive, triplet-based trumpet call, as well as a conspicuous organ part which suggests authority and power. In my opinion this suggests Christ as embodying both femininity and masculinity. (Barbier & Carré 2009: 44; Gounod 1869: 455–462; Gounod 2009.)

6.4 DVD productions

I shall now proceed to discuss hermeneutical gender analyses of three DVD productions of Gounod’s *Faust*.

6.4.1 Gounod: *Faust* (Wiener Staatsoper, 1985)

Although this is chronologically the oldest production being discussed in this study, it is in my opinion also the most controversial. The British film-maker Ken Russell, famous for his permissive treatment of sexuality and religion (which are the two main topics of my

dissertation), was chosen to serve as producer and director. Anti-Christian sentiments are portrayed in shocking ways. In the end, though, principles of the Christian faith are shown to be victorious. The action is set in sixteenth-century Germany. (Gounod 1985.)

DISC 1

Act I, Introduction

We meet an aged Faust sitting in his cluttered study representing years of obtained and practiced knowledge. There is a knock on the door after which three men enter, two of them are carrying a coffin. The coffin is laid on a large table and after it is opened it reveals a body of a girl. A flickering light resembling an astrological constellation appears and descends from the roof. As it flickers the girl in the coffin arises, steps out, dances, but then collapses again. In my opinion this opening scene can be a portrayal of Faust's frustration with his old-age: his study represents his abilities and successes of past years, but now he is inactive and numbed by age. The action concerning the girl in the coffin might indicate his attempts and desires to attain the joy of youth again, but he is unsuccessful. Arguably, his initial success in enlivening her might be symbolic of the course of the plot, with regard to gender, that is about to commence. Faust views women, including Marguerite, as beautiful objects that he can control to suit his needs. Hence, he is victorious in seducing Marguerite (the flickering light and simultaneously moving female dancer representing this). However, a point is met where he is unable to have control over Marguerite anymore. Her death, which might seem as defeat on her behalf, then reveals itself to be conquering in the sense that she receives redemption and eternal life, while Faust is damned to hell. (Gounod 1985.)

Act I, Scene I

The three men of the previous scene enter Faust's study again and remove the girl in the coffin. While Faust is sitting with a big book on his lap voicing his frustration and depression, a young female dancer, clearly embodying a maid, enters with a duster and fleetingly cleans the room. As she leaves, Faust pours poison into a golden goblet. No image or appearance of a female or male is seen while the choir of maidens and choir of burghers are heard,

respectively. Similar to the previous scene, a sense of male dominance is experienced in the portrayal of the maid – the female is presented as subordinate, and controlled by male authority. However, the fact that Faust then proceeds to attempt committing suicide stands in contrast, as this then shows weakness in the male. (Gounod 1985.)

Act I, Scene II

Méphistophéles appears on stage, surrounded by smoke. His costume is, in my opinion, very accurate when one considers the comparison with a gentleman, referred to in the text – he is wearing a black tailcoat, black pants, black boots, a red waistcoat, red shirt and a hat with a feather on. Masculinity is further articulated by physical props of golden coins, a crown and a medal when Méphistophéles asks Faust whether its wealth and power that he desires. When the pact is made, Faust is obliged to sign a contract, his own blood serving as ink. While this occurs a female dancer stands passively in the background, dressed in white. She makes the symbol of the crucifix on her chest followed by a prayer gesture, while Faust is being transformed to a younger version of himself. I believe this scene can be viewed as a gender portrayal of the nineteenth-century France in which *Faust* was composed. Men were associated with power, wealth and dominance while women were stereotyped as being passive and subordinate, embracing religion and a pure lifestyle. (Gounod 1985.)

After his transformation, Faust is now dressed in a red tailcoat, with a white ruffled shirt and white pants. He exits the stage being escorted by a group of female ballet dancers. I believe the match of the colour red between Faust's tailcoat and Méphistophéles's waistcoat and shirt is no coincidence. In my opinion the use of red may hold many significant symbolic meanings relevant to the plot. Red is often associated with love and/or lust as well as evil (blood/death), all of which is very present in this opera. Since it is a colour which is in many instances also related to the feminine, I am prone to believe that the application of the colour to Faust and Méphistophéles may imply both the battle between femininity and masculinity so present in this opera, as well as the idea of an enmeshed gender. (Gounod 1985.)

Act II, Scene I

The setting is the town square. Patriotism and patriarchy, as well as gender stereotyping is immediately evident: A big cannon appears on stage surrounded by soldiers dressed in formal parade wear of the time. Town maidens are also present on stage. Their attire of sundresses, headscarves and aprons, together with bare feet, is symbolic of subordination and gender stereotyping. A big icon of a crucified Jesus is prominent, and a priest is visible among the people. The latter is led off stage when a colossal golden cow statue appears. The statue is accompanied by ballet dancers representing menacing, androgynous creatures. (Gounod 1985.)

Act II, Scene II

The ill-omened staging of the previous scene is strikingly exchanged for a setting with the church as main focal point to which townspeople, women in particular, are headed for a service. In my opinion this sudden switch is deliberately chosen in order to display the contradictions and pretentiousness often present in religious communities (as was arguably the case in nineteenth-century France). Just moments ago the townspeople were admiring and celebrating the golden cow which is symbolic of hedonism and greed (sin), whereas now they are suddenly shown to be pious and humble as they attend mass. While this occurs, Valentin sings his aria, “*O sainte médaille*”, next to the icon of the crucified Jesus, suggesting that the aria is a prayer. The focus of the action in the background now makes an interesting shift to Marguerite: a ceremony resembling that of an ordination of a nun takes place, with her as main subject. She is being dressed in a nun-outfit by other nuns, and then blessed by the priest who offers her communion. (Gounod 1985.)

As has previously been the case, I believe this scene to be a portrayal of the Catholic milieu of nineteenth-century France in which the opera *Faust* was written. The gender implications that this environment brought about is evident in the scene. More women than men attended church, although religion was nevertheless still a male-dominated institution. (This is articulated by the masculinity portrayed by Valentin as he prays in his soldier’s suit and medal.) This masculinity and patriarchy led to gender-stereotyping and a view, as well as an expectation, of women to be pure, motherly, pious and subordinate. The representation of

Marguerite as a nun is therefore both shocking and controversial (since she commits sin), as well as very appropriate. Furthermore, a nun is, or ought to be, the closest earthly embodiment of the Virgin Mary. Considering this, my argument of Marguerite representing the Blessed Virgin (however ambiguously) is relevant in this scene. (Gounod 1985.)

Act II, Scene III

Again I believe that commentary on the often hypocritical and pretentious nature of religion as a practice is given here. Connecting with the previous two scenes, Marguerite and the churchgoers leave the stage and are replaced with soldiers, the grotesque statue of the golden calf and Méphistophéles, who is accompanied by provocative female dancers in golden dresses. Rather innovatively, the golden calf's eyes start rolling to resemble that of a slot machine, with the irises being replaced with random alternating objects like cherries. The mouth of the calf opens as coins start flowing out of it. Méphistophéles calls upon Lord Bacchus, after which he stabs the icon of the Messiah on the cross with his sword. A red substance symbolising Jesus' blood flows out from the stab wound. Méphistophéles then holds his goblet underneath the wound in order to fill it up. Theologically, this is an act of blasphemy since the Devil ridicules the practice of communion and uses it to feed his own appetite for pleasure. As they seem to become aware of the evil in their presence, Siébel and Valentin approaches Méphistophéles with crosses. He starts to become weak and collapses, after which Siébel rests his cross on Méphistophéles's back. The scene ends very originally and unexpectedly with our antagonist moving and taking the cross from his back. He then starts to unwrap the cross, revealing it to be chocolate which he then devours menacingly. (Gounod 1985.)

Gender-wise this scene is predominantly masculine. The Devil and Jesus are portrayed conventionally (male), although Méphistophéles is to some extent connected to femininity since he is surrounded by females. This is suggestive of the evil feminine, a concept associated with hedonism, seduction and lust. Discrimination against, and objectification of, the female is thus evident here. (Gounod 1985.)

Very noteworthy is the presentation of Siébel. "She" is dressed noticeably different, more feminine, in comparison with the rest of the male crowd: a green ruffled shirt with lace-

ornamented cuffs and a matching green jacket with puffed sleeves. It is justifiable that my theory of Siébel possibly embodying the *avant-garde* nineteenth-century French woman, is implied here. (Gounod 1985.)

Act II, Scene IV

No striking gender messages are evident in this scene (Gounod 1985).

Act II, Scene V

Nineteenth-century gender stereotypes are again articulated. The cannon on stage is surrounded by couples dancing. The men are dressed in the formal soldier wear while the women are presented in the domestic outfits previously seen. Marguerite in her nun-outfit enters the stage. Noticeable is androgynous monster-like creatures also present amongst the crowd. It is possible that the latter implies that evil is omnipresent and can take on any, or no, gender. It would complement the idea of Méphistophéles arguably taking on male and/or female identities. (Gounod 1985.)

Act III, Entr'acte

In this scene Méphistophéles is without a doubt portrayed as masculine: he is seen urinating (standing) in the fountain in Marguerite's garden. The fountain bears an icon of the crucified Jesus which Méphistophéles blasphemously covers with his hat. (Gounod 1985.)

DISC 2

Act III, Scene I

Siébel, still wearing the green outfit, is at first alone on stage as “she” starts “her” song about “her” love for Marguerite. Soon Méphistophéles appears followed by female dancers in white dresses with red flowers serving as adornments. After Siébel sprinkles water from the font on the posy, the dancers circle “her” and mockingly copy “her” act by pretending to sprinkle

water from the font onto “her”. A duality in terms of the female gender is portrayed here. The evil feminine is suggested by the dancers clearly being affiliated to the Devil. Simultaneously (and contradictingly) the connection between the female as nurturing life-giver is symbolised by the “holy water” being used by Siébel (who is arguably feminine), and ironically, also by the female dancers. In turn this positive femininity is visually linked with Christ, due to the pertinent icon on the fountain. (Gounod 1985.)

Act III, Scene II

No significant gender aspects were evident in this scene (Gounod 1985).

Act III, Scene III

Again, no specific gender ideas can be deduced from this scene (Gounod 1985).

Act III, Scene IV

Although Faust is the only character on stage, femininity is undoubtedly dominant. This femininity is however stereotyped and objectified. As Faust sings his aria, “*Salut! demeure chaste et pure*”, a huge portrait of a pretty young girl, presumably implying Marguerite, appears as backdrop to the stage. The font with the crucified Jesus icon is still present and now enjoys a central position. The backdrop and the centrality of the water font is very befitting when one considers the text of the aria of which the subject matter is Marguerite’s purity, beauty and “divinity”. She is thus greatly objectified and stereotyped, portrayed as the “perfect” embodiment of a nineteenth-century French woman. (Gounod 1985.)

Act III, Scene V

I could not deduce valuable gender ideas from this short scene (Gounod 1985).

Act III, Scene VI

The stereotyped femininity of Scene IV is still dominant in this scene: before she even starts her aria, Marguerite is portrayed as a caring, domestic philanthropist, dropping a basket of fruits and vegetables at her neighbour, Marthe's, home. Unique to this production is the fitting presentation of Marguerite having Marthe's two children as listeners, sitting cross-legged by her feet as she reads them the tale of the King of Thulé. This adds to the stereotype since she is representing a maternal position. (Gounod 1985.)

Gender stereotyping, objectification and the male gaze are aspects deducible from the second part of the scene, when Marguerite discovers the jewel box ("*Air des bijoux*"). As she is making the discovery, Méphistophéles is suddenly seen appearing in one of the upstairs windows of Marguerite's house, his eyes fixed on her. Simultaneously female ballet dancers dressed in ornamented golden dresses with golden crowns on their heads surround Marguerite by the casket. The latter is then being adorned by the ballet dancers with a golden cross-shaped brooch (possibly blasphemously), earrings, a bracelet, a ring, a crown, and a hand mirror. Visually, this creates a great symbolic contradiction, both gender-wise and theologically. Marguerite, presented as a nun, is overtly adorned with jewels and items representing earthly possessions which are connected to sinful behaviour like hedonism, self-adoration, greed and seduction. She is at once the embodiment of two different feminine stereotypes; a praised and encouraged femininity of piety, subordination, nurture and chastity supported by the catholic religion; as well as an almost feared femininity of evil, entailing the sinful hedonist behaviour mentioned above. I believe this dual representation to be of great significance as it sums up the feminine gender constructs of nineteenth-century France. In my opinion it also serves as commentary on the rigidity and extremity in distinction of the gender identities that reigned then: one stereotype was the only accepted, where anything deviating from this was judged and discriminated against. Ironically though, the objectification practised by men inevitably led many women to embrace a femininity of "evil" in which bodily desires are the main focal point. (Gounod 1985.)

Act III, Scene VII

No predominant gender ideas are present in this short scene (Gounod 1985).

Act III, Scene VIII

This scene also does not entail symbolic gender meanings worth mentioning (Gounod 1985).

Act III, Scene IX

Gender-duality and/or androgyny with regard to evil is again suggested as Marthe (unaware) is circled by black ghost-like creatures with white gloves and no distinct faces. This occurs when Méphistophéles practises his manipulative skills on her in order to lead her away from the two lovers. (Gounod 1985.)

Act III, Scene X

Smoke ascends from Marthe's porch as Méphistophéles appears. He has been transformed into an ominous black androgynous creature with a head resembling that of a bull and huge bird-like wings. As he spreads these wings while he casts the spell of seduction on Faust and Marguerite, female ballet dancers in white dresses with red roses surround him. I believe the alternation of gender identities (male, female, genderless) connected with Méphistophéles not only suggests that the Devil adopts different genders, but it might also be a representation of the *performativity* and spectacle of gender as a whole: different from biological sex, gender is fluid and changeable. (Gounod 1985.)

Act III, Scene XI

The unique staging of this scene appropriately stresses Marguerite's purity and "divinity". As Faust sings his aria, "*Divine pureté!*", the text of which describes Marguerite as a holy, pure being, the latter kneels by the water font with the crucified Jesus icon, in prayer. (Gounod 1985.)

Act III, Scene XII

No telling gender ideas are evident in this short scene (Gounod 1985).

Act III, Scene XIII

Marguerite is seen at her window expressing her feelings and longing for Faust. When she finally gives in to her desires, she runs out of her house to embrace Faust who is standing in the garden. The production is unique as Marguerite is the one taking action, while Faust is the passive receiver. This creates grounds for two contrasting arguments: on the one hand her behaviour is empowering considering Marguerite in essence *chooses* her femininity, even though it is a femininity not accepted by her community; on the other hand it supports the stereotype of the evil female being the seductive instigator of sin. One can thus view it as an attempt by the director of this production to depict the development in freedom of gender identities that started appearing from the middle of the nineteenth century. Alternatively though it can merely serve as a portrayal of the negative nineteenth-century stereotype of the evil feminine, in which case it depicts the conservative and restrictive constructs that governed this time in history. (Gounod 1985.)

Act IV, Scene I

The setting for this fourth act is still Marguerite's garden. However, the milieu has been altered to depict the church, which now encompasses the entire backdrop of the stage. For the first time in the opera, Marguerite's attire has changed from the nun-outfit to a black dress and long grey scarf. She is holding what appears to be the lifeless body of her and Faust's illegitimate child, whom she has murdered. A row of nuns passes Marguerite. When they notice Marguerite, they make the crucifixion sign on their chests while she looks shamefully away. Unique to this production, Marthe comes and takes the body of the baby away from Marguerite, as the latter starts singing of Faust's abandonment of her. This scene gives insight into the gender framework of nineteenth-century Catholic France. Due to her sinful act of lust (in the eyes of her community) she does not embody the accepted and encouraged femininity of purity, piety and maternity any more. Instead, she is now the representation of a feared and frowned-upon femininity not accepted by her Catholic community. The prominence of the church in the background, the passing by of judging nuns, the inability to accept her child's death, as well as her attire (mourning and concealing) can be indicative of Christian guilt, based on gender, inflicted on many women by the patriarchal church system of the nineteenth century. (Gounod 1985.)

Act IV, Scene II

I could not deduce significant gender ideas from this short scene (Gounod 1985).

Act IV, Scene III

This scene is performed at the end of the act, and therefore I shall discuss it after scene VIII (Gounod 1985).

Act IV, Scene IV

The soldiers have returned from war and they are received by townswomen dressed in seductive gypsy dresses. While the men sing of their victory the women perform sexually suggestive dances, and later sexual acts with soldiers are enacted. Again, I believe this to be commentary, and presumably criticism, on the shallow and objectifying view that many nineteenth-century men had of women. Simultaneously it portrays the hypocrisy that dominated Catholic communities: men advocated and praised the value of a chaste woman; however, when it suited them, access to promiscuous female sexuality was easily overlooked, and enjoyed. (Gounod 1985.)

Act IV, Scene V

This scene does, in my opinion, not contain any substantiated gender commentary (Gounod 1985).

Act IV, Scene VI

Masculinity is by default prominent here. Production-wise, no other gender ideas are evident. (Gounod 1985.)

Act IV, Scene VII

The case in terms of gender is similar to the previous scene (Gounod 1985).

Act IV, Scene VIII

The concept of Christian guilt experienced by many women in nineteenth-century Catholic societies (introduced in the discussion of Act IV, Scene I) is again relevant here. Valentin (having been stabbed by Faust) lets out his last breath after bitterly cursing his sister. Marguerite folds his arms forgivingly over his chest and performs the crucifixion sign over her own body. Hereafter, Marthe appears holding the little body of Marguerite's baby. She hands it to Marguerite who lovingly embraces it. I believe this scene to be a representation of gender-based guilt that Marguerite is experiencing due to her Catholic milieu. Although Valentin also sinned by judging and wishing his sister an ill-fated future, Marguerite easily forgives him (arguably portrayed by the gesture of folding his arms and then performing the crucifixion sign). She is however unable to forgive herself and convinced that God is also unforgiving (the ensuing church scene being proof) and experiences guilt over her unaccepted femininity: she is an unsuccessful sister and mother. (Gounod 1985.)

Act IV, Scene III

In an interesting rendition of the text, this scene in the church suggests Valentin's funeral. Marguerite is seen lying on the floor and as the organ starts playing, the priest and clergymen enter. There is a coffin in the centre of the stage, and as is the case throughout the opera, a crucified Jesus icon is visible, hanging above the coffin. While Marguerite starts praying at her brother's coffin, Méphistophéles enters the scene blasphemously dressed in a mostly black outfit that closely resembles that of a church cardinal. He is accompanied by the female ballet dancers in golden dresses. In another attempt at prayer, Marguerite is led by two men to sit in a pew next to women dressed in nun-outfits. She is soon surrounded by a group of these supposed "nuns", each swaying an incense holder – a ritual prominent in Catholic masses, symbolising the presence of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, the "nuns" take off their respectful attire to reveal red seductive dresses and bold-shaven heads. Much to the spectator's surprise

Faust, not Valentin, arises from the coffin holding Marguerite's dead baby. She embraces it lovingly, and it becomes obvious that she is delusional. (Gounod 1985.)

There are a number of possible gender ideas presented in this scene. The male-dominated Catholic framework of the nineteenth century is evident in the presentation of males in leading positions. The idea of male leadership and knowledge versus female docility and subordination is evident in the observation of an all-male clergy, and in contrast, an all-female congregation. Religious gender stereotyping is highlighted by the nun-outfits that all the church-attending women, apart from Marguerite (she is still dressed as in the previous scene), are wearing. The men, including Méphistophéles and Valentin (in his formal soldier suit), are all dressed in authoritative outfits. Gender, in this case specifically femininity, as a performance and spectacle is very powerfully depicted by the nun-outfits being replaced with seductive red dresses. Two contrasting femininities are displayed and shown to be adjustable identities manipulated by cultural forces – these forces being predominantly male in the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, the hypocrisy and pretention prevalent in religious communities are depicted and to a great extent linked with gender constructs. (Gounod 1985.)

Furthermore, the suggestion, however ambiguous, of Valentin's funeral and the presentation of Marguerite's dead baby stresses her gender-based guilt. (Gounod 1985.)

Act V, Scene I

The first scene of this act is not staged. Instead the camera shows the orchestra playing. Interestingly, I noticed that the orchestra (or those members chosen by the camera, as directed by Ken Russell) are all male. Taking this into consideration it is thus possible to suggest that the milieu of this specific production is male-dominant. (Gounod 1985.)

Act V, Scenes II-III

Unfortunately these two scenes have been omitted from the production (Gounod 1985).

Act V, Scene IV

A bare, colourless stage with a big prison gate as only prop is presented. Marguerite is seen lying on the floor holding her scarf as if it were a baby. Yet again Marguerite's gender-based Christian guilt is visible – she is unable to find closure and relief of guilt over the death (infanticide) of her baby. It is evident that this guilt has driven her to madness. (Gounod 1985.)

Act V, Scene V

There were no obvious gender messages conveyed in this scene (Gounod 1985).

Act V, Scene VI

When viewing this scene I feel that my suggestion of a male-dominated production milieu is motivated and justified. Rather disappointingly, Marguerite is not portrayed as a victorious figure. Visually she is in a subordinate position in comparison with Méphistophéles and Faust, as she is kneeling as she sings. After a while, Faust walks over to her, kneels by her side and takes her hand. Marguerite is then hand-cuffed and led to the guillotine. The backdrop changes to a scarlet bright and the guillotine becomes the only visible object on screen. The guillotine drops dramatically and the curtain closes. (Gounod 1985.)

Apotheose

The curtain opens again showing an aged Faust in his study with a coffin in the centre. A headless female arises from it and points accusingly at Faust. Méphistophéles appears and takes hold of Faust. The lighting becomes red and they are covered with a red sheet as they descend into the stage. (Gounod 1985.)

From a gender perspective, Marguerite is not shown as being liberated and conquering. Although it is arguably she who is portrayed by the headless female body in the coffin, I believe that her pointing finger is not substantial enough to represent the idea of

empowerment, victory and freedom. Rather, she is presented as humiliated, dishonoured and enslaved. It is also not evident whether she has received redemption through her faith. Speculative but possibly the case, is the use of red as the backdrop to the guillotine, and then again as lighting and colour of the sheet. This may point to a connection between Faust and Marguerite's demise – they are both doomed to hell, and red is often associated with evil and death. (Gounod 1985.)

6.4.2 Gounod: *Faust* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, 2004)

Ambivalence and duality in terms of gender representations are very evident in this production. Initially, Marguerite is portrayed as less conservative, and Faust as more sincere in his feelings toward her. As the tenor Roberto Alagna (Faust), is married to the soprano Angela Gheorghiu (Marguerite), the fact that he comes across as more sympathetic and loving, might therefore be influenced by their real-life union. The director of the production is Sue Judd (female), with Ross MacGibbon (male) as executive producer and Lisa Quilter (female) as associate producer. The input of both male and female genders is important to take into account when considering the portrayal of gender in this production. The specific setting of the opera is not stipulated.

DISC 1

Act I, Introduction

Different from the productions discussed in Chapter 6.4.1 and 6.4.3, the setting of the opening scene cannot be defined as a singular space. On the left side of the very dark stage is a big trunk with, who we later learn to be Méphistophéles, sitting on it. His back is turned to the audience and he is holding a filled goblet in his right hand. On the stage's right side is a pertinent ray of light shining from above to make visible tall pillars and a big pipe organ with a staircase leading from the stage toward it. Since there are also rows of chairs present underneath the organ, I believe a church is suggested. Méphistophéles gets up and proceeds to the staircase which he climbs halfway. A group of people dressed all in black appears on stage walking cautiously toward Méphistophéles. It is soon evident that it is the light that they

are afraid of – neither the Devil nor they dare to meet it. Méphistophéles turns around, covers the group of people with his black cloak and they all leave the stage. (Gounod 2004.)

It is justifiable to argue that the suggestion of femininity representing life, light and God (evident in the libretto of Act I, Scene I) can henceforth imply masculinity as regards darkness, death and the Devil, since these three aspects oppose life, light and God and the action on stage furthermore exhibits and corroborates this opposition. (Gounod 2004.)

Act I, Scene I

The setting is still the same as the previous scene and consequently no portrayal of a study is present. An aged Faust, dressed in a red coat, enters with a big book and sits in one of the chairs representing part of a congregational pew. Later he moves to the other side of the stage where the trunk is at. When the voices of the townswomen are heard, a female ballet dancer in a white dress and white flower in her hand, appears and dances at the back of the stage. Then, as the male voices of the burghers and farm labourers are heard, a male ballet dancer runs onto the stage toward the girl. They dance around, with the male dancer playfully trying to get hold of the flower. They seem mutually happy and kiss. (Gounod 2004.)

What I find outstanding in observing this scene is the absence of a male authoritative ambience, usually present in productions of this scene. There is no visible study (an absence of masculine-related concepts like knowledge and wisdom), and neither Faust nor the male ballet dancer exudes stereotypical dominant masculinity. Faust is depicted as exceptionally weak, passive and self-pitying. Even more interesting is the male ballet dancer who does not seem to represent typical masculine traits: he is dressed in a flowing, white linen outfit, is very gentle in body language and seems pre-occupied with the flower in his female partner's hand. The couple radiates equality and mutual respect in their relationship. Hence, no specific gender seems to be highlighted in this scene – rather, a sense of gender equality is evident. (Gounod 2004.)

Act I, Scene II

Méphistophéles appears out of a cloud of smoke dressed in accordance with the text: he is wearing a grey trench coat, grey trousers, a brown waistcoat and a country-style hat with a feather in it. In the vision shown by Méphistophéles to Faust, Marguerite is seen in a white linen dress resembling that of a night gown. She is washing herself from a basin of water. The pact between the Devil and Faust is confirmed by a puncture made on both of their hands of which the blood is taken and smeared on the contract. When Faust is transformed to a youthful version of himself, he matches Méphistophéles in similar trousers and waistcoat. (Gounod 2004.)

In contrast to the previous scene, nineteenth-century gender stereotypes are distinguished here. The men represent the typical masculinity of their time by means of their attire and pre-occupation with violence. In turn, Marguerite portrays the passive, domestic, nurturing nineteenth-century French woman, who is objectified by her male contemporaries. (Gounod 2004.)

Act II, Scene I

I find this scene interesting since it portrays, in my view, a sense of ambiguity with regard to gender representations. The town square is depicted with soldiers in formal soldier attire, townsmen in suits, and ladies in formal dresses, some of the latter adorned with hats or fascinators. Flags of France are prominent and a big figure of a crucified Christ stands in the centre of the stage. A banner with the words, “*Vive la guerre!*” (Long live war!) hangs out of a window. A muscled male entertainer doing tricks with a sword draws the attention of the ladies. A townsman becomes visibly jealous when he sees his, what I assume to be, wife or partner adoring the performer. The ladies take turns dancing with the latter, but his act is cut short when one of them pushes him away, with him consequently falling down on the floor. Siébel makes “her” entrance on the type of bicycle used by ladies, that is without the bar usually seen on bicycles for men. Noticeable is “her” outfit which looks strikingly different from the other men’s: similar to the ballet dancer in Act I, Scene II, Siébel is wearing a flowing, casual linen top with matching trousers. Méphistophéles and Faust enter accompanied by ladies who are dressed like gypsies. The Devil is wearing a conventional

black-tie suit while Faust appears rather comical in a devil-costume, recognisable by its head-piece with horns. (Gounod 2004.)

The ambiguity with regard to gender representations is evident in the alternation of stereotypical nineteenth-century gender distinctions with other unconventional (arguably more liberal) ones. Based on their outfits and actions, the soldiers and townsmen are representing the conventional masculinity of their time. When considering the ladies' appearance, they seem to also embody their stereotype. However, their actions, to a certain extent, differ from this: where the act of bodily objectification is generally assumed to be more applicable to men, the *women* are here shown to participate in this activity as they gaze at the well-built male entertainer. Furthermore, very striking is the unconventional act of a woman showing domineering behaviour by pushing a man and causing him to fall. (Gounod 2010.)

Aiding my theory of Siébel embodying the rising, however controversial, *avant-garde* femininity which slowly emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century, is the portrayal of “her” as an other, arguably a *female* other. The stark difference between Siébel's appearance and that of the other men immediately strikes the spectator: it is, in my opinion, of a more feminine nature, since it is non-domineering and non-authoritative, as is the case with the outfits of the other men. The fact that “she” is the only one bearing this difference, is important since it makes it an unavoidable and distinct aspect that cannot be dismissed and also cannot be regarded as merely coincidental. Furthermore, if Siébel is indeed intended to represent the unconventional, liberal female, the staging of “her” riding a bicycle is befitting since it implies independence and freedom. (Gounod 2004.)

The girls resembling gypsies who accompany Méphistophéles and Faust are, in contrast to the townswomen and Siébel, negatively stereotyped. In my opinion, they suggest the evil feminine by means of their seductive dresses and their connection to the Devil. (Gounod 2004.)

Hence, I am of the opinion that this scene portrays both the conventional gender distinctions of the nineteenth century, as well as new gender constructs that were emerging.

Act II, Scene II

I did not find noteworthy gender commentary or symbolism in this scene (Gounod 2004).

Act II, Scene III

Méphistophéles is dressed in a overtly adorned red suit with two female and two male dancers by his side. They are also wearing red and both the men and the ladies resemble gypsies. Similar to the production discussed in Chapter 6.4.1 is the symbolic portrayal of Christ's blood serving as wine for Méphistophéles. While the "blood" is pouring from the Jesus figure's body, the Devil and his entourage rub their hands suggestively over Christ's body and then proceed to lick their fingers with delight. Hereafter, the crucifixion icon breaks apart. (Gounod 2004.)

Refreshing is the use of both male and female genders presented in this scene. Gender duality and, arguably, gender equality is therefore implied. The significance of red in the group's attire can arguably be linked to the concept of seduction and lust, as well as death/murder. The fact that both genders are present suggests (rather creatively, when compared to the other two productions) that evil is unisex/genderless and universal, rather than being exclusively associated with one singular gender. (Gounod 2004.)

Act II, Scene IV

I did not derive any gender ideas from this scene (Gounod 2004).

Act II, Scene V

The scene commences by portraying a performance (*Cabaret L'Enfer: Cabaret Hell*) of seductively dressed female show dancers in short dresses, fishnet stockings and high heels. The townspeople, both male and female, are the spectators. Wine is enjoyed by both genders. Méphistophéles and Faust enter, dressed formally in black-tie suits. Marguerite makes her entrance very nonchalantly, her attire and appearance strikingly similar to that of the other

townswomen. After Faust and Marguerite's meeting, the dance show proceeds – this time with a male dancer in the centre, surrounded by the female dancers. The show, and scene for that matter, ends entertainingly with one of the female dancers “shooting” the male dancer with a pistol. She provocatively blows away the smoke of the weapon. (Gounod 2004.)

Ambiguity as regards gender representations reign in this scene. The stereotyped evil feminine is portrayed through the sexually suggestive dance routine and attire of the “show girls”. Adding to this negative femininity is the act of the girl “shooting” the male dancer. On the other hand though, this act has the potential to imply female independence, dominance and power. Also, Marguerite is not presented as an objectified, divine figure, as is often the case in productions. It can therefore be argued that Faust has a deeper appreciation for her than merely for her beauty and femininity. Presenting the townswomen with glasses of wine (with the absence of visible judgment from their male counterparts) suggests liberty as well as a sense of gender equality. Hence, I am again prone to believe that an attempt was made by the producers to portray both the biased gender constructs that governed nineteenth-century France, but also the new wave of female liberalism and gender equality that started to emerge during the latter part of the era. (Gounod 2004.)

Act III, Scene I

Instead of a crucified Jesus icon on the water font, as is the case in the other two productions, an icon of the Virgin Mary is present here. This may be a reminder and portrayal of the predominance of Mariology that characterized nineteenth-century French society. (Gounod 2004.)

Act III, Scene II

I did not find gender symbolism in this short scene (Gounod 2004).

Act III, Scene III

Again, no hermeneutical gender symbolism could be deduced by watching this scene (Gounod 2004).

Act III, Scene IV

Stereotyped masculinity on the one hand, but a newfound respect towards the female on the other, is depicted here. Faust is dressed in a typical formal male suit which could suggest authority and importance. He is, however, depicted as taking off his hat as he starts to sing his aria directed at Marguerite. He replaces the hat on his head when he is finished. This sign of respect is noteworthy in that it is indicative of Marguerite being valued, rather than merely used for Faust's own enjoyment. This gesture is unique to this production, which contributes to my notion that although the producers aptly portrayed the existing gender stereotypes, they also took note of the positive developments that occurred in the female gender construct, as the nineteenth century progressed. (Gounod 2004.)

Act III, Scene V

There were no outstanding gender motives found in this short scene (Gounod 2004).

Act III, Scene VI

Marguerite enters the courtyard outside her home with a very average, for the time, attire: a brown skirt, white shirt and black informal hat. Very striking to this production is the enjoyment and, what appears to be, absence of guilt in the portrayal of Marguerite's discovery of the jewels. (Gounod 2004.)

Again, I am prone to believe that this scene serves as a possible representation of a change in the societal mindset of what the female gender construct entailed, and ought to have entailed, in mid-nineteenth-century France. Marguerite is not portrayed as a "holy", sinless, objectified construct, but rather as an average mortal with human vices. (Gounod 2004.)

Act III, Scene VII

No obvious gender ideas are, in my view, delivered in this scene (Gounod 2004).

Act III, Scene VIII

Again, I did not deduce noteworthy gender symbolism here (Gounod 2004).

Act III, Scene IX

In this scene, Marthe is seen pouring a glass of wine for both Méphistophéles *and* herself. It is also she who lures the Devil into her house and not the other way around, as would be expected. Although it is contestable that Marthe is depicted as the evil feminine here (she indulges in sinful behaviour with regard to her Catholic context), I believe one can see this differently as her embodying a liberated woman who is master of her own choices and actions. (Gounod 2004.)

Act III, Scene X

In this production this short scene does not, in my opinion, comment or give critique on gender constructs (Gounod 2004).

Act III, Scene XI

A sense of gender equality and female empowerment is evident. In my opinion, there is in this scene no obvious indication of Marguerite being dominated or brainwashed by male forces. As Méphistophéles casts the spell, Marguerite and Faust are kissing in, what appears to be, an act of mutual enjoyment. When she tells Faust the tragedy of her mother and sister, she is sitting up straight while he rests his head on her lap. Visually she is thus elevated. As was the case in Act III, Scene IV, Faust is again shown to take off his hat as he commences his aria delivered to Marguerite, and puts it back on again as he concludes. (Gounod 2004.)

Instead of staging Marguerite as an innocent victim of male domination, I am likely to believe that she is rather representing the first steps to female empowerment that were being taken in the latter part of the nineteenth century. She seems in control of her own femininity and sexuality. Furthermore, Faust's positioning on her lap, as well as the subsequent gesture as regards his hat, arguably depicts the rise in respect towards females which accompanied their fight for equality and liberation in this era. (Gounod 2004.)

Act III, Scene XII

I did not find conclusive gender-based commentary in this short scene (Gounod 2004).

Act III, Scene XIII

The way in which Marguerite is depicted in this last scene of the act is similar to the staging of Marthe's situation in Act III, Scene IX. Marguerite is visually elevated as she is seen standing at a top window of her house. Faust climbs a staircase that leads to her window. As he arrives, she clearly invites him by gesturing towards the inside of the room. After he has climbed inside, she slowly and contently closes the window. They embrace gracefully. (Gounod 2004.)

I am again likely to believe that the staging of this scene suggests a more positive and liberal view of Marguerite as a woman who is her own decision-maker and controller. An impression of her being objectified, manipulated and dominated by the opposite sex is not at all what I experienced when I watched this. Lustful, promiscuous sex is not implied – rather mutual respect and a mutual intention of committing the act seems evident. The new, alternative constructs of femininity that surfaced during the second half of the nineteenth century are contestably depicted here. (Gounod 2004.)

DISC 2

Act IV, Scenes I & II

Unfortunately these two scenes have been omitted from this production (Gounod 2004).

Act IV, Scene III

A visibly pregnant Marguerite is confronted with Méphistophéles clearly embodying a statue of Jesus. He is surrounded by male dancers who resemble daunting crawling creatures. The church congregation who later passes Marguerite consists of both females and males. Innovatively, Faust is depicted as the organist. Since organ-playing was predominantly associated with the male gender in the nineteenth century, this is an apt portrayal. It is furthermore creative, as well as ambivalent, to include Faust in the church-scene, since he is a non-believer. (Gounod 2004.)

I am of the opinion that the idea of gender equality and/or gender duality is implied. Refreshingly, Méphistophéles's entourage is male, in contrast to the prevalence of females often observed by his side. It is possible that this is an attempt by the producers to depict the changes in the theologically-based gender framework that governed the minds of the nineteenth-century French: women were no longer unfoundedly assumed or expected to be, by default, evil incarnate. The possibility that men could also be of an evil nature were starting to be considered as well. (Gounod 2004.)

Act IV, Scene IV

Although this is not a gender-based aspect, the numerous French flags visible on the stage have, in my opinion, great relevance and importance with regard to this study. The French flags used in this production contribute to the argument that a spectator ought to view *Faust* as an original Gounodian, and hence, a contextually nineteenth-century French creation, as opposed to viewing it in a German context because of the opera's connection with the Goethe play. (Gounod 2004.)

Act IV, Scene V

No gender symbolism was evident in this scene (Gounod 2004).

Act IV, Scene VI

A visibly masculine Méphistophéles in a formal suit with a tailcoat is presented in this scene. In an original way, Faust is depicted as a drug addict. He enters the stage looking unwashed, disillusioned and unsteady on his feet. He stumbles and frantically takes a rubber band to pump the veins in his arm, after which he injects himself with a needle filled with liquid. A sense of relief and content seems to overwhelm him. (Gounod 2004.)

In a very unique and innovative rendering, the producers have succeeded in portraying the male in two very contrasting ways. Méphistophéles is embodying the assumed, expected and praised male stereotype that exhibits control, pride and self-assurance. Faust, on the other hand, is clearly lacking control and self-respect. He comes across as pathetic and dependent. The portrayal of Faust is very distinctive as it stands in contrast to the masculinity advocated in the nineteenth century, in this scene represented by Méphistophéles. In my opinion this could be a means by which the producers want to comment on the unreasonable gender “standards” that societies, in this case specifically the nineteenth-century French society, impose onto people. To present Faust as pathetic and dependent therefore reminds the audience that gender constructs are enforced *performances* and that anyone has the ability to “fail”. Consequently gender-connected characteristics, like dependency, can essentially be experienced by any sex in any context. (Gounod 2004.)

Act IV, Scene VII

In ironic (and, in my opinion, deliberately planned) contrast to the previous scene, Faust “restores” the nineteenth-century construct of masculinity, by participating in a violent battle of strength with Valentin, and additionally, stepping out as victor, killing the soldier. (Gounod 2004.)

Act IV, Scene VIII

No noteworthy gender symbolism was found in this scene (Gounod 2004).

Act V, Scene I

Faust and Méphistophéles enter the stage, with the former again appearing very worn out, frightened and unsteady on his feet. The Devil seems to have adopted an androgynous image: he is completely covered under a black cloak, only his face being visible. (Gounod 2004.)

I believe it to be a possibility that with Faust's behaviour deviating from the "prescribed" nineteenth-century masculinity, the producers again comment on enforced gender constructs and their *performative* nature. It is also justifiable that the thought-constructs regarding gender identities could have become less restrictive as the century developed, and that "un-masculine" behaviour like Faust's might have been encountered more often. The androgynous presentation of Méphistophéles again suggests that genders can be, and are, *performed* and thus fluid. (Gounod 2004.)

Act V, Scene II

Women, representing matriarchal figures of the past ascend from underneath the stage. They convey a message of power, wealth and beauty. Méphistophéles takes off his black cloak, to reveal a feminine persona: he is wearing a glittery ball gown and a diamond tiara on his head. Faust is given a blue liquid to drink which clearly has an intoxicative effect on him – he suddenly looks enamoured and aroused. (Gounod 2004.)

The portrayal of the women of stature at the beginning of this scene is refreshing in that they are not, in my opinion, presented as objectified sex symbols. Rather, their power and dominance are highlighted by sceptres and large crowns. In other words, they are presented respectfully. On the other hand, it is very possible to argue that Méphistophéles's own feminine *performance* implies the evil feminine. Ambivalence with regard to the portrayal of the female is thus present here. Faust's intoxication again suggests dependency and lack of

control – characteristics that were more associated with femininity than masculinity in the nineteenth century. Hence, this scene exhibits ideas of gender duality, gender *performativity*, the evil feminine, as well as the empowered female. Although the gender message here appears rich in ambivalence, these are all constructs that, at some stage, had a place in the French nineteenth-century gender framework – whether judged, feared, imposed on, or accepted. (Gounod 2004.)

The ballet now follows. The first ballet dancer to enter the stage is a male dressed as a female in a white tutu, performing a routine representative of feminine gestures. He is joined by female (in sex and gender) dancers dressed similarly to him. The ensuing act has a female dancer, representing a pregnant Marguerite, as central figure. More female dancers enter and they proceed to ridicule her. The Marguerite-emulating ballerina now dances with a male, dressed in a typical masculine suit. He seems to handle her disrespectfully and eventually she is dragged off the stage by him. The “ghost” of Valentin now enters, surrounded by the female dancers in white tutus. They are depicted as victimizing him. The latter leaves the stage and a routine of explicit sexual acts are suggested by couples of female and male dancers. After this, Marguerite is seen with a short, stocky haircut, carrying a baby in her arms. The female dancers in white tutus take the baby from her and put it in a coffin, after which they run away. Faust is shown looking very upset and worried over Marguerite. (Gounod 2004.)

Again, it is impossible to single out one governing gender idea. Rather, the ballet is, as is the case with the first half of the scene, representative of great ambiguity as regards the representation of femininity and masculinity. The presentation of a female-dressed male dancer was possibly a means employed by the producers to comment and critique on the overstated masculinity that governed the male gender in nineteenth-century France. Alternatively, it can merely be another reminder of the superficial nature of gender, in the sense that it is a *performance*, and therefore has the ability to alter itself. Presenting a male in this manner is also indicative of the more liberal view of gender constructs that were starting to emerge by the mid-nineteenth century in France. (Gounod 2004.)

The Marguerite-embodying dancer being ridiculed by the other female ballerinas serves as a depiction of the scrutiny and judgement prevalent when a person behaves contrary to the

gender stereotype enforced onto them. The ensuing routine between “Marguerite” and the male dancer portrays the objectification of and dominance over women that were still common in French nineteenth-century communities. (Gounod 2004.)

Contrasting with the routine just discussed, we now encounter a representation of a male being governed by women. The ballet dancers victimizing the ghost of Valentin is symbolic of the evil feminine, a negative and biased stereotype especially dominant in this era’s religious sphere. The following enactment of sexual deeds corresponds to the concept of the evil feminine, as the latter is representative of seduction and lustful sin. From the other point of view, this explicit routine might again be an indication of the objectification and dominance of women by men. (Gounod 2004.)

I am of the opinion that the short, unkempt haircut which Marguerite presents in the last part of the scene might be symbolic of the “murdering” of the stereotyped femininity initiated by her act of sin. This is evident considering she stands out from the other female dancers on stage who all seem to represent the “ideal” femininity – suggested by their long hair. Very striking and unique to this production is Faust looking authentically empathetic and concerned when he sees Marguerite. I believe it to be a possibility that Faust is herewith distinguished as a male who does not conform to the stereotype of men viewing women as controllable objects. Rather, he has a deeper sense of respect for her. This correlates with the surfacing of a more equal treatment of the female in the latter part of the nineteenth century in France. (Gounod 2004.)

Act V, Scene III

As is the case in the other two productions discussed, male-associated characteristics like dominance and control are automatically implied by the prison-setting. A huge gate encompasses the stage, separating the audience from Marguerite. Worth mentioning is the presence of other female inmates seemingly sharing a cell with Marguerite. (Gounod 2010.)

This might serve as another focus on the evil feminine – stressed even more by the number of women in the cell and the depiction of them quarrelling among themselves. The females are

however dominated and controlled by male forces, suggested by the masculine setting. (Gounod 2004.)

Act V, Scene IV

The gender ideas of the previous scene are applicable to this scene as well (Gounod 2004).

Act V, Scene V

Faust and Méphistophéles enter the stage. The former still appears worn out, agitated and unwashed. Méphistophéles has his original “gentleman” outfit on, looking in control. It is evident that Marguerite is tormented by delusions. (Gounod 2004.)

Faust is again presented as embodying an unconventional masculinity that exhibits so-called “feminine” traits such as loss of control, instability and dependency: He depends on Méphistophéles and intoxicative substances. In contrast, Méphistophéles represents an expected and praised masculine stereotype of the nineteenth century. Another negative gender-type almost exclusively, and discriminatively, assigned to the female sex during this era is here portrayed by Marguerite, namely madness. Three different gender stereotypes of the nineteenth century, whether approved of, or judged, are therefore evident. (Gounod 2004.)

Act V, Scene VI

Faust opens the gate for Marguerite and she is delighted to see him – her madness is apparent. Very noticeable, though, is the sense of control and dominance that she displays. She proceeds to stand on a podium in the centre of the stage with her arms outstretched, Faust dependently hanging onto one of them. She is oblivious to Faust’s cries. As a ray of light descends from the organ onto her, Faust leaves her arm and goes to the other side of the stage where his original study of the first act is visible. Méphistophéles and his black-dressed followers of the first act stand behind Marguerite, after which the former descends into the stage as his entourage frantically tries to back away from the light. (Gounod 2004.)

This scene is, in my opinion, filled with gender symbolism. Despite being labelled into different nineteenth-century femininities throughout the opera (the last of which is madness), Marguerite manages to free herself from these restrictive stereotypes in order to step out as conqueror. I believe the producers established a binding motive through the recurrence of certain ideas used in the first act. Considering my argument of Act I, *Introduction* (that light could be connected with femininity and in turn also to the Christian God), feminine redemption and liberation is implied in this scene. It is a possibility that this could be symbolic of the struggle that the women of nineteenth-century France had to endure in order to gain empowerment and freedom from controlling and inhibitive patriarchal forces. (Gounod 2004.)

As mentioned before, Faust's presentation of dependency and weakness could be viewed as commentary and critique on the restrictive masculinity that dominated nineteenth-century French men. The masculinity of power, authority and control could be regarded as similarly inhibitive and controlling over *men*, as was the stereotyped femininity of domesticity, docility, passivity and dependence over women. Faust's deviation from this masculine norm can either imply the surfacing of less-controlled and enforced gender constructs, that emerged during the latter part of the era, or it might be indicative of the ridiculing of a man who did not fit the "prescribed" gender of his time. (Gounod 2004.)

Based on my argument of Act I, *Introduction*, Méphistophéles is again connected to darkness and subsequently to masculinity. (Gounod 2004.)

Apotheose

Faust is presented similarly in Act I, Scene I. He appears aged and weak, and is crying. (Gounod 2004.)

As indicated in my discussion of the previous scene, Faust is portrayed as deviating from the masculinity expected of him. His embodiment of defeat might indicate female victory, since Marguerite steps out as victor. (Gounod 2004.)

This production is therefore unique in its portrayal of gender, since the female is not depicted as a victim, rather she is independent-minded and the ultimate triumphant bearer of her own decisions and actions. Creatively, Faust embodies an alternative (for the time) masculinity in that he exhibits a sense of respect and sympathy towards Marguerite, whilst emulating so-called “feminine” traits.

6.4.3 Gounod: *Faust* (Teatro Coccia, Novara, 2005)

Despite a visibly low budget, the producer and director of this Italian production, Beppe de Tomasi, introduced unique symbolism in his creation – especially with regard to the use of colour and staging decisions. It is indicated as set in sixteenth-century Germany, although the costuming is inconsistent with the period, since twentieth-century as well as medieval attire is prevalent. I suggest that this might contribute to the universal relevance conveyed by many aspects in Gounod’s *Faust*. The five acts of the opera are divided into four acts in this production, indicated by the Italian terms *Secondo Atto* (Act II), *Terzo Atto* (Act III) and *Quatro Atto* (Act IV), appearing on the screen at the relevant times. As mentioned in Chapter 6.1, I persist in referring to the scenes as they follow in the score. (Gounod 2005.)

Act I, Introduction

In this production we do not encounter a staged *Introduction*. Rather, the viewer is shown footage of the orchestra, alternating with scenes from the opera, shown as a slide-show. Therefore, gender deductions cannot be made.

Act I, Scene I

The curtain opens with the setting of Faust’s study. An old Faust is sitting on a coffin-like casket holding a goblet with poison. The casket and painted bookshelves serve as the only props on stage. It is possible that the obvious representation of books indicates masculinity, as the latter and education were more associated and assumed with men, than femininity was with the art of learning. When the off-stage townswomen are heard singing their morning song, an image of a pretty young girl, stretching her arms as if she had just awoken, appears

on stage. A muscular farm worker with an axe is presented when the male burghers are heard. In my opinion, this depicts the stereotyped genders of the townspeople in the opera: the women are unproductive and passive, but admired for their beauty, while the men are associated with strength and productivity as they contribute to the economy. (Gounod 2005.)

Act I, Scene II

Méphistophéles makes his first appearance on stage, dressed in a bright red cloak, with a black shirt and red tie underneath. He has long black hair and carries a sword. It is thus interesting to note that he does not fit the costume-description, used in the text. After Faust is shown a vision of Marguerite, he is transformed into a younger version of himself. There is a clear visual link between Faust and the Devil, since Faust now wears a black suit with a bright red shirt and black tie underneath. The scene ends with Faust being led off stage by what appears to be nymphs (female ballet dancers in light-brown leotards draped with flowers). (Gounod 2005.)

I believe the choice of red as the colour by which the spectator ought to associate evil (Méphistophéles, and arguably also Faust) can have several possible symbolic meanings. Red is the colour of fire which is an element strongly connected to the devil and hell – the eternal destination of sinners. In a more metaphorical sense, the use of the colour red reminds one of love which can imply seduction and sinful promiscuity, which in turn are acts generally associated with the female by patriarchal societies. These deductions have the potential to imply a gender duality in Méphistophéles – of which the “fairer” gender comes in the form of the evil feminine. This is greatly possible as the nymphs who lead Faust at the end of the scene are controlled by Méphistophéles, thereby emphasising the female. (Gounod 2005.)

Act II, Scene I

The staging of this scene lends itself to many possible interpretations. In what I believe to be a very original approach, Méphistophéles is embodying (in spite of his presence not being indicated in the score) a puppet and/or choir master who controls the townspeople. They are represented as robotic puppets, all wearing similar masks. The men are exclusively dressed in bland colours like grey, brown and black, while the women’s colours are similar with the

exception of bright red, worn by many. The obvious inclusion of red in the women's outfits supports my argument of female symbolism (evil, though) attached to the colour. In my opinion the scene serves as commentary on the societal control that dominated nineteenth-century communities, and the biased gender stereotypes conditioned into the minds of the people. (Gounod 2005.)

Act II, Scene II

This scene introduces the spectator to a great departure from Gounod's score – a *male* (tenor) Siébel. It is either possible that the director of this production felt it to be more authentic (thereby disagreeing with Gounod) when considering the nineteenth-century patriarchal milieu, or, a competent mezzo-soprano could not be found to fill the role. Either way, I do not see this as a very professional decision since it directly contradicts the score and may have the potential to inhibit the message of gender ambivalence that Gounod aimed to convey with his opera *Faust*. Valentin and Wagner are predictably, and accurately (in my view), staged as stereotypical nineteenth-century males, although dressed in formal twentieth-century brown military suits. (Gounod 2005.)

Act II, Scene III

This scene is staged to suit the libretto and score, consequently no alternative gender messages are delivered. Masculinity reigns. (Gounod 2005.)

Act II, Scene IV

Méphistophéles is, again rather originally, positioned in an aisle of the theatre. It is possible that this can imply that the audience is also being controlled – both by a male figure of power and dominance and, unconventionally, by evil femininity. (Gounod 2005.)

Act II, Scene V

“Spectacle” is the word that would sum up this scene. Méphistophéles is still set in the aisle, embodying the role of puppet-master. On stage an array of bizarre identities are presented. A man on stilts, presumably portraying a clown, is in the centre of the stage, dressed in a jacket with stuffed toys attached to it. Around him are female dancers either in traditional folk dresses or (in stark contrast to the former) in eccentric, brightly coloured dance/cheerleading outfits. In my opinion this depiction appropriately fits the theory of *performativity* discussed in Chapter 3.2: People perform certain identities and gender stereotypes, and although they may convince themselves that their “performance” is authentic and original, it is essentially controlled (Méphistophéles being the metaphor for the latter). (Gounod 2005.)

Marguerite makes her entrance, interestingly dressed entirely in black – a black dress, black shoes and black head scarf. It is a possibility that the director might have chosen this specific attire as it corresponds to that of a nun. This would make sense, considering Faust’s objectification of her as a pure and pious, almost “holy” being (see Chapter 6.2, Act III, Scene IV). (Gounod 2005.)

The townspeople return to the stage, now dressed in evening wear. The men are wearing black suits, ties and white shirts; while the ladies shine in evening dresses, extravagant jewellery and fascinators. This is, to my mind, another portrayal of gender *performativity*. (Gounod 2005.)

Act III, Entr’acte

Méphistophéles is on stage with, what seems to be, red roses falling on him from above. This supports the idea that he is metaphorically connected to love, but to the lust side of it which involves seduction and promiscuity. A link to the feminine is again evident in that flowers are stereotypically associated with the female rather than the male. (Gounod 2005.)

Secondo Atto

Act III, Scenes I – V

Apart from the deviation from the score and libretto by presenting a Siébel who is male in sex, there are, rather disappointingly, no other outstanding gender aspects, with regard to staging, that are original or unique in this production. The genders are portrayed as would be expected. (Gounod 2005.)

Act III, Scene VI

What stands out in the presentation of this scene is the overt focus on Marguerite's sudden vanity after she has put on the jewels – she is fixated on her transformed image in the mirror. This can serve as commentary on the perception of beauty that is enforced by societal and cultural gender stereotypes. This stereotype suggests that natural, authentic femininity is not enough in order for a woman to be regarded (even by herself) as beautiful or desirable and that she therefore must “perform” (with the help of external resources like jewellery) in order to be accepted. (Gounod 2005.)

Act III, Scene VII

This short scene is staged closely to the score and libretto. Hence, I did not derive new production-based gender ideas from it. (Gounod 2005.)

Act III, Scene VIII

Again it is apparent to me that the evil feminine is a highlighted concept in this particular production. Marthe, who is often portrayed as an older, conservative lady, is here the representation of a vain, attention-seeking, seductress. This is furthermore evident when she proceeds to steal Marguerite's jewels – an action not prescribed in the text. (Gounod 2005.)

Act III, Scene X

Méphistophéles's connection with femininity is evident. As he casts the spell of seduction, he is surrounded by female nymphs. (Gounod 2005.)

Act III, Scene XI – XII

Strikingly, Marguerite and Faust are now dressed in white cloaks resembling the cut of clergy-attire. I would suggest that this indicates their chaste relationship until now, and can also serve as a reminder of the strong sense of control that the church, in particular the Catholic church, had on societies in the nineteenth century. (Gounod 2005.)

Act III, Scene XIII

The idea of Méphistophéles as puppet-master returns as he succeeds (by a mere raise of his hand) in transforming Marguerite into a controllable, catatonic-like figure, just as she was about to finally refuse Faust's advances. Once she surrenders, the nymphs approach her and strip her of the white cloak, leaving her in a revealing, white gypsy-style outfit. Faust takes off his shirt and is left with his white pants and suspenders. The two lovers embrace each other and as they lie down on the ground the stage is coloured bright red (by means of lighting) and they are covered with a sheet. I believe this to be an exceptionally fit way of portraying the extent (in the eyes of the church and its followers) of the sin that Marguerite is about to commit. The red is, as argued, indicative of the evil feminine. It is however possible to suggest that the evil feminine is in actual fact Méphistophéles, because it is he who (dressed in the symbolic red) plans, controls and initiates this act. Interestingly, a sense of power is thus given to the female (in a negative sense, though). (Gounod 2005.)

(In the following act we find a shuffling of the scenes' order as they appear in the score. In this production, Act IV starts with Scene IV of the score, with Scenes V, VI, VII and VIII following. After the latter, Scene III of the score serves as the end of the act – thereby omitting Scenes I and II.)

Terzo Atto

Act IV, Scenes “I” – “III” (IV – VI)

In my opinion these scenes are staged in accordance with the score and libretto, and therefore do not convey new gender ideas that have not been discussed in Chapters 6.4.1 and 6.4.2. (Gounod 2005.)

Act IV, Scene “IV” (VII)

In the staging of this scene Valentin is depicted as drunk (descending unsteadily from the stairs of the house with a drinking cup in his hand). He is wearing a white robe which he later takes off when he draws his sword to fight against Faust. I believe it is possible that commentary is given on the unfair discrimination that reigns over women’s sinful acts, in comparison with those of men. Marguerite’s sins are highlighted and forever held against her, while something like drunkenness in a man (also a sin) goes by unnoticed but not judged. Hence the white robe – a metaphor for purity. (Gounod 2005.)

Act IV, Scene “V” (VIII)

Articulating my argument of Scene “IV” (VII), Marguerite enters the stage dressed in a bright red dress and joins Marthe and the townspeople by Valentin’s side as he approaches death. When it is clear he has died, Valentin is covered with a white sheet and taken off the stage. To my mind, the contrast of the two outstanding colours, red and white, is symbolic of sin and purity, respectively. This reflects the unfair bias that also governs gender distinctions. (Gounod 2005.)

Act IV, Scene “VI” (III)

The staging of this church-scene lends itself to fascinating deductions unique to this production. By the end of the previous scene, Marguerite collapsed, consequently she is now lying on the floor. Two joined tables surrounded by a number of female ballet dancers, frozen

and dressed in white leotards, are present at the back of the stage. Méphistophéles enters the stage and proceeds to go stand among them. When he calls upon the evil spirits to frighten and taunt Marguerite, the ballet dancers start moving – suggesting that they are the embodiments of the evil spirits. This aspect of movement together with the gender of the dancers creates a connection to Méphistophéles of exploiting the body (which theologically is often employed as a metaphor for hedonistic sins) and sexuality. The concept of the evil feminine and a gender duality in the Devil are thus relevant.

I believe that as the scene progresses, a portrayal of The Last Supper is symbolised: a male ballet dancer who closely resembles the suggested appearance of Jesus Christ (long brown hair, beard and dressed in a white robe) is now lying in between the two (now split) tables. By the end of the scene he stands up and joins Méphistophéles in pointing at Marguerite as the Devil curses her. Although highly debatable, I am of the opinion that Marguerite is here compared to Judas who betrayed Jesus. Jesus' pointing at her is symbolic of him knowing of her misdeeds “against” him. This symbolism might be indicative of the view of many believers that God and his Son are non-forgiving and revengeful. It corresponds with the traits of the male Yahweh discussed in Chapter 3.6. (Gounod 2005.)

Quarto Atto

Act V, Scene I

The first scene of this act can be viewed as an introduction and preparation for the ensuing ballet scene. The dominance of femininity and female sexuality is immediately evident with female ballet dancers in skin-coloured leotards present on stage. Some of them are in cages which, in my opinion, suggests objectification and discrimination as a cage is symbolic of another entity (in this case, the male) dominating and controlling the person or thing behind bars. The latter is thus entirely vulnerable and robbed of any rights. In the case of a woman, her body becomes the property of whoever has imprisoned her, and she is a fixed object of gaze considering she cannot flee. Interestingly, when Méphistophéles and Faust enter, the female ballet dancers leave the stage. They are replaced with one male ballet dancer who is holding a red rose. Since this ballet dancer's act coincides with the appearance of the Devil and Faust (the two male characters who, for the most part, seem to exercise power and

control), one can argue that male dominance is suggested. On the other hand, the routine by the male ballet dancer might be representative of the power of seduction that the evil feminine exerts, considering that he is greatly preoccupied by the rose (arguably a symbol for femininity). (Gounod 2005.)

Act V, Scene II

The “*Chant bachique*” in this scene is one extended exhibition of female sexuality: seduction, promiscuity, lust and bodily objectification. The focus on the female is very clear as the vast majority of dancers on stage during this scene is female. There is a contradiction evident here in that the female is either portrayed as the instigator and controller, or as the subordinate, vulnerable, subjected. The former is portrayed by the prominence of a long rope being pulled back and forth by female dancers while one solo ballerina performs a sexuality suggestive routine. Afterwards, ominous-looking female dancers with strange masks appear, being a likely referral to the evil feminine. A female dancer embodying a beautiful bird in a cage is now the centre of attention – a shift in metaphor thus present with the female now in a position of vulnerability and objectification. The scene ends with the representation of sexual acts by couples of male and female dancers. (Gounod 2005.)

Act V, Scene III

The most outstanding of this scene is Marguerite (she embodies a vision of herself, though) appearing in a red dress holding a baby draped in white sheets. This clearly symbolises Marguerite’s act of infanticide. The red dress is, in my opinion, not only indicative of the crime (blood), but is a reference to the female, specifically the *evil* female. This causes an interesting contradiction in the sense that there exists a correlation between the Devil (red cloak) and Marguerite, despite the fact that the vision of her holding a baby reminds one strongly of Marian iconography in which the Virgin is often depicted holding the baby Jesus. (Gounod 2005.)

Act V, Scene IV

I believe the idea in this scene was to depict the unusual situation of a female, one who was once admired for her purity and piety, locked-up in a prison cell. The latter is more-often associated with violent, dirty, strong, aggressive men than with young, fair maidens. This contradiction is strikingly staged with two very masculine muscled men (presumably prison wardens) on the one side of the stage, while Marguerite is lying motionless on the other side. The one is holding an axe and the other a snare drum. This staging is not only indicative of masculine stereotyping (the axe suggesting strength and violence, and the snare drum, the military), but also male dominance and righteousness over female subordination and wrongdoing. (Gounod 2005.)

Act V, Scene V

Gender duality and contradiction is again present here: a male ballet dancer holding a red rose (symbolic of love and possibly lust/seduction) opens the scene, with Méphistophéles and Faust later entering the stage. When Marguerite sings of her and Faust's love, dancers depicting a romance are dancing in the background. (Gounod 2005.)

Act V, Scene VI

The staging and choreography in this scene is, in my opinion, very convincingly executed. As Marguerite starts to decline Faust's offer to re-unite, the latter and Méphistophéles move all the more to the back of the stage, as Marguerite, in contrast, moves forward. Faust and the Devil also seem very disillusioned and unstable in their movements. Hence, visually it is made clear who has triumphed. Not only is the character Marguerite revealed as conqueror, but she also represents the female gender, overcoming male dominance. Since she receives redemption, Marguerite consequently parts with the label of evil femininity that governed her, and exchanges it for an embodiment of purified strength and independence – possibly symbolic of the developments in female empowerment that started to surface by the middle of the nineteenth century. (Gounod 2005.)

Apotheose

The “purified strength and independence” which I referred to in my discussion of Act V, Scene VI is made even more visible with Marguerite now climbing onto a pedestal after which she proceeds in wrapping herself in a white sheet. Faust is surrounded by the female nymphs who lead him to the same coffin-like casket encountered in Act I, Scene I upon which the goblet (presumably filled with poison) is placed. The curtain closes as Faust reaches for the goblet and proceeds to drink from it. In my opinion this ending contributes to the idea that Faust is eventually outwitted by women. (Gounod 2005.)

6.5 Summary

By means of the analyses done in this chapter, I deduce that *Faust* is a text of incredible depth and worth regarding gender. All the deconstructed media needed to actuate the work are telling of a unique, multi-faceted, unconventional and accommodating gender supposition. Although some inconsistencies in the portrayal of male and female concepts and connections were expectedly found, it is clear that certain ideas are repeatedly and holistically applied throughout the work. This gives me reason to believe that these ideas are not merely accidental or subjectively hermeneutical – it is justifiable that they were intended by Gounod and his librettists and, for the most part, faithfully staged by the respective opera producers and directors of the performances discussed in this chapter.

A controversial gender-duality is suggested in the Devil and in God. The Christian death of redemption has a strong feminine representation, while the “secular” death is more connected to masculinity. Stereotypical nineteenth-century masculinity is evident in references to Valentin, his fellow townsmen and soldiers. Faust and Marguerite are unique gender incarnations characteristic of not merely one, but different, contrasting, and even ambivalent, masculinities and femininities, respectively. Similar to the Devil and God, Siébel exemplifies a dual gender identity, with the “female” being a portrayal of the liberal, independent woman emerging in mid nineteenth-century France.

Ingenious, though, is the message of ubiquity and universality, as regards gender constructs, evident in the costuming and set design of the DVD productions. It is contestable that

although the representation of gender in *Faust* is related to its French nineteenth-century environment, many of these stereotypes are still of relevance to today's societies. This then furthermore adds important worth to *Faust*, as it can be related to contemporary norms of femininity and masculinity throughout the world.

Hence, I cannot refrain in advocating that with *Faust*, Gounod managed to deliver a representation of his conservative gendered environment, whilst simultaneously liberating the rigid construct of gender by means of score, text and stage.

7 CONCLUSION

In this research my aim was to highlight, interpret and discuss the portrayals of gender in the opera *Faust* by Gounod in order to deduce whether and, if indeed, how the composer conveyed significant, unconventional and/or liberal messages regarding gender and its relation to its Catholic, French nineteenth-century context. As a means of achieving this goal, I committed to deconstruct the work, so as to analyze each component from a gender perspective. This then enabled me to derive common and holistic ideas that were found to be prevalent throughout the different spheres of the composition.

When objectively taking the entire work into consideration, I can conclude that Gounod did indeed produce a unique gem of gender significance with *Faust*. What is most outstanding to me is the array of genders portrayed, in some cases even multiple ones in a singular character. In my view this is specifically significant when one acknowledges the rigid gender milieu in which the work was constructed. Very wisely and successfully, though, Gounod did not *only* suggest the controversial, unconventional, liberal, *avant-garde* and futurist in his gender representations, but he also displayed, commented and critiqued on the existing norms of masculinity and femininity dominating the era. Hence, nineteenth-century gender stereotypes, gender duality, gender ambivalence, as well as gender equality come to the fore in this fascinating opera. I shall now discuss these aspects.

In my view, the most comprehensive and intrinsically complex character as regards gender is the female lead, and arguably the motivation of all action in the plot, Marguerite. Marguerite is a singular embodiment of a multiple femininities. She is at once the nineteenth-century French prototype female, exemplary of domesticity, piety, modesty and nurture; a feared, judged and condemned femininity of evil characterized by sexual promiscuity, lust, seduction/manipulation and hedonism; an incomprehensible “perverse” femininity, articulated by her act of infanticide; and a rising, but controversial and still unconventional, femininity of independence and liberation which is evident in the denouement.

Although gender might be viewed as a so-called “secular” concept, the character of Marguerite is also representative of theologically based suppositions with regard to

femininity. The “initial” Marguerite (before the seduction) shares many character traits with the Virgin Mary of the Catholic Christian denomination. Due to the opera’s predominant Easter content, it is also viable to suggest a connection between Marguerite and Jesus Christ – both judged and persecuted, and the literal destiny of both being death, although this “death” takes on a living and liberated symbolic meaning.

I have derived that Gounod’s portrayal of Marguerite might have pursued the articulation of Elohim (female) in God, which is characteristic of unconditional love, care and forgiveness. Connected to this idea is the hypothesis that Gounod perhaps aimed to comment on the hypocritical and ironic dogma as regards gender that arguably dominated the nineteenth-century French Catholic Church. This dogma focused greatly on sins committed by the female gender, with male enacted sins in many respects overlooked or merely accepted. In the libretto the act of sexual “immorality” that Marguerite committed is judged and condemned to the highest degree, whereas Faust’s mutual share in the incident is hardly referred to or commented on. The unjust bias in judgement of sin is furthermore evident in the portrayal of excessive alcohol abuse and sexual objectification among the soldiers and townsmen. This is clearly accepted and not even viewed as something worth commenting on by the Catholic society of the opera.

When viewing Marguerite as a possible representation of the female influences in Gounod’s own life, it is justifiable to view her as a combination of Gounod’s mother (Victoire Gounod, née Lemachois), Pauline Viardot, Fanny Hensel, as well as his wife Anna Zimmermann – however disparate these femininities might seem. Marguerite’s domesticity and maternal nature correlates to the roles Lemachois and Zimmermann fulfilled in the composer’s life. Independence, leadership (I view Marguerite as such, since she essentially controls the plot), and eventual victory and liberation is in turn characteristics of the “later” Marguerite, traits similar to that found in Viardot and Hensel.

The idea of gender *performativity* is thus evident in the character of Marguerite. She is evidence of the belief that gender identities are changeable and that a gender embodiment at any given time cannot by default predict future actions and behaviour. Similar to Marguerite, the character Faust exemplifies a rare phenomenon for his social context: he is both the nineteenth-century masculine stereotype, as well as the conveyer of a disparate masculinity.

When compared to the other townsmen, Faust's inclination towards female objectification is corresponding to theirs. He is an educated man, which contributes to the French nineteenth-century belief of males being cognitively more advanced than their female counterparts. However, in other aspects Faust deviates greatly from his male societal norm. He is non-Catholic, and is noticeably apathetic to his country's fate since he is not a soldier and does not take part in the patriotic merriment. From the start of the opera Faust is depicted as a loner and outsider – unlike the group-oriented men represented in the opera.

Faust's masculinity is furthermore unique when compared to the Faust encountered in Goethe's work. Not only does Gounod's Faust not enjoy the centre of attention, but he is not in the least as overtly lustful. As seen in the analysis of the DVD productions, the Gounodian Faust's feelings towards Marguerite can in some instances be interpreted as authentically loving, respectful and empathetic – not merely objectifying as is arguably the case in Goethe.

The most telling deviation from the male construct of the nineteenth century is, however, Faust's fate: He is non-victorious – in fact, he is conquered by a female – and he steps out defeated rather than heroic. He is clearly dependent (on Méphistophéles) and not in control of his destiny.

I believe that with Faust, Gounod illustrated that, similar to femininity, masculinity is not necessarily stagnant and fixed. It is possible that the composer wanted to give commentary on the rigid nineteenth-century belief that only certain “prescribed” characteristics are eligible for the construct of “masculinity”. He did this by depicting that a biologically male person's gender can differ from the dominant model, and that other masculinities are always available to embody.

It is evident in all the media analyzed for this study that, different to the characters of Marguerite and Faust, Méphistophéles embodies both male and female genders – not just different stereotypes of either. The typical masculinity of his milieu is depicted in many of Méphistophéles's traits: he dominates, controls, dictates and uses violence to attain certain goals. He is thus an incarnation of power. Very interestingly though, this power that he exerts is often conveyed in “feminine” forms. A very prevalent concept throughout the opera is one of seduction/manipulation. Seduction is generally, and this was also the case in the nineteenth

century, associated with the female, contributing to the idea of evil femininity. Considering the repeated relation suggested between seduction and Méphistophéles in the opera, a femininity is therefore ascribed to him. This gender duality has a fascinating hermeneutical possibility involving *performativity*: I propose that through the character of Méphistophéles, Gounod aimed to portray how the “altering” of a gender could entail the gain of different “powers”. Although Méphistophéles utilises both of the stereotyped genders’ characteristics negatively (to the detriment of others), one can deduce a positive notion of gender equality. Both supposed “male” as well as “female” constructs could serve as possible sources of power and dominance – hence, not only masculinity, as was believed by many of the nineteenth-century French.

On an entirely different, perhaps more obvious note, Gounod also contributed in initiating a more unconventional, less rigid framework of gender and its relation to theological entities.

In contrast to the other main characters in *Faust*, Valentin personifies the normative, singular masculine identity of nineteenth-century France. He is a patriotic soldier, a Catholic, and a staunch supporter of the subordinate, domestic, chaste and nurturing view of women. However, what I find conspicuous is that Valentin (the strong, authoritative, domineering model of masculinity) is the one character directly being defeated. This serves as undeniable commentary on the irony and spectacle of enforced gender identities. Valentin’s extreme judgement and denunciation of Marguerite’s “offense”, which is in itself wrongful conduct in a Catholic sense, perhaps suggests that, as regards sinning, there is no gender bias. In this respect all genders are thus equal.

A character especially indicative of the articulation of, and commentary on, gender constructs, is Siébel. As observed in the comparison to Goethe’s work, the entire role of Siébel was transformed into one of significant complexity as regards gender representation. The decision to create a breeches role is, in my opinion, already telling of a non-accidental thought process regarding the symbolizing of masculinity and femininity in *Faust*. Besides the inevitable gender ambivalence that a breeches role creates, Siébel’s character (as in personality traits, behaviour, etc.) is articulate of the feminine. This femininity that “she” conveys is in itself fascinating, since it seems to be a combination of certain stereotypical female characteristics, as well as controversial and unconventional ones. Suiting the

stereotyped femininity of “her” milieu, “she” is presented as a character with little self-confidence, she does not show any domineering or authoritative behaviour, and “she” is caring and sympathetic. “She” does not seem to reflect a sense of belonging to “her” male community – “she” is not a soldier, does not partake in violence, does not contribute to the objectification of women, and is also never depicted in any way related to supposed “male” pastimes like drinking and politics. The pinnacle of Siébel’s role in the plot is furthermore associated with a posy – in my opinion, a clear symbolization of the feminine. Siébel as the possible embodiment of the newly surfacing female construct of the later nineteenth century is typified by her independence (both physically and intellectually) and “otherness”. I believe Siébel to be the possible operatic representation of the controversial George Sand: both “female” and “non-female”.

Apart from the “female” theory that I suggest, the gender ambivalence in Siébel could also be symptomatic of an androgynous identity. I believe this possibility to be a rather ironic idea, since it, in my view, then essentially ridicules the whole concept of gender, by proposing that a gender construct is both indicative of everything *and* nothing – it represents culture, religion, era and social beliefs, while it simultaneously bears no meaning, since it is *made* and therefore without *authentic* intrinsic value. Alternatively, a proposed androgynous character like Siébel sheds light on the supposition that one *can* be an entity without necessarily being a gender.

God is not performed as a physical character in *Faust* but, as I have discussed, I think the various references to Her/Him contribute significantly to the gender symbolism and theological commentary in the opera. Gounod articulated Yahweh and Elohim, the respective masculine and feminine manifestations of the Christian God, very inventively through both libretto and score. Since Her/His masculinity is universally acknowledged as the norm, the female representations of God in the opera are specifically unique and telling of the liberal and unconventional gender ideas that Gounod conveyed when considering his societal context.

It is justifiable to deduce that Gounod is critiquing the conservative and gender-discriminatory belief-system that governed the Catholic Church in nineteenth-century France by not only proposing some aspects of femininity to God, but also suggesting a much more

accommodating and liberal God than what is often doctored by the church. Marguerite's redemption indicates an unbiased and equally forgiving God as regards the gender of a sinner.

I am of the opinion that, theologically, Gounod perhaps suggested gender to be, or ought to be, both significant *and* irrelevant.

The discerning use of specific melodic techniques, instrumentation and rhythm, to name but a few, in combination with a greatly adapted and context-relevant text, contributes to create an operatic milestone of complex gender symbolism.

Through my research I have concluded, rather unexpectedly, that Gounod did not focus on female empowerment, feminism and female liberation. Rather, his goal was much more intricate: In my opinion, Gounod aimed, and succeeded, in creating an incredibly accessible work portraying the ambiguous, expected, controversial, singular, dual, contradictory, *performative*, rigid, liberal, conventional, unconventional, secular and theological entirety of gender. The post-Napoleonic, Catholic France of the nineteenth century harboured a composer who was neither male, female, masculine nor feminine. Instead, it was home to a multi-gendered, original contributor to not only the musical canon but also to every *performance* delivered daily, whether in suit or dress.

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