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**Man of glass**

Abstract:

*Man of glass* is a script about delusion and obsession, sanity and insanity, and the line between the two. The story unfolds against the backdrop of fin de siècle Paris, a turbulent period marked by the rise of the new ‘sciences of mind’ – psychology and psychiatry – and the development of new ‘scientific’ theories of madness and criminality. Disgusted with the mercantilism and vulgarity of the bourgeoisie, Gaspard de Ronsard, a decadent, neurotic aristocrat, impulsively assumes the identity of a stranger, who might be the serial killer that has been terrorizing Paris, only to find out that someone else has assumed his own identity. Trapped in the position of an impostor, Gaspard struggles to reclaim his identity ... even as it becomes increasingly unclear whether he is not the man he thinks he is pretending to be. The script poses existential questions about the fragility and ambiguity of identity, the possibility or impossibility of escaping who we are, and the dangerous obsession with becoming someone else.

Biographical note:

Temenuga Trifonova is Associate Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at York University, Toronto. She is the author of *Warped Minds: Cinema and Psychopathology* (Amsterdam University Press, 2014), *European Film Theory* (Routledge, 2008), *The Image in French Philosophy* (Rodopi, 2007), and numerous scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals and edited collections. Her first novel, *Rewrite*, was published in 2014. Temenuga is the recipient of several fellowships and artist residencies, including the Pushkinskaya-10 Center International Artist Residency (St. Petersburg, Russia), The Dora Maar Fellowship (France), the Fondation des Treilles residency (France), and the visiting senior fellowship at the Davis Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University. Her research and teaching interests include: Film Theory, Film and Philosophy, Screenwriting, Film and Photography, European Cinema, Film and Literature, The Sublime, Medium Specificity, Film Criticism, Film Remakes, Contemporary American Cinema, and Creative Writing (Fiction).

Keywords:

Creative Writing – Paris – Fin de siècle – Psychology

## **THE CHARACTERS**

GASPARD DE RONSARD - a decadent Parisian aristocrat, 30, tall and handsome

DOCTOR GIRARD - psychologist, in his 50s, short and stocky, wears glasses

JUDGE - in his 50s, judge in the court of law, tall and authoritative

PROSECUTOR - in his late 40s, tall and skinny, very confident, a bit cocky

ATTORNEY - in his late 40s, soft-spoken, with a childish face

DOCTOR DUCHENNE - in his 50s, medium built, with a serious face, a bit lacking in social skills

DOCTOR CHARCOT - in his 50s, gregarious and self-assured

PRISON CHAPLAIN - in his 60s, humble, soft-spoken

GILBERT - in his 30s, tall and handsome, blonde hair

ALBERTINE - in her 20s, in poor health, greasy hair and dirty clothes, but still beautiful

IMPOSTOR - we never see his face but he looks in his early 30s, tall and lean

CAPTAIN BOILEAU - in his early 50s, stocky and bald, has a striking moustache

CONCIERGE/TAILOR - in his 50s, average looking, medium height, dark hair and dark eyes

HOTEL RECEPTIONIST - in his 40s, very skinny, big eyes, sunken cheeks

YOUNG PROSTITUTE IN THE STREET - 17, very pretty, looks jaded and tired

**SETTING/STAGE DESIGN**

Paris, late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The action takes place in several major locations: the protagonist's Paris apartment, a café, the house of a prostitute, the courthouse, prison, a hotel, the Salpêtrière hospital, the streets of Paris

**MAN OF GLASS**

TITLE UP: **PARIS, 1892**

FADE IN:

INT. PARIS - GASPARD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The room, large and opulently furnished, is filled with opium smoke. The silhouette of a man slowly takes shape in the midst of the smoke. He is DUKE GASPARD DE RONSARD, 30 years old, handsome. His eyes are glazed over and his forehead is covered with sweat. He is wearing an unbuttoned fine white shirt. Gaspard inhales deeply from his opium pipe and closes his eyes. The expression on his face is orgasmic. Gradually, his face disappears back into the smoke.

OVER THIS IMAGE A LEGEND APPEARS: MAN OF GLASS

CUT TO:

EXT. GASPARD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Gaspard stands at the window looking out. The heavy curtains are drawn aside. A SCULPTURE sits on the windowsill. TWO WOMEN, half-naked, enter the frame from either side and start caressing and kissing Gaspard. He abandons himself to their caresses without responding to them.

FATHER CHARLES (O.S.)

I call desolation the darkness of soul,  
disturbance in it, movement to things low  
and earthly, the unquiet of different  
agitations and temptations, without hope,  
without love, when one finds oneself all  
lazy, tepid, sad, as if separated from...

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS - THE SEINE - EVENING

Gaspard walks by the river. The muddy embankment is covered with decomposing leaves and dirt. He bends down and breathes in the wretched smell. A HOMELESS MAN is sleeping on the ground. Lying next to him is a brown bag containing a piece of

meat covered with MAGGOTS. Gaspard bends down and watches the maggots' incessant movements.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS BANLIEUE - STREETS - EVENING

Gaspard wanders down the street. He is now in one of the poorest parts of the city. A rat runs between his feet. A child is CRYING in one of the houses he passes by. He stops in front of the house. A young prostitute, badly made-up, is leaning against the wall. She raises her skirt above her bony, dirty knees. She is ALBERTINE.

CUT TO:

INT. PARIS BANLIEUE - ALBERTINE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Gaspard stands in the middle of a dimly lit, cheaply furnished room. He can still hear a child CRYING somewhere in the house, though now the crying is more subdued. Albertine walks toward him, awkwardly caressing her pale, transparent skin and smiling wearily. She lets her long hair down: it looks like it hasn't been washed for a while. Her face is expressionless and she looks malnourished. Her chest is flat. She motions to him to come closer. He does. She starts undressing him. Gaspard pushes her on the bed and lies on top of her. He lifts up her dress and starts caressing her thin legs. She lies there obediently without moving. He continues sliding his hand over her leg mechanically, as if he were rubbing an object.

Suddenly he feels the girl's hand on his crotch. She tries to smile seductively and puts his hand on her non-existent breasts. He doesn't respond. She tries to kiss him. He doesn't respond. All of a sudden, he pushes her away, gets up and picks up his coat. Albertine extends her bony arm, trying to pull him back.

ALBERTINE

Does Monsieur have any special requests?

Gaspard pulls away and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. MADAME BUFFET'S BROTHEL - EVENING

Gaspard stops in front of a big house. The door opens and MADAME BUFFET, a middle-aged woman with a big mouth and a deep cleavage, comes out, surrounded by young prostitutes, all provocatively dressed. She extends her arms to Gaspard.

MADAME BUFFET

Welcome to the House of Pleasure!

INT. MADAME BUFFET'S BROTHEL

Gaspard is half-sitting, half-lying on a sofa in the middle of the room, smoking opium. Several half-naked girls are lying on top or next to him, their arms and legs wrapped around his body. Through the smoke he sees a YOUNG MAN, modestly dressed, sitting on the smaller sofa in the corner. Standing by the young man is Madame Buffet, gesticulating profusely and pointing to the few coins in his hand. She grabs the coins from his hand and throws them on the floor.

INT. PARIS CAFE - EVENING

CLOSE ON the absinthe inside a glass. Gaspard shakes the glass and brings it up to his mouth. PULL BACK to reveal: Gaspard and GILBERT, another aristocrat, are playing baccarat. Gaspard is absent-mindedly drawing a nude on a napkin, not paying attention to the game.

GILBERT

Where did he tell you he worked?

GASPARD

Laurent & Moreau. An accounting firm.

GILBERT

You paid an accountant 500 francs?

GASPARD

I paid Madame Buffet. She runs the brothel.

Gaspard lights a cigarette.

GASPARD (cont.)

I am simply trying to train a murderer.

Gilbert looks confused. Gaspard leans back, cigarette in hand.

GASPARD

(lethargic)

The boy's a virgin. He could've run after the little girls of his neighbourhood, amusing himself but remaining decent, content with his little share of the tedious joy reserved for the poor. I want the thought of a regular life, working in an office for his daily bread, to start to oppress him. I want him to get accustomed

to carnal pleasures he cannot afford to enjoy. I expect it will take a month for these pleasures to become indispensable to him. At the end of the month, I'll cut off the little allowance I gave Madame Buffet. And then...

Gaspard pauses dramatically.

GASPARD (cont.)

The boy will go to any lengths: steal, even kill, to roll on that sofa again.

Gaspard starts dealing the cards. Gilbert interrupts him.

GILBERT

No, no, you have to deal the third card face up...

Gaspard drops the cards on the table.

GASPARD

I am not in the mood.

Gaspard looks around contemptuously. The café is crowded.

GASPARD

This city is done for. The bourgeois are lording it over everyone, counting their money, eating out of picnic paper bags.

Across the street TWO BOYS, around 10, are fighting fiercely, rolling on the ground, sand in their hair and snot under their noses. Gaspard observes them with disgust.

GASPARD

Look at these brats!

Gilbert looks at the boys.

GASPARD (cont.)

They would have been better off not being born. What do they have to look forward to except measles and slaps, kicks and meaningless chores, the cunningness and deceitfulness of women and, towards the end, infirmity and death in a poorhouse or an asylum!

One of the boys, trampled to the ground, starts crying while the other one continues kicking him and throwing stones at him.

GASPARD (cont.)

To be fair, it's the same for everyone.  
With the rich it's the same pains and the  
same mediocre pleasures—alcoholic,  
literary or carnal.

A WAITER approaches them, carrying a tray covered with food. Gaspard's face twists in disgust.

GASPARD

Throw this to those brats murdering each  
other!

The waiter walks over to the boys. They start fighting over the food.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREETS - EVENING

CLOSE ON Gaspard as he staggers down the street, overwhelmed by the city noises: horses neighing, drunken screams, women's vulgar laughter, street vendors' cries. He recoils from the people around him: close ups exaggerate their ugly, twisted faces. Gaspard leans against a building, turns towards the wall and vomits.

PROSTITUTE (O.S.)

(apathetic)

Looking for love, Monsieur?

Out of the shadows emerges a VERY YOUNG PROSTITUTE with a worn out face. She is practically a child. He takes a few steps back, away from the girl, who continues staring at him. He puts up his collar, turns around and trudges through the mud. A NEWSPAPER BOY runs in front of him, nearly pushing him over.

NEWSPAPER BOY

Le Figaro! Le Figaro! Read the latest  
crime stories! The Phantom Killer strikes  
again!

CUT TO:

EXT. GASPARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gaspard stumbles down the street. Breathing with difficulty, he takes out a cigarette; his hands are shaking. He searches his pockets for a light but can't find any. Without looking



around him, he wanders into a building right across from his apartment building: Hotel L'Etoile.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE LOBBY - NIGHT

The RECEPTIONIST, a very old man, is reading a newspaper article titled "Who Is the Phantom Killer?" Gaspard approaches the counter unsteadily.

GASPARD

Do you have a light?

The receptionist looks up from the paper and smiles pleasantly. He offers Gaspard a light and places a hotel key on the counter.

RECEPTIONIST

Breakfast at 10 o'clock as usual?

Gaspard stares at the key.

GASPARD

(as if in a trance)

As usual.

He picks up the key and heads for the stairs. He checks the number on the hotel key: room 12.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE HALLWAY - EVENING/NIGHT

Gaspard walks down the hotel hallway. The walls are covered with faded wallpaper, whose original colour is hard to guess.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE ROOM - NIGHT

Gaspard surveys the room: there are no personal belongings except for a nondescript pair of shoes. Gaspard opens the closet: inside there are two identical suits, of the type an accountant would wear. He sits on the bed and looks around. The only sound in the room is the measured tick-tock of the clock. Time passes.

Gaspard gets up from the bed and walks over to the closet. He starts undressing. He folds up his clothes and puts them at

the bottom of the closet. He then changes into the hotel guest's suit.

There is a notebook lying on the floor. He picks it up and lies on the bed. The notebook is filled with abbreviations of names, addresses, dates and times. The first entry reads "corner of Rue du Port and Rue de la Capitale, July 17, 8 o'clock in the evening." Gaspard lets the notebook fall flat on his chest and falls asleep immediately.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNER OF RUE DU PORT AND RUE DE LA CAPITALE - NIGHT

Gaspard walks up and down the deserted street. He is dressed in the clothes he found in the hotel room. Suddenly, there is a GUN SHOT followed by a SCREAM. Gaspard runs around the corner. He catches a glimpse of a MAN running around the corner at the opposite end of the street. Somewhere a window is SHUT closed. Gaspard turns around: in a little dark alley ANOTHER MAN slumps to the ground.

Gaspard approaches the dead body. The dead man is dressed modestly, like an accountant. Gaspard searches his pockets and finds identification papers. He inspects them closely.

GASPARD  
(reading)  
'Theodore Blanc'.

Gaspard bends over the body and picks up a REVOLVER lying next to it. A policeman comes running: he is CAPTAIN BOILEAU.

BOILEAU  
(to Gaspard)  
Name?

GASPARD  
(hesitates)  
Camus. Francois Camus.

BOILEAU  
What did you see?

Gaspard extends his hand, holding the revolver, and looks Boileau straight in the eyes.

GASPARD  
No one saw me.

CUT TO:

INT. PARIS - ASSIZE COURT - DAY

The court is almost empty except for A FEW MEN AND WOMEN of the Paris high society. The JUDGE, a man in his 60s, with a weary face, sits behind a massive desk. The PROSECUTOR, a middle aged man with sharp, piercing eyes, walks back and forth in front of the judge, occasionally pointing at Gaspard, who sits in the front, guarded by Captain Boileau.

PROSECUTOR

Your Honour, the defendant is Francois Camus, age 30, occupation unknown, residence unknown. On the night of July 17, the defendant attacked and murdered...

The prosecutor ruffles through his papers, looking for the victim's name.

PROSECUTOR (cont.)

... Theodore Blanc. The bullet that killed Blanc matches the revolver the defendant was carrying at the time he was apprehended. [Beat] Your Honour would be interested to know that the bullets that killed the Phantom Killer's last two victims came from the same revolver.

CRIES of excitement in court.

PROSECUTOR (cont.)

Doctor Girard will now present his medico-legal report.

DOCTOR GIRARD, an unpleasant man with a disproportionately small head, takes his place in the witness box.

DOCTOR GIRARD

Your Honour, I found the defendant to be a vain, idle man of a brooding temper, given over to unwholesome introspection, exhibiting strong flat affect, possibly a reaction to the crime he committed. During the initial interrogation he alternated between a calm, rational state and an irritable, narcissistic one. He answered my questions with a subtle but unmistakable whiff of superiority. When I told him the lack of witnesses might work

in his favour he anxiously claimed full responsibility for the crime. Indeed, he seemed almost desperate at the prospect of being found non-guilty!

Girard wipes his forehead with a handkerchief.

DOCTOR GIRARD (cont.)

There is no doubt in my mind that Francois Camus is intellectually capable of perceiving the difference between right and wrong. There is no evidence of a disequilibrium of his mental faculties. I trust no further comment is necessary to establish the defendant's high degree of moral imbecility.

Girard goes back to his seat. The prosecutor stands up again. He addresses the judge.

PROSECUTOR

Your Honour, born criminals represent a throwback to an earlier stage of primitive human development. There is no other way to account for the defendant's appalling moral insensibility, in which he seems to take a perverse pleasure. There is only one 'treatment' for men of his kind: the guillotine!

The prosecutor returns to his seat. Gaspard leans over.

GASPARD

(mocking)

Impressive: succinct and eloquent.

The prosecutor is shocked by the unexpected praise. Gaspard's ATTORNEY stands up.

ATTORNEY

Your Honour, the prosecution is desperately trying to convince us that individual moral responsibility is irrelevant. If offenders were predestined to a life of crime, it would be meaningless to speak of punishment. Gentlemen, the social milieu is the mother culture of criminality; the criminal is just a microbe, which gains significance only by virtue of finding the broth that makes it ferment.

Gaspard yawns. The attorney is embarrassed by his client's indifference but tries to compose himself.

ATTORNEY (cont.)

The defendant committed this crime under the influence of extreme cerebral excitement. His reason was temporarily affected by the action of acute mental distress on a highly sensitive temperament. [he points to Gaspard] Francois Camus belongs in a mental asylum.

Prolonged stir in court. Someone in the back opens a bottle of champagne. The judge brings his fist down.

JUDGE

Silence! May I remind you that the court is not a theatre! The popping of champagne corks is incompatible with the sobriety of a legal proceeding. (to Gaspard) What is your relationship to the victim?

GASPARD

(blasé)

I never saw him before.

JUDGE

In other words, you murdered a stranger. Did you plan to rob him?

GASPARD

Certainly not!

JUDGE

Were you seeking revenge?

GASPARD

That's one way of looking at it.

JUDGE

(impatient)

Monsieur, it is in your interest to enlighten us.

Gaspard looks out the window as if he is really thinking about the question. He looks back at the judge.

GASPARD

His sartorial taste offended me.

Gaspard sighs and leans back. He looks bored.

JUDGE

(resentful)

Monsieur, I urge you to take a little more interest in the proceeding. Your own life is at stake.

ATTORNEY

If I may, your Honour, the defendant has already confessed to the crime, indicating his desire to be sentenced.

JUDGE

He has indicated a desire to be sentenced, not a desire to be judged. His refusal to participate in the interrogation can be interpreted as contempt of court. (to Gaspard) For the last time, why did you murder that man?

Gaspard looks at the judge calmly.

GASPARD

I wanted to experience the sensations of an assassin in order to analyse them.

The judge exchanges looks with the attorney. The attorney makes a gesture as if to say that Gaspard's insanity has just been confirmed.

JUDGE

(to Gaspard)

Is there anything you'd like to say in your defence?

GASPARD

I can't think of anything.

Gaspard turns to Captain Boileau and raises his handcuffed hands.

GASPARD

Shall we?

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON - GASPARD'S CELL - DAY

Gaspard stands at the window, looking through the bars at the small patch of whitish sky. The door opens and Father Charles

walks in. He takes a few steps forward and stops, remaining at a respectable distance from Gaspard.

FATHER CHARLES

Son, I am not here to judge you. Only the Lord can do that.

Gaspard turns around and stares at him.

FATHER CHARLES

You have committed a sin. You have taken another man's life.

GASPARD

(cold)

How likely is it for a holy man to have a cigarette?

Father Charles smiles sorrowfully and clasps his hands together.

FATHER CHARLES

Do not despair, my son. Let him who is in desolation consider how the Lord has left him in trial in his natural powers, in order to resist the different agitations and temptations of the enemy...

Gaspard starts walking around the cell, looking Father Charles up and down as though he is trying to make up his mind about him. Looking uncomfortable, Father Charles tries to ignore him.

FATHER CHARLES (cont.)

(earnestly)

...since he can with the Divine help, which always remains to him, though he does not clearly perceive it: because the Lord has taken from him his great fervour, great love and intense grace, leaving him, however, grace enough for eternal salvation. Let us pray.

GASPARD

(indifferent)

I don't remember how.

Father Charles approaches Gaspard and puts his hands together.

FATHER CHARLES

Put your hands together like this. Incline your head forward. Can you not feel your soul invaded by ideas of humility and contrition? Repeat after me: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth...

Gaspard pulls away from Father Charles, puts his hands in his pockets and resumes walking around the cell.

GASPARD

Have you looked at a newspaper recently? What do you find on the back pages? Advertisements for corn cures made by priests. The monasteries are now factories producing herbal remedies and liqueurs. The Cistercian order - chocolate. The Dominicans - an anti-apopleptic elixir. The monks of Saint Bruno - Chartreuse. Abbots are turning into confectioners; lay brothers are now pharmacy assistants.

Father Charles doesn't quite know how to respond to this so he continues praying.

FATHER CHARLES

...and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate..

Gaspard circles around Father Charles like a vulture. The circles are getting smaller and smaller.

GASPARD

The ingredients you use for Mass are completely debased. You mix holy oils with chicken fat, candle wax with calcinated bones, incense with cheap resin and old benzoin. You dilute the wine with elderberry, salicylic acid and lead oxide. What about the hosts made of potato starch?! Do you really expect God to manifest himself in potato starch?!

Father Charles is trying hard to remain focused.

FATHER CHARLES

(under his nose)

...was crucified, died, was buried and...



Gaspard stands face to face with Father Charles.

GASPARD  
(matter-of-factly)  
...descended into hell.

CUT TO:

INT. ASSIZE COURT - DAY

Gaspard, flanked by his attorney and the prosecutor, stands before the judge.

JUDGE  
The court has granted you a full pardon.

Gaspard shakes his head and looks at the judge in disbelief.

GASPARD  
That's impossible.

JUDGE  
We have three witnesses testifying that you are, in fact, Theodore Blanc, accountant, residing at Hotel L'Etoile. Since Monsieur Blanc...since you...are not dead, we are left with no choice but to release you immediately. This case is closed.

Gaspard does not seem at all pleased to be informed of his impending release. The judge stands up.

GASPARD  
(anxiously)  
Your Honour, you seem to be forgetting that you still have a corpse in the morgue.

JUDGE  
You are a free man, Monsieur Blanc. Try to see this as a good thing.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE ROOM - EVENING

Gaspard is sitting at the table. Blanc's notebook lies open in front of him. CLOSE ON the next entry: "rue d'Orsel and rue de Ronsard, August 11, 8 o'clock, evening."

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNER OF RUE D'ORSEL AND RUE DE RONSARD - EVENING

MONTAGE OF STILL IMAGES:

Gaspard stands in the middle of a deserted street. A GUN SHOT.

Gaspard turns around.

At the opposite end of the street the shadow of a MAN disappears around the corner.

Gaspard bends over a man's dead body.

Gaspard extends his hand, holding a revolver, to Captain Boileau.

CLOSE ON the handcuffs on Gaspard's hands.

CUT TO:

INT. ASSIZE COURT - DAY

The attorney, the judge and the prosecutor are the same as in the first trial. Gaspard sits in the defendant's chair. His face is inscrutable. The judge looks at him for a long time as if he is trying to remember something.

JUDGE

It seems to me the defendant was already tried by this court.

PROSECUTOR

Your Honour, the defendant has just confessed to another crime similar to that for which he was earlier tried and acquitted.

JUDGE

(to Gaspard's attorney)

Have you spoken to your client and advised him of the best course of action? How does he plead?

Gaspard's attorney approaches the judge.

ATTORNEY

My client insists that as his attorney it is my duty to protect his right to claim responsibility for his own acts and to

demonstrate that he is as guilty as he claims to be.

PROSECUTOR

Your Honour, as we saw during the first trial, the defendant is a pathological liar. I believe his confession is part of an elaborate delusional system of belief, which demands further medical investigation.

The judge appears to have difficulty understanding the rationale behind either man's statement. He waves his wrinkled hand in front of their faces.

JUDGE

Proceed.

The attorney returns to his seat. The prosecutor turns around, facing the empty courtroom.

PROSECUTOR

I call to the stand Doctor Girard. He will demonstrate that the defendant's confession is utterly unfounded and that he is therefore *innocent beyond reasonable doubt*.

Doctor Girard approaches the stand, carrying a thick bundle of papers, which he proceeds to unroll on the desk in front of the judge. He speaks passionately and gesticulates widely.

DOCTOR GIRARD

Your Honour, we have recently adopted a new scientific method for eliciting the principal types of insanity by methods of optical superimposition of the portraits of the insane. The composite portrait enables us to obtain with mechanical precision a generalised picture, one that represents no man in particular but portrays an imaginary figure possessing the average features of any given group of men, whether epileptics, hysterics, or what have you. It is mathematically true that deviations from the average man...

JUDGE

The average man?

Girard produces a number of photographic portraits of various men. He spreads them out in front of the judge as if he were dealing cards.

DOCTOR GIRARD

The average man is a fictional being with respect to whom all things happen in accordance with average results obtained for society.

Girard picks up ONE of the photographs and holds it up in front of the judge; then he shows it to the attorney and the prosecutor.

DOCTOR GIRARD (cont.)

This is a composite portrait of hysterical and delusional patients. The portrait was obtained from the photographs of all patients in this class, including the defendant.

Girard approaches Gaspard and holds the composite portrait next to his face.

DOCTOR GIRARD (cont.)

You will notice that the portrait bears a striking resemblance to the defendant.

The judge looks at the portrait and at Gaspard. There is absolutely no resemblance between the two. The judge nods in agreement. Girard produces another set of photographs and spreads them before the judge. He picks ONE of these photographs and holds it up so everyone can see it.

DOCTOR GIRARD (cont.)

For the sake of comparison, this is a composite portrait of an average murderer produced from individual photographs of all murderers currently serving their sentence here in Paris.

Girard walks over to Gaspard and holds the composite portrait next to Gaspard's face.

DOCTOR GIRARD (cont.)

As you can see, the defendant's face represents a significant deviation from the composite portrait.

Once again, the judge nods in agreement.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SEINE - EVENING

Gaspard sits on a bench by the river, staring at the muddy water. He notices an old homeless man standing by the water with his back to Gaspard: the same homeless man he saw earlier. Gaspard observes him for a while.

DOCTOR GIRARD (O.S) (cont.)

On the basis of the scientific evidence presented here, I believe Theodore Blanc suffers from an unknown kind of mental disturbance, which forces him to claim responsibility for random acts that cannot, in fact, be attributed to him. Since the defendant does not pose an immediate danger to himself or to anyone else, I recommend that the defendant be released immediately.

Gaspard walks over to the homeless man and stands behind him. Beat. Gaspard pushes the man into the river. Everything happens very fast: the man doesn't even scream. Gaspard watches him drown.

CUT TO:

INT. ASSIZE COURT - DAY

The court hearing is under way. The judge takes off his glasses and carefully examines Gaspard's face.

PROSECUTOR

Your Honour, the defendant is painfully familiar to us: Theodore Blanc, two prior murder convictions, acquitted twice. Last night he was apprehended after allegedly committing another criminal act of the same nature.

JUDGE

Proceed.

PROSECUTOR

Monsieur Blanc, please describe what happened on the evening of August 19.

GASPARD

I was sitting on a bench by the river. I noticed a man. He appeared to be homeless.

PROSECUTOR

What was he doing?

GASPARD

Nothing. He was staring at the water.

PROSECUTOR

What happened then?

GASPARD

I walked over to him and pushed him into the river.

PROSECUTOR

(mocking)

What was your 'motive'?

GASPARD

He was obstructing my view.

JUDGE

Monsieur Blanc, I'm warning you: you will be held in contempt of court if you continue in this manner.

GASPARD

What I said is true.

PROSECUTOR

But is it statistically true?! Your Honour, I call to the stand Doctor Girard.

Doctor Girard addresses the audience in a calm, self-assured voice.

GIRARD

Your Honour, esteemed members of the jury, I would like to draw your attention to a little known fact. Did you know that the number of letters at the Dead Letter Office in Paris remains stable from one year to the next?

The judge appears both confused and intrigued by this piece of information.

GIRARD (cont.)

What does this tell us, you might wonder? Well, it tells us that every year, all other things being equal, the same number

of deaths is registered in Paris. Every year we witness the same crimes, leading to the same penalties, in the same proportions. We can predict the number of murderers, forgers, and prisoners, pretty nearly as we can enumerate in advance the births and deaths that will take place.

Girard is pleased with the effect his words have produced. He looks around triumphantly. As Gaspard listens to Girard's speech, he appears increasingly alarmed.

GIRARD (cont.)

To understand crime we must examine the laws and customs of society, not the whims of individuals. Individuals are impulsive, irrational, and inconsistent: the truth is, we rarely understand why they do what they do. To think that individuals can serve as the basis of the moral sciences is absurd! The average man, however, we can understand: in the average everything exceptional balances out.

MURMURS in court. Someone applauds but then stops.

GIRARD (cont.)

The first thing to be established is the defendant's propensity to crime. Supposing men are placed in like circumstances, the propensity for crime is the greater or lesser probability of committing a crime.

As he continues talking, Girard draws diagrams and formulas on a large sheet of paper. Intrigued, the judge leans forward.

GIRARD (cont.)

After considering a large enough number of cases, I devised an empirical formula, which can be used to calculate the propensity for crime, taking into consideration the specific information available in the defendant's record:

$$Y = (1 - \sin X) \frac{1}{1+m} \text{ supposing } m = \frac{1}{2x - 18}$$

The degree of the propensity for crime Y is expressed as a function of age X. It is necessary to take for the axis of the

abscissas the quarter of the circumference rectified and divided according to decimal division.

Girard holds up the sheet of paper.

GIRARD (cont.)

Using this formula we built a statistical profile for our murderer. We then compared the defendant's profile to the murderer's profile.

The prosecutor produces a sheet of paper containing a statistical table and shows it to the judge.

GIRARD (cont.)

This table shows the defendant's propensity to crime to be close to 0. When I took into consideration his education, marital status, age, birth place, time of the crime, place of the crime etc., I concluded that, all his claims to the contrary, the defendant did not, in fact, murder the victim.

Gaspard jumps up.

GASPARD

That my actions are statistically improbable does not make them unreal!

Captain Boileau forces him back in his seat. Girard produces another document.

GIRARD (cont.)

Your Honour, the document before you contains the latest suicide statistics in Paris. It shows that the two most common methods of Parisian suicide are drowning and charcoal. For the sake of comparison, Londoners prefer to hang themselves or use a revolver. Our victim clearly fits the statistical profile for a Parisian suicide.

Gaspard tries to stand up again but is pushed back in his seat.

GASPARD

That man did not commit suicide!



The prosecutor stands up.

PROSECUTOR

Even without resorting to statistical tables, it is easy to see why a man in the victim's situation—miserable, poor, homeless, with no family, etc.—would find death a welcome solution.

Gaspard makes another unsuccessful attempt to free himself from the captain's clutches.

GIRARD (cont.)

Your Honour, it is a statistical law that a certain proportion of the people in Paris will commit suicide in a given year. Logically speaking, it is not true of each Parisian that he or she is free not to commit suicide. If each person were free to do so, then it might have happened that none did so, and hence that would not have been a statistical law about the population, which is absurd!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE ROOM - EVENING

Gaspard stands by the window, staring vacantly at an apartment across the street, the one exactly across from the hotel room. The window is dark.

Suddenly, candle light flickers in the darkness, illuminating a SCULPTURE sitting on the windowsill. Gaspard recognizes the sculpture and freezes: the window across the street is that of his own apartment.

A HAND emerges from the darkness and moves into the candlelight. Gaspard instinctively steps back from the window. A MAN crosses the room: he is wearing Gaspard's clothes. The man's face remains invisible.

CUT TO:

EXT. GASSPARD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Gaspard watches the entrance to his apartment building. The man living in his apartment—the impostor—comes out of the building and walks down the street. Still unable to see the impostor's face, Gaspard follows him discreetly.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREETS - EVENING

Gaspard follows the Impostor at a safe distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS CAFE - EVENING

The impostor goes into the same cafe where Gaspard played cards with Gilbert earlier. Gaspard looks through the window.

CUT TO:

INT. PARIS CAFE - EVENING

Gilbert and the impostor are sitting at a table, playing cards and drinking. The impostor's face remains invisible.

CUT TO:

INT. PARIS CAFE - EVENING

The impostor gets up from the table and leaves the café, nodding 'hello' to a couple of men sitting at another table.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREETS - EVENING

Gaspard follows the impostor until he turns around a corner.

CUT TO:

EXT. MADAME BUFFET'S BROTHEL - EVENING

Gaspard walks back and forth before the brothel. Suddenly the door opens and a pretty young prostitute steps out. She takes out a small mirror and fixes her hair and make up. Gaspard approaches her.

GASPARD  
Hello Marie.

The girl looks up at him suspiciously.

MARIE  
Do I know you?

GASPARD

Perhaps you know some parts of me better  
than my face.

Marie looks at him coldly. She is about to say something when the door behind her opens and Madame Buffet appears on the steps.

MADAME BUFFET

What are you doing out here? Come on! He's  
been asking for you.

Marie runs back into the brothel. Madame Buffet glances at Gaspard indifferently, as if she didn't know who he was. A spurt of laughter erupts from inside the house. Just before Madame Buffet closes the door Gaspard catches a glimpse of a young man, with his back to Gaspard, surrounded by a gaggle of young girls who are passionately caressing and kissing him.

EXT. MADAME BUFFET'S BROTHEL - LATER THAT EVENING

The impostor comes out of the brothel. He kisses indiscriminately the girl flocking around him and throws money at them. When they finally let him go Gaspard follows him at a distance.

EXT. TAILOR'S SHOP - EVENING

Gaspard looks through a window.

CUT TO:

INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - EVENING

Inside the impostor is trying on a tailcoat. The tailor adjusts the tailcoat's collar.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREETS - EVENING

Gaspard watches the impostor walk away from the camera, then turns around and heads in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - EVENING

Inside it's dark. The tables are covered with pieces of fabric, coats, shirts and trousers. Gaspard finds the waistcoat the man was wearing earlier. A little piece of paper attached to it reads 'Monsieur Gaspard de Ronsard'. Gaspard tries to put on the coat: he is shocked to find it's too small for him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE ROOM - DAY

Gaspard is asleep, slumped in his chair. His dark apartment across the street is suddenly illuminated by a candle. Gaspard stirs in his sleep. One by one he unfolds his limbs and lifts up his head, like a marionette come alive. He looks at the window across the street. The candle goes out. Gaspard stands up and rushes out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAY

Gaspard follows the impostor.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALPETRIERE HOSPITAL - DAY

Gaspard follows the impostor down a street, at the end of which is the Salpêtrière hospital. Gaspard stops at a distance from the entrance and watches the impostor exchange a few words with a DOORMAN. The doorman lets him pass. Anxious, Gaspard walks back and forth, unsure how to proceed. The doorman signals to him to approach.

DOORMAN

How many times do I have to tell you?! The entrance is at the back! You are late again!

Gaspard hesitates for a moment but then walks to the back of the building.

CUT TO:

INT. SALPÊTRIÈRE HALLWAY - DAY

Gaspard looks around. The hallway is empty. A NURSE, dressed all in white, appears seemingly from nowhere. She rushes past Gaspard and throws him a parcel without saying anything. Gaspard opens the parcel: inside is a patient's white robe with the faded initials "TB."

CUT TO:

INT. SALPÊTRIÈRE - DAY

Gaspard is seated in the centre of a small stage; he is wearing a patient's white robe. Bright lights are hitting his face, nearly blinding him. DOCTOR DUCHENNE, a bald man with long sideburns and unruly eyebrows, approaches Gaspard.

Gaspard looks past Duchenne, searching the auditorium. A shadowy figure rises from one of the seats in the back and walks toward the exit. Before Gaspard can react Duchenne bends over him, obstructing Gaspard's view of the auditorium, and starts attaching electrodes to his face, stretching his facial muscles in different directions.

DUCHENNE

I will now produce the expression of glee by stimulating the greater zygomatic muscle with electric current.

Duchenne proceeds to faradize Gaspard's muscles into an expression of glee. Duchenne steps aside. CLOSE ON Gaspard's face: it is stretched in an unnerving, frozen expression of glee.

DUCHENNE (cont.)

And now I will produce the expression of aggressive malignity by means of electric contractions of the pyramidalis nasi. What is interesting about this subject is that the development of the pyramidal muscle is so full that its isolated contraction under the rheophores gives a dramatic play of cruel instincts, which his will has no power to evoke and which are only latent in his character. I have observed the same phenomenon in a number of subjects, which leads me to the conclusion that the aggressive muscle of malignity is one of those that least obey the will, and that it is put in action only by the instinct or mode of passion of which it is the essential agent of expression.

Duchenne steps aside. CLOSE ON Gaspard's face: it is now stretched out in a terrifying grimace.

DUCHENNE (cont.)

This expression renders the maximum of hatred and wickedness this subject's pyramidalis are capable of expressing. This is all the more peculiar given that he wields extraordinary power over his eyebrow muscles. He can give his eyes varied expressions and move them in contrary directions. But his will does not exert the least action over his pyramidalis. He cannot, by any effort, give to his countenance the expression of

aggression or wickedness. This man is of a very gentle character. Had he fallen prey to evil passions their gymnastic exercise would have very soon developed his pyramidals, changing the habitual expression of his countenance.

APPLAUSE. Duchenne removes the electrodes from Gaspard's face. Gaspard shakes his head and touches his face as if to check it is still there. Duchenne walks off stage. DOCTOR CHARCOT, neurologist and professor of anatomical pathology, in his 60s, comes up on stage.

CHARCOT

Allow me to draw your attention to a phenomenon Doctor Duchenne has neglected in his experimental work, namely the extent to which subjects can be compelled to commit acts foreign to their natural inclinations in the waking state.

Charcot holds down Gaspard and proceeds to put him in a state of somnambulism by rubbing the top of his head lightly with the palm of his hand and talking to him in a low, soothing voice.

All of a sudden, Gaspard becomes extremely agitated. He paces the stage, gesturing wildly, shooting, stabbing and poisoning imaginary enemies until he finally collapses on the floor. Charcot bends over him and talks to him in the same soothing voice. In a few moments Gaspard comes to his senses and gets up.

CHARCOT

Gentlemen, although you can't see it, this room is littered with corpses!

Unnerved, Gaspard looks around him. APPLAUSE echoes throughout the auditorium.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE ROOM - NIGHT

Gaspard lies in bed with his clothes on (Theodore Blanc's clothes). He is sleeping.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE LOBBY - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

Gaspard walks toward the counter in the hotel lobby. The receptionist looks up from his newspaper and smiles pleasantly.

RECEPTIONIST  
Breakfast at 10 o'clock, as usual?

CLOSE ON the sculpture of two hands touching on the windowsill in Gaspard's apartment.

The camera pulls back to a CLOSE ON a pair of HANDS in WHITE GLOVES crossed behind a man's back. The man is not entirely visible but it is clear enough that he is an aristocrat.

The man's POV: Theodore Blanc's hotel room across the street.

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL L'ETOILE ROOM - NIGHT

Gaspard opens his eyes His face is very pale, his eyes feverish. He walks over to the window. His apartment across the street is dark. He walks over to the closet, bends down and rummages through the clothes. He stands up, holding something in his hand: a KEY.

CUT TO:

EXT. GASPARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gaspard stands in the street. With shaking hands he puts a cigarette in his mouth and searches his pockets for matches, but cannot find any. He drops the unlit cigarette on the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. GASPARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gaspard drops the unlit cigarette and crosses the street.

CUT TO:

INT. GASPARD'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY

The concierge is looking at a pornographic picture. When Gaspard walks in, he hides it under the counter.

CONCIERGE  
Can I help you?

GASPARD

I am looking for Duke Gaspard De Ronsard.

CONCIERGE

The Duke is not here this evening. Would you like to leave a message?

GASPARD

He told me to wait for him upstairs.

Gaspard smooths down his hair. His hands are slightly shaking. He looks down at them and only now notices he is wearing white gloves. The concierge also looks at the gloves.

GASPARD

I am with the firm of Laurent and Moreau.

The concierge hesitates.

CUT TO:

INT. GASPARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gaspard takes out the key from his pocket and opens the door. He walks over to the window: the hotel room is visible right across the street. The light in the hotel room is on.

Gaspard stands by the window with his back toward the camera. He opens the desk drawer and takes out something. He puts it down on the desk before him: we cannot see what it is.

The camera pans around the room, stopping briefly on various objects: books by Verlaine and Baudlaire, bottles of perfume, artificial flowers, an opium pipe.

The camera returns to Gaspard, remaining behind him.

CLOSE ON his hands in white gloves crossed behind his back.

Gaspard raises his hands and picks up the object from the desk in front of him.

Pull back and CLOSE ON an elegant waistcoat spread out on the sofa: the same waistcoat the impostor was having tailored earlier. A GUN SHOT echoes through the night. The light in the hotel room across the street goes off.

FADE TO BLACK



## Research Statement

### *Research background*

For Freud, ‘abnormal’ psychic processes are part of ‘the normal structure of our psychic apparatus’ (1900). For Foucault, too, pathology structures the individual’s world in particular ways rather than being a symptom of pre-existing causes (1954). Core to much scholarly discussion of psychopathology is thus the transition from an epistemological to an ontological approach to psychopathology – studying an individual’s style of organizing experience—temporally and spatially rather than studying the content of experience or its causes and effects (Hacking 1995, Fuery 2003) – which I explore in this script and in *Warped minds* (Trifonova 2014).

### *Research contribution*

This script contributes to fin de siècle scholarship by drawing attention to photography’s role in the development of the new ‘sciences of mind’, particularly its foreshadowing of the ‘discovery’ of the unconscious and its importance in the transition from physiognomic to psychological theories of madness. Drawing on numerous cases of ambulatory automatism and double consciousness recorded at the fin de siècle (Azam 1877, Angell 1906) and on theoretical works from the period (Morrison 1843, Esquirol 1845, Londe 1893, Münsterberg 1909), the script undermines the primacy of consciousness, suggesting that consciousness is a secondary state functioning as an inhibitory mechanism disciplining the primary states of unconsciousness, involuntary perception/memory and dream.

### *Research significance*

This script is one of the first applications of the concept of identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘sciences of mind’, photography and statistics, to a creative work. The work is innovative in that it dramatizes fin de siècle criminological and medical aspects of ‘madness’ and applies theories of consciousness, photography, and statistics from multiple disciplines to foreground the constructed nature of personal identity.

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