The big sketch collections create order from an astonishing variety of components and perspectives. In other words, as bodies of knowledge they allow full scope for diversity within a cognitive superstructure that is always in evidence. Unlike sociology, however, they do not present knowledge of society in the form of empirical science. The forms in which they link observation and abstraction so that they become systems of cognition are, characteristically, hybrids between science, art and popular culture. The models of the panorama and of the encyclopaedia further support the paradigm of physiology which works as an epistemological vehicle, making possible the notion of interrelations in a living body. Wulf Wülfing has pointed to the analogy between panoramic and encyclopaedic orders in the sense that both aspire to cyclical completeness; be it a circular painting representing an overview or a printed work assembling a circle of knowledge, an *orbis doctrinae* (Quintilian’s expression translating the Greek term *encyclopædia*; the first encyclopaedias in book form date from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century).¹ Both panoramas and encyclopaedias were, of course, important in their own right as media that popularised knowledge. But the aspect that matters to Wülfing and also concerns the present study is their status as models of (re)presentation. The encyclopaedic paradigm thus informs periodical publishing, especially the form of the review, whereas the panoramic one is frequently found in nineteenth-century travel literature.² Both represent orders constituted from a potentially infinite number of parts and aspects.


Building on my interpretation in Chapters 1 and 2, I will show in this and in the next Chapter how ‘panoramic’ and ‘encyclopaedic’ arrangements enable ephemeral sketches to participate in bodies of knowledge that are in themselves as dynamic as the processes observed by an individual sketch. The fundamental openness of these collections, thanks to their additive character which is distinct from serial fiction, lies at the bottom of this inherent dynamism.

The Asmodean view and the inverted traveller’s view

The way in which vision and abstraction correlate in a panoramic mode is exemplified by Gavarni’s frontispiece for Le Diable à Paris (illustration 1, p. 7). Following the tradition of the tableau and its over-viewing ‘coup d’œil général’, the dandified devil, himself a cipher of Asmodean viewing, towers over an abstract representation of Paris in the form of a map. This depiction of the city as a whole transcends, but nevertheless guides vision. A grasp of the map conditions the view through the monocle; the precise, analytical perception of detail depends on the viewer’s concept of the plan. This wood engraving seems like a visual translation of Balzac’s description of the ideal ‘observer’ whose ‘bird-of-prey vision’ from on high is able to ‘analyse’ and to ‘synthesise’ in one single glance or ‘coup d’œil’. While there are scientists who have this gift, Balzac argues, such analytical-synthetic powers are extremely rare among observers of mœurs. When he formulated these thoughts in 1833, the serial projects which combined social analysis and synthesis on a grand collaborative scale were only just being pioneered by the Livre des Cent-et-un. The unity and completeness of vision that seemed unachievable for the individual moralist was to be attained by a collective, and this is what Gavarni’s frontispiece of 1845 conveys. The analytical and synthetic principle structures the process of representation in hundreds of individual components. While Flammèche’s basket full of scripts and his magic lantern point to the diversity of media, written and graphic, which serve the purpose of representing the ‘whole’ of the city, each written and graphic sketch feeding into the serial is a depiction of detail, created with the whole in mind. This whole is not only multimedial, but also multiperspectival. The magic lantern shows picture after picture in the manner of a slide show and the written sketches