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A Literary and Psychological Portrait of the Belle Epoque

James DiFilippo

University of Connecticut - Storrs, jamespolo@optimum.net

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A Literary and Psychological Portrait of the *Belle Epoque*

James Di Filippo, PhD

University of Connecticut, 2015

This dissertation depicts the *Belle Epoque* (1870-1914) whose *Zeitgeist* was epitomized by the motto, «*fluctuat, nec mergitur*» (Willms 339). The transformation in the spirit of Europe revealed the emergence of the conscious, the influence of the unconscious and the discovery of psychoanalysis. Although the *fin de siècle* was a period of degeneration, the epoch also represented hope for a new beginning. The *Belle Epoque* in Paris displayed a coat of arms that represented a metaphorical emblem of a tumultuous, sailing ship having an unattainable destination. The national self-awareness engendered a collective pathology, self-confidence and pride that characterized the consciousness of an age. In order to appreciate *Nana* (1880), the ninth volume in the Rougon-Macquart series by Emile Zola (1840-1902), and *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea* (1920), heralding from the trilogy, *Comedias bárbaras* (*Aguila de blazón*, 1907; *Romance de lobos*, 1908; and *Cara de plata*, 1923) by Valle-Inclán (1866-1936), one must have an understanding of this extraordinarily dynamic and creative period.

The psychoanalytic perspectives of *autre* (“ego”) and *Autre* (“unconscious”) established by Freud, the concept of *le stade du miroir* (“the mirror stage”) and the ideology of *désir* (“desire”) propagated by Lacan, and the distinctive tenets of mimesis, sacrifice and *skandalon* (“scandal”) or *pierre d’achoppement* (“stumbling block”) advocated by Girard, renders an interdisciplinary, as well as intertextual, analysis of the representative masterpieces, *Nana* and *Divinas palabras*, and bring to light a new understanding of literature of the *Belle Epoque*. Lacan also advocates that literature reflects paradigms that enable the psychoanalyst and the analysand to fathom dreams, symptoms and parapraxes, and adheres to Freud in the tenet that

there is a *liaison* between real case studies and the literary domain.

Another phenomenon of the *Belle Epoque* was the drama, *La femme X...*, by master playwright, Alexandre Bisson (1848-1912). This *histoire de coeur* spans a century, having been translated into fifteen international film versions, the most in the history of film. Analogous to Madame X, another famous heroine, Madame Henriette de Mortsau, the *châtelaine* and *l'ange de Clochegourde* in *Le lys dans la vallée* by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), also sacrifices herself for love, having psychological ramifications which result in her death.

A Literary and Psychological Portrait of the *Belle Epoque*

James Di Filippo

B.A., Boston College, 1982

M.A.T., Monmouth University, 1995

M.A., Bryn Mawr College, 2002

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

A Literary and Psychological Portrait of the *Belle Epoque*

Presented by

James Di Filippo, B.A., M.A.T., M.A.

Major Advisor _____

Lucy McNeece

Associate Advisor _____

Norma Bouchard

Associate Advisor _____

Gustavo Nanclares

University of Connecticut

2015

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation depicts the *Belle Epoque* (1870-1914) whose *Zeitgeist* was epitomized by the motto, «*fluctuat, nec mergitur*» (Willms 339). The transformation in the spirit of Europe revealed the emergence of the conscious, the influence of the unconscious and the discovery of psychoanalysis. The *Belle Epoque* was characterized by *Art Nouveau*, the prominent style that dominated Europe, and *decadence*, reflecting excitement or despair with regard to impending change and signifying an ominous blend of opulence and decadence confronting unavoidable change. Although the *fin de siècle* was a period of degeneration, the epoch also represented hope for a new beginning. During the *fin de siècle*, Paris was the “capital of the 19th century,” and the Universal Exhibition of 1900 signaled a transformation in European attitude from pessimism and disenchantment to optimism and reform. Paris experienced the *Belle Epoque* as an era of euphoria emanating from an abundance of entertainment and wealth. A golden age for the performing arts, the epoch ushered in a *cachet* of irrepressible adventure and *grandeur*, glamour and style, flamboyance and privilege, and omnipresent leisure and frivolity. Bohemianism permeated the *fin de siècle*, while the *Belle Epoque* evoked its glitter. Baudelaire, whose artifice transcended nature, a triumph that epitomized his esthetic, created a visionary universe encompassing synesthesia and believed in the reciprocity of art and the life of art. The Paris Commune of 1871, which represented a transition from the Second Empire to the Third Republic, reflected the contrast of the discipline of respectable society and the indulgence characteristic of Bohemia. The *cafés* and *cabarets* of *Montmartre* testified to a symbiosis between *la Bohème* and the *bourgeoisie*, and to the existence of a public in search of Bohemia.

Also, *Le Chat Noir*, established in 1881, reflected changes in Parisian life and evocations of Bohemia. A modernist poetry emanated from the remnants of Romanticism, especially the legacy of Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine, the main

architects of French poetry of the late 19th century. The Baudelairean vision associated Bohemia with the “vaporization of the self” (Seigel 266), and Verlaine epitomized the *fin de siècle* Bohemian, his early verse reflecting the school of the Parnassians which superseded the Romantics. As the image and experience of Bohemia were transformed, new movements in art and literature created the modernist *avant-garde*, such as Impressionism, which rendered pure encounter in the moment and reconstructed visual experience. Four *avant-garde* figures are noteworthy for their significant contributions during the *fin de siècle* and the *avant-guerre*: Henri Rousseau, a French Post-Impressionist painter, who created signature “portrait-landscapes”; Erik Satie, a composer, pianist and *Montmartre* bohemian who sought Impressionism in music; Alfred Jarry, the *avant-garde* author, who epitomized the “New Spirit” in *fin de siècle* Paris; and Guillaume Apollinaire, impresario of cubism, of which *Le Chat Noir* and *Lapin Agile* were *salons*, and surrealism.

Another phenomenon of the *Belle Epoque* was the drama «*La Femme X...*» by master playwright, Alexandre Bisson. This *histoire de coeur* spans a century, having been translated into fifteen international film versions, the most in the history of film. The leitmotiv of maternal love, poignantly portrayed when the ravaged heroine, Jacqueline Fleuriot, is reunited with her beloved son after many dark years, is linked to other salient, universal themes, including adulterous love, forgiveness, redemption, destiny and death. Bisson’s narrative technique, composed of suspense and revelation as *coups de théâtre*, especially as portrayed in the courtroom scenes and *dénouement*, contributes to the tragic pathos and audience appeal of his classic play. Previous to his swan song, Bisson, a versatile playwright, had written more than fifty comedies, and he also possessed a power of observation that revealed truth through fine psychological character studies.

Analogous to Madame X, another famous heroine, Madame Henriette de Mortsauf, the *châtelaine* and *l'ange de Clochegourde* in *Le Lys dans la vallée* by Honoré de Balzac, sacrifices herself for love, having psychological ramifications which result in her tragic death. Unable to resolve her psychological dilemma of her powerlessness with regard to her husband's despotism and her clandestine passion for Félix de Vandenesse, a young paramour, the manifestation of anorexia nervosa reigns. Moreover, Mme de Mortsauf renders a struggle between temporal desire and ephemeral perfection, a spiritual battle destined by her role in 19th-century society. In death, as in life, *l'ange de Clochegourde* epitomizes the ethereal lily of the valley, a symbol of purity. As a result of their refusal to acquiesce, the more Madame de Mortsauf and Madame X wield their power, the more they will succumb.

In the realm of psychology, Freud discovered in 1896 psychoanalysis, the inherent premise of which is the distinction of the conscious and the unconscious in order to understand the psychopathological functions of the mind. A state of consciousness (*Bewusstsein*), such as contemplating an idea, is essentially transitory, and an idea becomes latent or unconscious with the ability to reappear. The theory of repression reveals the concept of the duality of the unconscious: the latent unconscious (preconscious) capable of becoming conscious, and the repressed unconscious incapable of consciousness. The ego (*das Ich*), representing the coherent structure of mental functions, adjoins consciousness, controls behavior in the external world, censors dreams and creates repressions. The psychical id (*das Es*) represents the unconscious through which the repressed is able to communicate with the ego. In contrast to the ego, where reason and common sense reside, the id bears the passions. The super-ego or ego ideal (*das Über-ich*) reacts against the choices of the id. With regard to the ego, the reactions of the super-ego may be permissive or prohibitive, manifesting in the form of conscience or as unconscious

sense of guilt.

In contrast to individual psychology, collective psychology effects thoughts, feelings and actions differently than what would have been expected due to the individuals who compose a psychological group. According to Gustave Le Bon, the characteristic bond that unifies this psychological group causes the acquisitions and distinctiveness of the individual to become obliterated. With regard to this unity, the unconscious emerges, the heterogeneous submerges into the homogeneous, and the individual exhibits characteristics not formerly possessed. Le Bon believes that the primary factor for this phenomenon is that the individual acquires a sense of invincible power which yields to instincts that would otherwise have been restrained, and the dominating sense of responsibility vanishes, considering the anonymity and irresponsibility of a given group. Freud, however, does not emphasize the emergence of these characteristics, but rather the influence of the conditions that allow the individual, having acquiesced with the collective, to spurn the repressions of the instinctual impulses of the unconscious. The intervention of contagion, the second cause of the new characteristics resulting from unification with the collective, manifests the traits and trends of the group whose sentiments and actions are contagious to the extent that individual affinities and pursuits are willingly sacrificed, and the collective interest reigns. The most important third cause regarding the alterity of the individual, suggestibility, refers to the influence of suggestions of the group that has deprived the individual of a conscious personality. As a result of suggestibility, the individual loses the powers of will and discernment, commits acts that contradict his character, and surrenders feelings and thoughts to a hypnotic collective.

According to Jacques Lacan, whose concepts focused on Freudian psychology, the unconscious represents an irremediable link to the dynamics of language in which the signifier is

separated from the signified due to a chronic lack of meaning. Another concept propagated by Lacan, *le stade du miroir*, relates the function of the *I* in psychoanalysis and the structure of subjectivity as permanent. The paradigm of this phenomenon exposes a conflictual duality: a decisive turning point and a libidinal relationship with the image of the self. This mirror stage also expresses the critical aspect that identification functions as a catalyst in the formation of the Ego. The developmental “mirror stage” having been achieved, the realization of desire is only illusory, and the fulfillment of desire (*jouissance*), as well as the continuity of signifier (“word”) and signified (“object”), become impossible. As a result, Lacan refers to the “Real,” a mythic ego that reflects a *manque-à-être* (“lack-of-being”) which prevents a unity of self or wholeness of being. Also, Lacan’s Symbolic order of culture not only determines identity, but results in alienation of the self or “otherness.” In addition, the ego is affected by *méconnaissance* (“misunderstanding”), a depressive reaction resulting from a precarious perception of the image, or alienation of the self: the Imaginary order. Whereas Freud designated *der Andere* (“the other person”) and *das Andere* (“otherness”), Lacan referred to the “other” as “A” (*Autre*), signifying the unconscious, and “a” (*autre*), signifying a reflection of the Ego. The “a” (*Objet petit*) is the perceived image derived from others and the specular reflection which compose the Imaginary order, and the “A” (*Autre*), as an extreme alterity, transcends the illusion of the Imaginary due to a lack of identification. This “Other” comprises the Symbolic order which resolves the rapport with the “other” and functions as the locus for language. Another concept of Lacan, *désir*, is fundamental to his theories in that through psychoanalysis, which occupies a linguistic dimension, the analysand must unveil the truth of desire only through articulation in order that the “other” becomes apprised of this new existence in the world. Nevertheless, this discourse proves to be insufficient, because, attempting to expose desire, it always effects a surplus in

which the truth is incomplete. In fact, the *raison d'être* of desire does not dictate fulfillment as its goal, but propagates the desire. Moreover, the “fundamental fantasy” depicts the rapport between the subject and the cause of desire on which the analysand is fixated, and functions as a palimpsest, the truth of which must be unveiled.

René Girard, a French historian, literary critic and philosopher, reveals his mimetic theory that witnesses the collapse of the autonomous self and a conversion experience, also thought of as a realization of death and resurrection, to attain enlightenment. Contrary to acquisitive mimesis, characterized by the appropriation of the same object, accusatory mimesis reveals a sacrificial crisis, characterized by a unanimous scapegoat that results in a violent catharsis. Asymmetrical victims, or even figures who are perceived to be different, become the focus of hostility of the *esprit de corps*, because they threaten the established cultural and psychological tenets of a society. Girard identifies this convergence of violence as surrogate victimage, in that the aggression is transferred toward a victim who is vulnerable and available. According to Girard, mediation is external when the social status of the mediator is superior to that of the hero, whose aspirations are optimistic, yet unfulfilled. On the other hand, internal mediation signifies equal social status of both the mediator and the subject. Girard also exposes his concept of *skandalon*, translated as *pierre d'achoppement* (“stumbling block”), a psychopathological designation rendered as obstacle or scandal. Mimetic desire transcends *skandalon* through conversion based on a model, as opposed to the harbingers of desire that presage enslavement and victimization. Also, the ‘scapegoat mechanism’ reflects all blame borne by the victim, who has reconciled the collective and become imbued with positive aspects. Girard refers to this paradoxical effect as a ‘double transference’: a transference of aggression from persecutor to victim and a transference of reconciliation to the victim implicated in a

catharsis. Girard views human desire as imitative, and mimesis encompasses intentions of acquisition or a *mimésis d'appropriation*. In fact, desire functions as *le désir selon l'Autre* ("desire according to the Other"), as opposed to *le désir selon soi* ("desire according to one's preferences").

Emile Zola, foremost exemplar of the literary school of naturalism and prolific author of the collection, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, reveals psychological aspects introduced by Freud, Le Bon, Lacan and Girard in *Nana*. For example, Chapter 6 is a revelation of «*le stade du miroir*» in which Nana perceives herself, despite her proclivity for debauched liaisons and her religiosity, in relation to a young, innocent lover. This "mirror stage" relates the structure of subjectivity and the function of the *I*. The paradigm of «*le stade du miroir*» also exposes a decisive turning point and a libidinal relationship with the image of the self. Furthermore, the Lacanian concept of *méconnaissance*, which may affect the Ego as a depressive reaction due to a precarious perception of the image or alienation of the self, is revealed in Chapter 7 in which Nana becomes «*la mouche d'or*» ("the golden fly"). Also, the transition from naïve girl to young woman transformed into «*la bête d'or*» exemplifies the presence of *Autre* ("Other"), an extreme alterity that transcends the illusion of the Imaginary order due to a lack of identification.

Specifically, the episode of the mirror reveals the *désir* of Nana and, once again, the existence of *Autre* as her reflection. Moreover, the culmination of *désir* and the effects of *Autre* become apparaent when Nana reigns as *la reine de Paris*. In addition, mimetic desire with internal mediation or acquisitive mimesis, proposed by Girard and characterized by the appropriation of the same object, is evoked with the contemplation of suicide by the young Georges Hugon (subject), because his older brother, Philippe (mediator/model), competes for the same desire, Nana (*objet de désir*). This triangular desire attests to Girard's discovery that works

of fiction witness characters who evolve within a system of relationships. In contrast to accusatory mimesis that reveals a sacrificial crisis characterized by a unanimous scapegoat, acquisitive mimesis escalates conflict due to an object of desire. Nana affirms her innocence in an effort to avoid *skandalon* in order to elude the ‘scapegoat mechanism,’ propounded by Girard and comprising false accusation and victimization, two aspects Nana desires to circumvent. Furthermore, despite his attempts to expiate the *skandalon*, the temptation that represents *désir* and the antithesis of Christianity, the Count Muffat succumbs to his “obsessive passion” (Zola 384). Finally, according to Le Bon, the collective wields a veil of suggestibility behind which dwells a cohesive power that unites the group. The wake of *la mouche d’or* included asymmetrical victims who epitomized acquisitive mimesis. Victims of *skandalon*, they all succumbed to temptation that represented *désir*, the harbingers of which presaged enslavement.

Another example of *skandalon* occurs in Act III, Scene IV of *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea* by Ramón del Valle-Inclán, an innovative and antinaturalistic playwright, who created the *esperpento*, a dramatic genre translated as “grotesque.” This scene reveals the carnal liaison between the heroine, Mari-Gaila, and Comrade Miaou, and propagates the adultress as an *objet de désir* through acquisitive mimesis, which escalates conflict. Moreover, Act III, Scene V, the last scene of the play, once again reveals *skandalon* in which the *pierre d’achoppement* is characterized by the harbingers of desire that presage enslavement and victimization. Only when the sexton recites the miraculous divine words («*divinas palabras*») in Latin is the violent ambience of the crowd assuaged. The Latin words, «*Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat*», have performed a miracle, since a profound religiosity alters the collective consciousness and calms the savagery. Through the intervention of Judeo-Christian Scriptures, the Cross conquers the avatar of the *skandalon*, resulting in redemption,

rebirth and enlightenment, as witnessed by the divine words.

CHAPTER I

I. LA BELLE EPOQUE: LE NAVIRE A LA DÉRIVE

[THE *BELLE ÉPOQUE*: THE DRIFTING SHIP]

In order to appreciate *Nana* (1880), the ninth volume in the Rougon-Macquart series by Emile Zola (1840-1902), and *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea* (1920), heralding from the trilogy, *Comedias bárbaras* (*Aguila de blazon*, 1907; *Romance de lobos*, 1908; and *Cara de plata*, 1923) by Valle-Inclán (1866-1936), one must have an understanding of this extraordinarily dynamic and creative period. The *Belle Epoque* (1870-1914) in Paris displayed a coat of arms that represented a metaphorical emblem of a tumultuous, sailing ship having an unattainable destination. The national self-awareness engendered a collective pathology, self-confidence and pride that characterized the consciousness of an age. The transformation in the *Zeitgeist* (“spirit of the time”) caused people to describe phenomena in terms of “emanations of the conscious mind,” the ego and the unconscious, and to be interested in psychoanalysis during an age of renewal of romanticism and idealism. The cultural *milieu* of the epoch was characterized by contradictions: profligacy, but also *ennui*, neurasthenia and *énervement d’esprit*, reflecting an era of decadence. Nonetheless, the *Belle Epoque* witnessed a financial golden age, as well as a resurrection in the theatrical arts. The *fin de siècle* also reflected Impressionism, an artistic *avant-garde* in the 1860’s, *Art Nouveau*, which became known as the style of the *Belle Epoque*, Expressionism in the early 20th century, and decadence, a term which signifies the ominous duality of opulence and decline confronting unavoidable change. Moreover, this era produced startling transformations in European literature through such representative authors as Theodore Fontan, Guy de Maupassant, Gustave Flaubert, Marcel Proust and Emile Zola, who differed from the Romantics through an interest in both Realism and Naturalism. During the *fin de siècle*, the

“City of Light” symbolized the “capital of the 19th century” and a world of cultural, artistic and intellectual glory, becoming a “Mecca” that attracted people from all parts of the world.

Paris also symbolized a world of: czars, emperors, kings and *nouveaux riches*; the artistic movements of Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism; magnificent literature, opera, waltzes and romance, but also anarchy and decadence. The Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900 signaled a transformation of European attitude in that the pessimism and disenchantment of the *fin de siècle* yielded to optimism in scientific progress, as well as socialist reforms. Compared to other European nations, Paris experienced the *Belle Epoque* as an era of euphoria. Paris and the provinces had never had such a plethora of theaters, music halls, restaurants and *cafés*, and the *bourgeoisie* was capitulating to temptation, especially the motor car after 1910 (Jullian 10-11). Vienna, the “City of Dreams,” was also a capital of the *Belle Epoque*, particularly in the realm of pleasure, although the pervading *malaise* signaled the advent of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Comparable to Paris, Vienna experienced the tradition of the Second Empire, *sans* the interruptions of a war and a revolution, but was devastated by the economic crisis of 1873 (Jullian 12). As a result of the deficiency in monetary resources, the Sacher, for example, was not as elegant as Maxim, although the *bourgeoisie* that composed the French *clientèle* paled in comparison to the aristocratic patronage of the Viennese counterpart (Jullian 35-36). The *Belle Epoque* reflected the transformation of an aristocratic society into a world of capitalism to the euphoria emanating from the abundance of wealth and the stability of political equilibrium. The *Belle Epoque*, an age of grand hotels, luxury transatlantic liners and national prestige, also represented an era in which diplomats ensured the establishment of treaties bearing the initials of venerated monarchs. The pessimism and disenchantment of the *fin de siècle* generated a penchant for pleasure that characterized the spirit

of the *Belle Epoque*. For example, Baudelaire had created a visionary universe in which artifice transcended nature, dandyism eclipsed elegance and synesthesia was a necessity. Also, *Manette Salomon* (1867) by the Goncourt brothers reflects a portrait of 19th-century artistic life and an image of Bohemia *sans pareil* in hostility and insight. The *fin de siècle* was also characterized by *décadence*, a phenomenon that typifies the final years of a culturally vibrant period, marked by anticipatory excitement or despair with regard to impending change. *Décadence* also refers to the literary movement of late 19th-century France and England characterized by refined estheticism, artifice and the quest for new sensations, and the artistic climate of effete sophistication.

The Paris Commune of 1871 represented a transition from the Second Empire to the Third Republic, and was depicted as *la fin de la Bohème*, considered by the *bourgeoisie* to be a realm of irresponsible escapism, while the area of *Montmartre* testified to an odd symbiosis between *la Bohème* and the *bourgeoisie*. The Paris Commune of 1871 constituted the most bitter social struggle of the 19th century, and represented a transition from the authoritarianism of the Second Empire to that afflicted parliamentarianism of the Third Republic, lasting only six weeks from mid-March to late May. The Commune ended in rage and despair as a result of the immorality that had pervaded French intellectual life during the 19th century. The Commune also generated a fear of the masses and the rabble that haunted the *bourgeois* imagination. The paper,

Le Père Duchêne, employed slang and a gallery of characters to advocate the Communal cause, and Bohemia and revolution were also means to individual gratification. The Commune observed the contrast of the discipline of respectable society and the indulgence characteristic of Bohemia. The Paris Commune was established in March 1871, after the Second Empire had

fallen, defeated by the Prussians on September 4th, 1870. Bohemia was very much alive during the final decades of the 19th century. The *fin de siècle* evoked the period's anxiety; the *Belle Epoque* evoked its glitter. The *cafés* and *cabarets* of *Montmartre* testified to a symbiosis between *la Bohème* and the *bourgeoisie*, and to the existence of a public in search of Bohemia. The Bohemian spirit of *fumisme* or *fumisterie* expressed a disdain for everything, leading to acts of aggression and farce (Seigel 226). Also, *L'Hydropathe*, the publication of the *Hydropathes Cafés*, featured Emile Goudeau, André Gill and Alphonse Allais. Goudeau and Rodolphe Salis opened *Le Chat Noir* in 1881, and Goudeau edited the newspaper, *Le Chat Noir*, which advertised artistic trends, such as Impressionism and Symbolism. The spirit of *fumisme* continued in *Le Chat Noir*, whose celebrities included Maupassant, Huysmans, Edmonde de Goncourt and Toulouse-Lautrec. *Le Chat Noir* also reflected changes in Parisian life and evocations of Bohemia.

Le Chat Noir and *Le Mirliton* of *Montmartre* were characterized by “sensual abandon, metaphysical anxiety and political passions” (Seigel 239). Bohemia was a realm of escapism for the *bourgeoisie* and a domain of fantasy, sexual passion, death and violence, boundaries which *Le Chat Noir* permeated. *Le Chat Noir* closed in 1897 following years of financial distress, corresponding to the trajectory of *Montmartre*, which saw notorious prostitution in the *Moulin Rouge* during the 1890s, as well as violent criminality (Rearick 74). Beyond the *Boulevard de Clichy*, the entertainment of the quarter was waning, due to competition from the *Moulin Rouge* and the diminishing of *Montmartre*. The *cabarets* of the *fin de siècle* fulfilled a desire of the *bourgeoisie* to live in Bohemia, the great age of which had been during the epoch of Romanticism.

Bohemianism could refer to three groups that had a certain notoriety in the early 1830s: the *Jeunes-France*, whose dress and manner were inspired by medievalism; the *Bousingots*, consisting of students wearing a waxed leather cap who rebelled against the government; and the *petit cénacle*, a group of young writers who followed Victor Hugo (1802-1885) and met on the Left Bank to read each other's work and offer support (Seigel 26). *La Bohème ignorée*, the unknown Bohemians, were genuine poets and artists; the contingent that did not compose poets and artists substituted fantasy for a vocation. During the 1870s, the symbiosis of the bohemian and the dandy emerged with radical author, Jean Richepin (1849-1926), and Paul Bourget (1852-1935), an elegant writer of psychological fiction. Moreover, Baudelaire (1821-1867) created a visionary universe that surpassed the boundaries of ordinary experience. To Baudelaire, artifice transcended nature, a triumph that was the main principle of his esthetic, and dandyism went beyond elegance and self-cultivation. Baudelaire accepted the necessity for synesthesia, despite the concomitant sordidness and degradation, and believed in the reciprocity of art and the life of art, similar to the *avant-garde*. The Baudelairean vision associated Bohemia with the "vaporization of the self" (Seigel 266). Decadence, often associated with Baudelaire, characterized young poets who would identify themselves as Symbolists after 1886, a movement originating from *A Rebours* by Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907). Verlaine epitomized the *fin de siècle* Bohemian, and his early verse reflected the school of the Parnassians which advocated classical harmony and impassivity, and replaced the sentimentality and subjectivism of the Romantics. According to Verlaine, Bohemia represented the liberation of dreams and abolished the boundaries that separated imagination and reality, and poetry was "absolute" in the sense of visionary within a poetic universe (Seigel 244). In addition, the work of Rimbaud represents an escape from 19th-century romantic humanism, and his brilliant poetry evokes the spiritual

metamorphosis of an adolescent in crisis. Both Verlaine and Rimbaud belonged to the *Cercle Zutique*, which provided a meeting place for poets, and published an *Album*, which satirized renowned literary figures. Some believed that Rimbaud's expression, «*Je est un autre*», derived from mystical writers who would later influence the decadents and Symbolists (Seigel 265). They viewed *autre* as a universal spiritual power emanating from individuals, and «*Je*» (“I”) corresponded to late 19th-century intellectualism, such as that of Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Darwin (1809-1882). Also, the vagabond Bohemians, representing the periphery of Parisian society, were actually quite *bourgeois*, despite their odd demeanors and indulgence in mysterious activities. Bohemian authors endeavored to establish the standard of socialism in literature, and *bourgeois* existence, characterized by passion and inventiveness, contributed to the *mal de siècle*.

The *Belle Epoque* also revealed Alexandre Bisson's dramatic play, «*La femme X...*» (“Madame X,” 1908), which became the most prolific *oeuvre* in the history of film, having fifteen international versions that span a century. During the *Belle Epoque*, the theater represented a privileged forum for exhibiting the dynamic contradictions of the age. The leitmotiv of maternal love, as well as Bisson's techniques of suspense and revelation, contribute to the tragic pathos and broad audience appeal of this classic play. In addition to the *sensibilité* reflected on the stage at that time, naturalistic drama of the late 19th-century portrayed human behavior in detail, and the views of Emile Zola reflected behavior as determined by the environment. Henry-François Becque and Zola became distinguished Naturalist playwrights of the period for their penetrating depiction of the immorality and corruption of contemporary Parisian life. Their requisite «*tranches de vie*» (“slices of life”) characterized their ensuing plays which constituted a caustic portrayal of the immoral society which reigned during that era. The thematic commonality of the plays of Becque and Zola reflect the turbulence, conflicts and

corruption of the age. The Theater also adopted modern methods, including Expressionism, and playwrights depicted mundane life and and sexuality to shock contemporary audiences, and cabaret theater and salon music accessible to a general audience became popular, similar to repertories of songs for piano and violin.

Another work revealed a similar famous heroine struggling with the contradictions typical of the period. Madame Henriette de Mortsauf sacrifices herself for love and displays psychological symptoms analogous to Madame X. She appeared in

Le Lys dans la vallée (1836), a *roman de mœurs* by Honoré de Balzac. Madame de Mortsauf, *châtelaine de Clochegourde*, represents the quintessential «*ange*» of the 19th century, who finds herself trapped by the expectation of her role in society, waging to control her life in her desire for physiological, as well as psychological power. The psychological dilemma of *l'ange de Clochegourde* is her powerlessness with regard to her dominating husband, compounded by the moral dictates of society, and her powerlessness with regard to Félix de Vandenesse, a young paramour whom she loves passionately, albeit clandestinely. Her psychological dilemma unresolved, her powerlessness regarding her husband's despotism and her refusal to acquiesce to the affections of Félix, the manifestation of anorexia nervosa reigns. Although the desire for the culmination of her love for Félix may be unconscious and her intention to commit suicide is conscious, she believes that sorrow could cause one's death. Overwhelmed by her circumstances with M. de Mortsauf and Félix, *l'ange de Clochegourde*, once the image of beauty, wealth and happiness, succumbs to sorrow.

Moreover, Mme de Mortsauf, who, as we will see, is similar to Zola's Nana, «*la reine de Paris*», is unable to reconcile her inherent sexuality with her quest for spirituality. Thus, both

«l'ange» and Nana/Vénus struggle between temporal desire and ephemeral perfection; in the case of Mme de Mortsau, a spiritual battle destined by her role in 19th century society. Unlike Nana/Vénus, however, the death masque of Mme de Mortsau reflects the beauty of an angel and the attainment of virtuous power, although ravaged through self-imposed annihilation. In death, as in life, Mme de Mortsau epitomizes the ethereal lily of the valley, symbol of purity, whereas Nana becomes the image of suppurating decay. Thus, the reconciliation of the archetypal angel and the profligate woman is rendered impossible, Mme de Mortsau resolving her psychological dilemma in choosing death by starvation and the attainment of spiritual empowerment and virtue. The threshold of death upon her, Mme de Mortsau relinquishes the “powerlessness of her power,” the oxymoron that will ultimately result in her agonizing death, and confesses her love for Félix, a confession that echoes the *dénouement* of the 1981 version of “Madame X.” Inexorably, the more Mme de Mortsau and Mme X wield their power, the more they will succumb.

Another phenomenon which characterized the *Belle Epoque* was the frequent consummation of absinthe, a potent symbol of decadence in 19th-century France and a panacea for poets, painters and all versions of “Madame X.” Invented in 1792 by a French doctor, Pierre Ordinaire, in the Val-de-Travers region, *La Fée Verte* provided Verlaine with a sense of exaltation in his poetry, and he constructed a Bohemian cult around the elixir. Similarly, Rimbaud regarded absinthe a necessity for his poetry, as revealed in his prose poem, “Morning of Drunkenness,” in *Illuminations*, and in his final tribute to visionary poetry, «Une saison en enfer». Moreover, in 1876, Degas painted the famous «L’Absinthe», portrayed in the illustrious Paris café, *La Nouvelle Athènes* on the *Place Pigalle*, where the exchange of ideas influenced the arts of the *Belle Epoque*. Also, the *Montmartre* of Zola’s novel, *Nana*, portrays the libertine

courtesan, who would inhabit the room on the *Rue de Rochefoucauld*, drinking absinthe and gossiping with her childhood friend and paramour, Satin, in a world which propagated the reputation of absinthe as an aphrodisiac. In September 1888, another famous artist, Van Gogh, painted the «*Café de l'Alcazar*», a favorite haunt of *absintheurs*, entitled “Night Café at Arles,” which expresses his idea that a café is conducive to ruination, madness and crime. The *fin de siècle* witnessed portraits of absinthe with anguished or unchaste women and, in 1901, Picasso painted “The Absinthe Drinker,” a powerful, psychological portrait of addiction. In contrast to Impressionist paintings, such as «*L’Absinthe*» by Degas, Picasso’s works do not represent «*une tranche de vie*», but express the emotional world of the artist. His 1911 painting, “The Glass of Absinthe,” for example, represents a masterpiece of analytic cubism, opposed to Renaissance perspective.

According to Christian de Bartillat, the *Belle Epoque* spanned the thirty-five years from the birth of the Eiffel Tower to the commencement of World War I. During the *Belle Epoque*, Paris became a catalyst for the excitement, fear and expectation that characterized the *fin de siècle*. In fact, at the turn of the century, the *café-concerts*, music halls, dance palaces and *cabarets critiques* effected the *nivellement des jouissances* (“leveling of the pleasures”) in the enchantment of Paris. Similarly, the *Folies-Bergère* was a *rendez-vous* for a metropolitan society seeking to drown its loneliness in the intoxication of sensation. Paradoxically, the spectacular expositions of 1878, 1889 and 1900 signaled the *dénouement* of a crisis during the *Belle Epoque* and reflected widespread optimism. On October 6th, 1889, the *Moulin Rouge* opened in *Montmartre*, which contrasted Haussmann’s expanded and structured Paris and realized the nostalgia and utopia as a remedy for modern urbanity. Indeed, the freedom of *Montmartre* characterized the *Belle Epoque* and echoed the Paris of Maupassant’s novel, *Bel-*

Ami, in which avarice and power reigned. The emblem of Paris of a tumultuous, sailing ship also signified her endurance, perseverance, timelessness and immortality. In addition, the *Belle Epoque* represented the apex of civilization, culture, peace and prosperity, and portrayed the life, behaviors and habits of an elegant, refined and cultivated society during the *Années Folles*, analogous to *A la recherche du temps perdu* of Marcel Proust.

At the turn of the 19th century, poetry revealed great prestige and *Le Parnasse*, which exalted mystical beauty and revealed profound sentiments, and during the last fifteen years of the 19th century, *les symbolistes* triumphed, revealing a sense of mystery, verbal music, suggestion and, of course, symbol. The *Belle Epoque* also consecrated Paris as capital of the literary, artistic and intellectual worlds, as well as a microcosm of pleasure, and great progress in science, technology and aviation presaged a promising future. The prospect of a hopeful future, however, would not endure after the tragic saga of April 14th, 1912, when the *Titanic*, the most opulent, “unsinkable,” ocean liner in history collided with fate, thereby symbolizing the end of the *Belle Epoque*. Furthermore, the climate of the *Belle Epoque* provided fertile ground for the production of two representative writers of the era: Emile Zola (1840-1902) and Valle-Inclán (1866-1936).

The *Zeitgeist* of the *Belle Epoque* developed as early as 1870 in Paris and enveloped Europe until 1914, harbinger of another era, amid the classic strains of Offenbach, the bravos of the *can-can*, and the romantic waltzes of Johann Strauss, symbol of the sensuality of Vienna, the second city of the *Belle Epoque*. In Paris of the *Belle Epoque*, where pleasure, entertainment and immorality reigned, and the music halls, *cabarets* and *cafés* of dissolute *Montmartre* flourished, the motto of a coat of arms epitomized the spirit of the epoch: «*fluctuat, nec mergitur*» (“it is tossed by the waves but does not sink”), a metaphorical emblem of a sailing ship whose destination was unattainable (Willms 339). The period from 1870-1900, also identified as the

Age of Materialism, synonymous to the *Belle Epoque*, saw an ethos that effected a collective pathology. In contrast to the development of the spirit of science and positivism, a philosophy that held that authentic knowledge was based only on actual sensory experience, rejecting metaphysical speculation, the era provoked a preoccupation with consciousness and psychology, and the influence of the unconscious upon man and society (Mosse 220). This was reinforced by the discoveries of Freud (1856-1939). As the ideology of *bourgeois* consciousness pervaded the era with tolerance, positivism and rationalism, these were challenged by the discovery of psychoanalysis. As André Gide reflected upon his own life, “how much stronger are innate values than acquired ones” (Mosse 220). Another aspect of the *fin de siècle* was positivism, a philosophy that held that authentic knowledge was based only on actual sense experience, and rejected metaphysical speculation. Also, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a philosopher who advocated interiority, spirit and intuition, and Karl Marx (1818-1883), who espoused universality, socialism and rationalism, two mid-19th-century philosophical figures, were both influenced by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), who emphasized the concept of consciousness, which overshadowed traditional perspectives of the mind. As a result of the emergence of consciousness, Kierkegaard and Marx manifested prepsychological endeavors.

The turn of the 20th century was also the heyday of neurasthenia, first introduced in 1856 as an explanation of and reaction to modernity, and considered to be a psychological disease of the elite who had the time and money to contemplate their world-weariness and pay for the cure that required a stay in a health spa or sanatorium. The reasoning for this reaction to the fast pace of urban life was that the wealthy were highly developed and sensitive, similar to pure-bred race horses, whereas the poor, who exhibited the same symptoms, were analogous to donkeys suffering from the effects of labor. This extreme stress on the nervous system was not classified

as a weakness of the mind; nor was it uniform or predictable. There was, however, a relation between physiological and psychogenic causes, and opposite social attributes, such as optimism and pessimism that characterized the *fin de siècle*, could cause a diagnosis of neurasthenia.¹

Bastille Day 1880 signaled the advent of the *Belle Epoque*, a celebration of the upsurge in national patriotism that observed the release of flags to the regiments, a climax rarely reached again. After 1880, places of entertainment, especially the newer forms, such as *caf'concs*, *café-chantants*, music halls, and after 1900, film theaters, proliferated in the cities. Moreover, along with a penchant for pleasure that characterized the spirit of the *Belle Epoque*, it exhibited anticlericalism and a distrust of authority. *Le Chat Noir*, *Courrier Français* and *Revue indépendante* rebelled against the censors, and the *Montmartre* revolt became part of the *fin de siècle* struggle for fantasy, pleasure, liberation and social justice. *Le Chat Noir* was a restaurant, theater, *café* and *café-concert* simultaneously and was *sans pareil* at that time. As a result of the success of *Le Chat Noir* and that of the artistic balls of the *Courrier Français* and the *Quat'z'Arts*, the *première* of the *Moulin Rouge* occurred in October 1889, and the *Butte* became a capital of commercial entertainment. In the dance halls and cabarets of *Montmartre*, Parisians could escape from mundane respectability, disguise acceptable *bourgeois* behavior and engage the *milieu* of marginal society, after having indulged in the realism of a novel. In contrast to the *badaud* (“gawker”), who was alone and lost in the crowd, the *flâneur* (“idler”) was a *connoisseur* of the city’s pleasures, and *le droit à la paresse* countered the work ethic and the misery of a

¹In addition, criminality paralleled the growth of cities and suburbs, and urban decay reflected pathological corruption. The 19th century also signified the age of the conquest of darkness. Tuberculosis dominated the later 19th century and was a malady linked to the social problem of alcoholism, as typhoid fever was linked to polluted waters. Deaths resulting from the cholera epidemics waned with the century, whereas the Franco-Prussian War produced a deadly pandemic of small pox. During the later 19th century, Louis Pasteur affirmed French science over the German, discovering the remedy for rabies, as well as fermentation and preservation of everyday products (Weber 64). In 1892, Robida published a novel about the 20th century in which the possibilities of destruction, such as overpopulation, pollution, weapons and chemical warfare, revealed a pessimistic view of the future. This vision reflected that of the *fin de siècle*.

capitalist society (Rearick 176). Furthermore, the *flâneur* was not the dandy nor the flamboyant individualist of Baudelaire, and the *badaud* was less artistically discriminating than the *flâneur* and lost his individuality, remaining lost and alone.

The *Belle Epoque* was nourished in part by the economic recovery at the beginning of the 20th century when the French money supply increased from 16 to 27 billion between 1900-1913, a golden age that also revealed the triumph of the train, a technological innovation that mastered space, time and life. Emile Zola's *Paris* (1897-98) was published in installments in *Le Journal* during the Dreyfus Affair (1897-99) and portrays Hyacinthe Duvillard, who personifies the anarchism which was a reflection of the time.² In the 1880s and 1890s, the theater was the most pervasive of the arts: half a million Parisians attended once per week, and more than a million attended once per month. Lugné-Poë's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, Antoine's Théâtre Libre and Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art epitomized the *avant-garde* and imported plays by such authors as Ibsen, Strindberg and Maeterlinck, as well as French authors, Courteline and Jarry. December 1897 was the greatest theatrical triumph of the *fin de siècle*: Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a verse play which reflected romanticism. The *fin de siècle* also revealed optical effects due to the harnessing of steam, gas and electricity, and a revolution in theatrical lighting. Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* constituted a *fin de siècle* history, a profound account and quest to resurrect lives and experience that linked the lost past and the present.

²In June 1899, the High Court of Appeals quashed the December 1894 verdict of guilty against Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish French Military Intelligence officer accused of spying for the Germans and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island, and referred the case for retrial in another court-martial (Weber 123). In December 1899, the retrial once more resulted in a verdict of guilty. Although Dreyfus finally received a presidential pardon, he was not exonerated until 1906. Some Dreyfusards included Zola, Jaurès, Péguy and the antimilitarist and anticlerical, Laurent Tailhade, as well as Proust and Anatole France. Anti-Dreyfusards included Barrès, Caran d'Ache, Claudel and Valéry.

The intervening years that spanned the Franco-Prussian War and World War I were characterized by transnational affiliations that were as significant as national identities, and the international workers' union reinforced pan-European accord. Although domestic regimes were invariable, with the exception of the republican revolution in Portugal in 1910, tensions between working-class socialist parties, *bourgeois* liberal parties and aristocratic conservative parties increased in many countries, and political instability betrayed the calmness of European politics of the era. In fact, militarism and international tensions augmented between 1897 and 1914, and the prewar years were characterized by a competition for armaments. Moreover, this era signaled expansive overseas colonialism, the New or High Imperialism, particularly the scramble for Africa. This had an impact on the French psyche, because the contact with traditional cultures brought to France other ways of being in the world, as well as “primitive” beliefs and the occult. A vague sense of guilt and fear, poorly understood, but nonetheless palpable, was also engendered, especially in the middle class. This, too, influenced the identity crisis of the era.

In addition, European culture was pervaded by a world-weary mood during the last two decades of the 19th century, when artists and writers, including the French Symbolists, such as Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), founded the modern tradition in Western poetry and adopted a “decadent” rejection of any moral or social function for art. Reacting against realism and naturalism, they sought pure beauty, as opposed to the imperfections of nature and the drabness of contemporary society. Although the *fin de siècle* was a period of degeneration, the era also represented hope for a new beginning, and the self-conscious Symbolist movement became part of the *décadence* of that time that looked to art and artifice as sources of truth. Their principles also appeared in drama, notably in the works

of the Belgian playwright, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), in the 1890s, and in novels by Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907) and Edouard Dujardin (1861-1949).

Furthermore, European literature experienced a transformation during the *Belle Epoque*. Theodore Fontane (1819-1898), a German novelist and poet, considered the most significant German-language realist writer, Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), a popular 19th-century French novelist and modern short story writer and *protégé* of Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), and Emile Zola (1840-1902), an influential French writer and most important proponent of literary and theatrical naturalism, represented the culmination of literary realism and naturalism. Eventually, realism developed into modernism, which emerged in the 1890s and dominated European literature during the final years of the *Belle Epoque*. Among the most prominent European modernist authors was Marcel Proust (1871-1922), a French novelist, essayist and critic, whose *A la recherche du temps perdu*, begun in 1909 and published in seven parts from 1913 to 1927, depicts the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the *bourgeoisie* during the Third Republic and the *fin de siècle*. The emergence of modernism represented the psyche and differed from previous movements, such as realism and naturalism.

During the decade preceding the outbreak of World War I, Bohemian Paris and the modernist *avant-garde* occupied the streets and squares of *Montmartre*. Although smaller than *Le Chat Noir*, the popular *Lapin Agile* offered a traditional bar and artistic *cabaret* where visitors to the Latin Quarter performed. Jules Depaquit (1869-1924), a French illustrator, whose work was characterized by sexual themes and parodies of traditional literature, caused Dadaists to identify him as a predecessor. The Dada movement, born in Zurich in 1916, was characterized by a spirit of revolt and dramatized the animosity toward *bourgeois* society and culture. Dada was the ultimate development of *fumisme* that had animated the original *Le Chat Noir*. Francis

Carco (1886-1958), a French poet and novelist, believed that *Montmartre* was the cradle of the *avant-garde*, and the art of Maurice Utrillo (1883-1955), a renowned French painter of cityscapes, was an escape from threats hidden in the depths of the psyche. Also, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), a *Montmartre* figure and Symbolist poet, who coined the term ‘surrealism,’ combined modernism with Bohemianism, and was a literary publicist for Cubism and supporter of Matisse, Fauvism and the Italian Futurists. The work of Apollinaire, predecessor of the Surrealists, was characterized by the Bohemian literary consciousness, because he lived by his thought, feelings and dreams. The French writers, led by André Breton (1896-1966), a French poet and a founder of the Surrealist movement, united under the banner of Surrealism. Having originally supported Tristan Tzara (1896-1963), a Romanian and French *avant-garde* poet, performance artist and the leading figure of Dadaism, they claimed independence from the movement’s negativism. Other Surrealists who created the *avant-garde* in France included Rimbaud, Jarry (1873-1907), a French writer, and Picasso (1881-1973), a Spanish painter and sculptor. André Breton and his followers were also interested in Freudian psychology as a visionary testimony to mental powers that promised a transformation of life. Breton attributed anarchism as a seed of Surrealism, composed of dream and reality states represented as an absolute reality, and he and his followers insisted on their hostility to traditional art and literature. Surrealist literature, painting, and cinema reflected an esthetic shock.

Four *avant-garde* figures are noteworthy for their significant contributions during the *fin de siècle* and the *avant-guerre*: Henri Rousseau, from the world of art; Erik Satie, from the realm of music; and Alfred Jarry and Apollinaire, from the domain of literature.

Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), a French Post-Impressionist painter in the Naïve or Primitive manner, exhibited his paintings at the *Salon des Indépendants* and the *Salon d'Automne*. One of his masterpieces, *Un soir de carnaval*, reveals a simple composition in silhouette and immaculate style. Another successful painting, *La bohémienne endormie*, evokes the detail and mysterious moonlight of *Un soir de carnaval*. His final masterpiece, *Le rêve*, returns to the exploitation of detail through a tapestry of the jungle, moonlight and mystery. At the turn of the century, Rousseau experimented with perspective approaching Impressionism. One best perceives his genius through the naturalness and mystery of the human figure occupying landscape: “portrait-landscapes,” of which he was the inventor and for which he would be remembered (Shattuck 86). His formal compositions are set against pastoral backgrounds, and his portrait-landscapes characterize his primitive style which perceives a person and surrounding objects as a single subject, as opposed to dramatic isolation. Rousseau’s canvasses evoke a “transformed reality” in which landscape, wild beast and human being share one life: nature as the result of his vision (Shattuck 93). The leitmotif of pastoral landscapes conveys a yearning for idyllic peace and space, and the depiction of light in his paintings renders them timeless. Instead of verisimilitude, Rousseau’s compositions achieve a vision of light and color that differed from anything during his epoch, evoke sentimentality, and relate not only to modern art, but to the motion picture (Shattuck 107).

Erik Satie (1866-1925), a composer, pianist and *Montmartre* bohemian, was a best friend of Claude Debussy (1862-1918), and assisted his *protégé*, Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), in avoiding Wagner (1813-1883). Twelve years after having retired into oblivion in 1898, he was rediscovered, accompanied by Debussy and Ravel, a dual career that reflected the shift in French music during the banquet years. Inspired by the religiosity of the literature of Flaubert (1821-

1880) and Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), he had become committed to music and composed his most renowned works, the three *Gymnopédies*, a haunting composition whose accompaniment never abandons the melody (Shattuck 118). Both the *Gymnopédies* and the *Gnossiennes* blend exoticism, innovation and unparalleled accompaniment. His affiliation with the Rosicrucians led to his performance at the *Rose-Croix* exhibition, an event of distinguished importance during the *fin de siècle*.³

³After having met Debussy at the *Auberge de Clou*, he became pianist at the *Café de la Nouvelle Athènes*, which had attracted such painters as Degas (1834-1917), Renoir (1841-1919), Pissarro (1830-1903) and Gauguin (1848-1903), and where he met Ravel, who later regarded the piano player as one of his masters (Shattuck 121).

During the last ten years of his life, Satie accompanied painters who influenced his musical esthetic and Bohemian spirit, and suggested using the representation that Monet (1840-1926), Cézanne (1839-1906) and Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) were revealing. His *cahiers de musique* contained his fragmented observations of various subjects, as well as harmonies, melodies, chord positions, experimental tones and comical caricatures. These *cahiers* also reveal the years of ease which preceded poverty, and were later assembled for lectures and articles.

The encounter of Alfred Jarry with the professor of physics at the provincial *lycée* in Rennes was destined for literary history. Jarry collaborated with the Morin brothers in writing epics and plays about the suffering Professor Hébert, and staged *Les Polonais*, the precursor of *Ubu Roi*, which shocked Paris in 1896. His dialogues, *Guignol*, were published in *L'Echo de Paris* in 1893 and reflected the transformation of Hébér to Père Ubu for the first time, as well as his Conscience and the science of “Pataphysics” or antireason (Shattuck 194). «*Les minutes de sable mémorial*» constitute his most important work of poetry and prose, and reveal the influence of symbolism and the significance of Ubu.

Jarry epitomized *fin de siècle* Paris, reveling in the “New Spirit.” A few years after his mother’s death, he devoted his most passionate book, *L’amour absolu*, to the leitmotif of maternal love, evoking a religious experience. His novel, *Les jours et les nuits*, reveals that life is continuous and correlates to the tradition of Rimbaud and Nerval. This perspective of life, “sustained hallucination,” unifies his lyric poetry and the extroverted farce of Ubu (Shattuck 201). According to Jarry, the conscious and the

unconscious represent a continuum, and his hallucinatory life represents the incarnation of a dream, which constitutes his science of Pataphysics. Thus, he portrays the hideous image of Ubu. During these years, Jarry metamorphosed, enduring a transformation that resulted from hallucination and a vast consumption of absinthe and ether which caused him to spend the remainder of his days dying. Reminded of Père Heb from his *lycée* days in Rennes, he published six Ubu texts, and in 1896, Paul Fort (1872-1960) of the *Théâtre d'Art* published the play, «*Ubu Roi*», in «*Le Livre d'Art*». Jarry's obsession with Ubu revealed his "Other," his virtual hallucination, which corresponds to the Lacanian concept of "Other," meaning the unconscious. Also, the notion of «*amour absolu*» ("absolute love") or *l'amour fou* can be related to the leitmotiv of maternal love between Madame X and her long-lost son, as well as between Nana and her tragic son, Louiset. *L'amour fou* can also relate to the fateful paramours of Nana, all of which endure a strong *liaison*, but end tragically.

The *première* of «*Ubu Roi*» at the *Théâtre Nouveau*, filled with symbolists and decadents, heralded back to the *première* of Hugo's «*Hernani*» in 1830.⁴ The first word of the monster Ubu in the opening scene, the neologism «*Merdre*», provoked pandemonium in the theatre; Edmond Rostand (1868-1918) smiled and Mallarmé was silent (Shattuck 208). The scatological language of Père Ubu and Mère Ubu lasted two performances, and the play was not revived until 1908, the year of the *première* of «*La femme X...*». The *première* of 1896 signified the end of an era and the *début* of another, as well as the celebrity of Jarry: Ubu was the harbinger of terror in literature. Moreover, Jarry personified Ubu in the artifice of eccentric dress and staccato speech, and his

⁴ In contrast to the original marionette performance in the attic in Rennes in 1888, Lugné-Poë (1869-1940) was persuaded to stage the play *en guignol* at the symbolist *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* which he directed.

transformation was also reflected in his refuge in the studio of Henri Rousseau, who was also from Laval. This transformation into Ubu's kingdom was composed of royal dress and lodging, as well as the bicycle, the royal vehicle, and finally, alcoholism which resulted in his suicide. Jarry defied the complacency of the *fin de siècle* through literary mimesis, the fusion of his life and literature.

Guillaume Apollinaire, the impresario of the *avant-garde*, began his literary career with the lyrical and most famous of his poems, «*La chanson du mal-aimé*».⁵ «*Le Pont Mirabeau*», his favorite love poem, inspired by the gamine, Marie Laurencin (1883-1956), was written in 1914; their *liaison* had lasted until 1912. Apollinaire was the first to advocate the movement of cubism, and wrote «*Zone*», a nostalgic, modernist poem that weaves the past and the future.

The *avant-guerre* saw the publication of his two most significant volumes in 1913: «*Alcools*», a collection of modern poetry, which revealed a blend of styles and lack of punctuation, and «*Méditations esthétiques; les peintres cubistes*», which was composed of reproductions of forty cubist paintings and represented his esthetic of cubism (Shattuck 281). *Le Chat Noir* and *Lapin Agile* were *salons* of the new movement. Cubism produced his doctrine of simultanism, resulting from orphism, which connotes mystery and poetry. This simultanist expression characterized his modernistic poetry, a profound innovation at the height of his career, undiminished by the advent of war.

⁵ Following the triumphs of symbolism and naturalism, as well as the *époque* of the 1900 Universal Exposition and the Dreyfus case, Apollinaire encountered the poet, André Salmon (1881-1969), Pablo Picasso and the humorous poet, Max Jacob (1876-1944), “one of the most significant literary artistic collaborations of the century” (Shattuck 263).

These risky initiatives to transform art forms and perception relate to the bizarre dynamics of the period and to the excesses portrayed in *Nana* and *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea*.

Having enlisted in the army, he wrote letters to the beautiful, aristocratic, Louise de Coligny-Châtillon (1881-1963), whom he had met in Nice and with whom he had had a haunting, erotic affair. These letters, many in verse and addressed to «*l'ombre de mon amour*» (“the shadow of my love”), became «*Calligrammes*», an anthology of his best poems and simultanist works published after the war (Shattuck 288). In his final years, Apollinaire coined «*surréalisme*», which would transform the arts, and «*l'esprit nouveau*», which expressed French lyricism (Shattuck 296.)⁶

Encompassing a range of apparently disparate tendencies and contradictions, the cultural logic of the period is well represented by the metaphorical emblem of a

tumultuous ship, having an unattainable destination, a ship that signified her endurance, perseverance, timelessness, but also her inveterate immortality. For thirty-five years, the *Belle Epoque* also signified the duality of opulence and decline, profligacy and *ennui*, and a financial golden age and the emergent consciousness of an era. The *fin de siècle* reflected the “City of Light” that symbolized the capital of the 19th century and an artistic world of both nostalgia and revolution. The opulence of the *Belle Epoque* contradicted the anxiety, disdain and *malaise* of the *fin de siècle*. Similarly, there existed a symbiotic contrast between the *bourgeoisie* and *la Bohème*, between the belief in social and scientific progress and the desire for freedom and transcendence, which, for artists such as Baudelaire, could only be obtained through art.

These innovations in the artistic *milieu* reflect the polarization of the culture of the time, and the cultural *milieu* nourished the illusions and the “theatricalization” of life. These elements also relate to *Nana*, in the portrait of the profligate heroine, and to *Divinas palabras*, in the expression of the *esperpento*, a grotesque «*tranche de vie*». Thus, the dramas of Zola and Valle-Inclán mirror the contradictions of the *Belle Epoque*, the demise of which was symbolized by another metaphysical emblem that signified the grandest, most tumultuous ship that was deemed unsinkable.

II. MADAME X

The following poem, addressed to Madame X, expresses the nostalgic love of an estranged paramour, who also sends her a wistful thought, although, in the first line, he questions her love, “(of course?).” This unforgotten love which traverses time is revealed by the emblem of a rose whose language expresses the “oaths of first love.” The memorable rose signifies the glory of the poet’s love. Similarly, this poem relates the lost love of the estranged son (or daughter) of Madame X, the tragic heroine of Alexandre Bisson. The first line, in this case, reflects the dubious love of a child who has been surreptitiously abandoned. Although the symbol of a rose is not used in «*La femme X...*» (1908), “the oaths of first love” could indicate the love between mother and child. «*A l’âme de Madame X*» indicates three years of absence, whereas «*La femme X...*» depicts twenty years of absence; yet, the memory of love and its glory remain the same. In the original version, after having had an adulterous affair, Jacqueline Fleuriot has no recourse, but to abandon her prominent family in order to protect her husband and only son. Estranged for twenty years, Jacqueline finds herself on trial for murder, inadvertently defended in court by her long-lost son. Thus, the “X” signifies Jacqueline’s anonymity in order to protect her identity and the revelation of her past from her son and the court. Only Monsieur Fleuriot recognizes his former wife, despite the ravages of absinthe, and Holly’s regretful mother-in-law, who was responsible for her estrangement, also recognizes her in the courtroom, in the 1966 film version. Similarly, the significance of the “X” in «*A l’âme de Madame X*» is to protect the identity of the lover and the preservation of “pure” (l.4), eternal, if ephemeral, love. This leitmotif and preoccupation with adultery and mother-love could be a symptom of the *malaise* of the era, due to the immorality which reigned at that time.

A l'âme de Madame X

A Madame X...

En lui envoyant une pensée

Au temps où vous m'aimiez (bien sûr?)

Vous m'envoyâtes, fraîche éclore,

Une chère petite rose,

Frais emblème, message pur.

Elle disait en son langage

Les «serments du premier amour»:

Votre coeur à moi pour toujours

Et toutes les choses d'usage.

Trois ans sont passés. Nous voilà!

Mais moi j'ai gardé la mémoire

De votre rose, et c'est ma gloire

De penser encore à cela.

Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

juillet 1883

[To the soul of Madame X

To Madame X...

While sending her a thought

At the time when you loved me (of course?)

You sent me, fresh opened,

A dear little rose,

Fresh emblem, pure message.

It said in its language

The “oaths of first love”:

Your heart belongs to me forever

And all the things of custom.

Three years have passed. There we are!

But I, I have guarded the memory

Of your rose, and it is my glory

To still think of that.]

The drama, «*La femme X...*» (“Madame X”) spans a century. It was first an unprecedented stage success from the performance of Alexandre Bisson’s leading lady, Jane Hading, also known as Jeanne Alfredine Trefouret (1859-1940), who conquered the tragic heroine in 1908, and also from the performance of Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) on the New York stage in 1910-1911. It was subsequently succeeded by five Hollywood film versions in 1916, 1920, 1929, 1937 and 1966. This series of films signifies the lasting success of a play which might have otherwise been forgotten among minor plays of the era. The dawn of sound produced “Madame X” of 1929, which made Ruth Chatterton a star, “the first major new dramatic actress of the talking screen” (Valentino 247). This version later became a television movie retitled “Absinthe” during the 1950s. Later on, in 1981, television adapted the play again, but with a gender twist: instead of a son, Madame X has a daughter who also plays her defense attorney. Although each era, ranging from the middle of World War I through the second half of the 20th century, propagated versions diverse in technique and episodic content, all evoke the leitmotiv of Bisson’s original tragedy: mother-love.

In addition to the five well-known American film versions, ten other versions have been made, not only in France and the United States, but in Denmark, Germany, Spain and Greece: “Who Is She?” (Denmark, 1910); «*Madame X und die ‘Schwarze Hand’*» (“Madame X and the ‘Black Hand,’” Germany, 1921); «*La Mujer X*» (Spain, 1931); «*Etes-vous jalouse?*» (“Are You Jealous?,” France, 1938); “A Woman Is the Judge,” (US, 1939); “The Trial of Madame X” (US, 1948); «*Les Femmes sont folles*» (“Women Are Crazy,” France, 1950); «*L’Etrange Madame X*» (“The Strange Madame X,” France, 1951); “Madame X” (Greece, 1960); and “Madame X: An Absolute Ruler,” (US, 1977).

The worldwide appeal of «*La femme X...*» can be attributed to several factors which have to do with both form and content. As mentioned above, the leitmotiv of maternal love, portrayed most poignantly when the ravaged heroine, Jacqueline, finds herself reunited with her beloved son after many dark years, is the most prominent theme. But it is linked to many other salient themes contained in the play, such as the themes of adulterous love, betrayal, loss, suffering, self-sacrifice, justice, forgiveness, redemption, lack of self-esteem, destiny and death. Bisson's narrative technique, composed of suspense and revelation as *coups de théâtre*, especially as portrayed in the courtroom scenes and *dénouement*, contributes to the tragic pathos and audience appeal of his classic play. Furthermore, these scenes perfectly lend themselves to be translated into climactic screen moments in the subsequent film versions.

Alexandre Charles Auguste Bisson, a versatile playwright and *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur*, was born in Briouze (Orne) on April 9, 1848 and died in Paris on January 27, 1912. According to Maurice Hennequin in his obsequies of Bisson on January 31, 1912 at the cemetery of Boulogne-sur-Seine, Bisson was “the dramatic author whose successes count among the greatest in the contemporary theatre” (Commission, 728). Bisson was also a member of the *Commission de la Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs dramatiques* and possessed a power of observation that revealed truth through fine psychological character studies. His works range from comedies, such as his first great success, *Un voyage d'agrément* (3 acts, 1881), and *Les Surprises du divorce* (3 acts, *Théâtre Vaudeville*, 1888), a model of the genre, to operetta, vaudeville, and his tragic swan song, «*La femme X...*» (5 acts, *Porte-Saint-Martin*, 1908).⁷ Moreover, Bisson's prolific works span the first half of the Third Republic (1870-1940), after the

⁷ «*Un Voyage d'agrément*» was written in collaboration with E. Gondinet and «*Les Surprises du divorce*» was written in collaboration with Antony Mars.

fall of the Second Empire (1852-1870) and before WWI (1914-1918), especially the *Belle Époque*, an era of artistic and cultural refinement in French society at the beginning of the 20th century.⁸

The comedies, farces and dramas of Bisson's era can be traced to the *comédie larmoyante* and the *drame bourgeois* («*drame*») that characterized 18th-century French theater. The genre of *drame* was first propounded by Denis Diderot (1713-1784) in *Entretiens sur le Fils naturel* (1757) and *Discours sur la poésie dramatique* (1758). In these theoretical works, Diderot proposed an innovative theatre portraying contemporary middle-class life through gestures and tableau effects. This new theatre aimed to avoid “the remoteness of tragedy and the frivolity of comedy” through a diversity of genres: *tragédie bourgeoise*, *drame philosophique* and *comédie sérieuse* (Gassner and Quinn 296). These genres portrayed middle-class social life by means of sets, costumes, diction and gestures, engaging audience sympathy and evoking the *sensibilité* (“sensitivity”) in vogue at the time. The *philosophes* of the Enlightenment regarded the *drame* as essential for social and moral advancement. Diderot's *dramas*, *Le Fils naturel* (1757) and *Le Père de famille* (1758), are characterized by melodramatic didacticism, and his innovative approach influenced Europe for 150 years. However, this genre eventually witnessed public ridicule and effected only a temporary separation of tragedy and comedy in France and other countries.

In post-1789 Paris there were four official theatres (*Comédie Française*, *Odéon*, *Opéra* and *Opéra-Comique*) and four secondary theatres: *Gaîté* and *Ambigu-Comique*, which specialized in melodrama, farce and pantomime; and *Variétés* and *Vaudeville*, in which parodies,

⁸ Some representative comedies written and performed at the end of the 19th century and during the *Belle Époque* include *Un lycée de jeunes filles* (opерetta-vaudeville, 4 acts, *Cluny*, 1881) reprised with equal success at the *Renaissance* in 1890, *115 Rue Pigalle* (3 acts, *Cluny*, 1882), reprised at the *Palais-Royal* in 1891, and *Les plumes du paon* (3 acts, *Odéon*, 1907).

musical sketches, and *risqué* short plays flourished.⁹ During the 1830s, the theatre appealed particularly to the eminent commercial and manufacturing class. Furthermore, the public theatre of the Second Empire was strongly affected by *haussmannisation* which propagated the construction of theatres, such as the *Châtelet* and the *Porte-Saint-Martin*, where «*La femme X...*» was to premiere on December 15, 1908.

French society of the Second Empire and the Third Republic was portrayed in social drama and comedy, farce and operetta on stage, as opposed to the escapism of Romantic drama during the July monarchy. According to Gassner and Quinn, social drama “reflected the tension between new money and old social position, the morality of financial speculation, and the threat to family life posed by extramarital sexual relationships.”¹⁰ Alexandre Dumas *filis* (1824-1895) and Emile Augier (1820-1889), two major writers of this genre, portrayed contemporary morality characteristic of French society, especially the role and even the dark side of fallen women in Second Empire society. *Les Idées de Madame Aubray* (Dumas, 1867) depicts the “plea for the social redemption of repentant fallen women,” and *Le Mariage d’Olympe* (Augier, 1855) reveals that an innate affinity for evil makes a woman a prostitute and that a “fallen woman” could legitimately be shot if she tried to become affiliated with a respectable family (Gassner and Quinn 298). *La Dame aux camélias* (Dumas, 1852) became a legendary romance of a “fallen

⁹ Despite its proliferation, the theater was under severe censorship laws. Although a decree of January 6, 1864 renounced the state monopoly of theatres that characterized the Restoration and most of the Second Empire, and converted theatres into commercial enterprises, they still remained governed by the laws of blasphemy and obscenity and subject to the approval of the censor. Although an act of 1905 abolished censorship, the *préfets* (chief administrative officials) then dominated public morals.

¹⁰ John Gassner and Edward Quinn, *The Reader’s Encyclopedia of World Drama* (New York: Thomas Y.

woman” that witnessed recurring theatrical revivals. Light comedy and farce also portrayed contemporary values, particularly as they concerned women, marriage and the *ménage à trois*. The *dénouement* in farce always revealed ultimate conformity to accepted social standards. Le Chapeau de paille d’Italie (1851) and Le Voyage de M. Perrichon (1860) by Eugène-Marin Labiche, who was a cousin to Bisson, are classic examples of this genre. The *dénouement* of Le Voyage de M. Perrichon is exemplary: Armand, a friendly suitor for Henriette, the daughter of M. Perrichon, a wealthy retired stock broker, wins her affections, as opposed to Daniel, a deceitfully clever rival. In other words, the nice, honest man gets it all: love and money.

According to Gassner and Quinn, the realistic drama of the mid-19th century witnessed the *pièce bien faite* (“well-made play”), a genre of bourgeois comedies developed by Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) and his successor, Victorien Sardou (1831-1908). This genre was characterized by compact dramatic form, representative of neoclassical plays, and was meant to entertain the prosperous middle class. Scribe’s more serious plays, evoking morality or satire, still owed to Diderot’s theatrical code of entertainment and didacticism. But, the special attention to form, characteristic of the *pièce bien faite*, was to have long-lasting impact on play writing. After the Revolution of 1848, Emile Augier and Alexandre Dumas *fils* wrote a number of *pièces à thèse* (“problem plays”), serious social dramas that adopted the form of the *pièce bien faite*. Still later, the *pièce bien faite*, in which a climactic *scène à faire* (“obligatory scene”) reveals and resolves the secret for the hero, continued to influence many genres, including even the highly developed late century bedroom farces, Le Monde où l’on s’ennui (The Status Seekers, 1881), the satirical masterpiece of Edouard Pailleron (1834-1899), and La Dame de Chez Maxime (The Lady from Maxim’s, 1899) by Georges Feydeau (1862-1921).

The serious plays, as opposed to the *pieces bien faites* of Eugène Scribe, and the *pièces à thèse* of Emile Augier and Alexandre Dumas *fils* correspond to Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea by Valle-Inclán. The climactic *scène à faire*, although characteristic of the *pièces bien faite*, also characterizes this play in that there is a revelation and a resolution of the secret when the hero, Pedro Gailo, pronounces the “divine words.” Similarly, the late bedroom farces, Le Monde où l’on s’ennuie, literally The World Where One Gets Bored, and La dame de chez Maxime, correlate to Nana by Emile Zola, in that this novel represents a *pièce à thèse* (“problem play”) of Augier and Dumas *fils*, as well as a serious “play” of Scribe that evokes morality and didacticism. Nana also evokes the *pièce bien faite* in that there are climactic *scenes à faire* that are revelatory for the heroine. In the case of Le Monde où l’on s’ennuie, Nana literally lives in a world of *ennui* as she habitually amasses material and financial wealth *sans cesse*, although she is chronically unfulfilled.

As mentioned above, Emile Augier and Alexandre Dumas *fils* could be considered as important social critics about family values and the role of the *bourgeois* women. They both adhered to Diderot’s 18th-century precepts of social drama. The moral and social corruptions prevalent during the Second Empire influenced Augier to produce penetrating character studies that praised the virtues of the old bourgeoisie. His most outstanding play, Le Gendre de M. Poirier (Monsieur Poirier’s Son-in-Law, 1854), written in collaboration with Jules Sandeau (1811-1883), is an analytical portrait of class struggle with regard to marriage. It praises the virtues of the old bourgeoisie, such as honor, devotion, respect and love, in contrast to pride, egoism and vulgarity of the *nouveaux riches*. These plays express conservative views, a preoccupation with virtue that focused upon women. Similarly, Dumas *fils* produced emotionally powerful plays, and his *raisonneurs*, characters who moralize upon the behavior of

the other characters, evoked his personal views, particularly with regard to social evil. His outstanding, sensationalistic plays, *Le Demi-Monde* (1855), about an unscrupulous woman of easy virtue, *Les Idées de Madame Aubray* (1867), recounting the redemption of a “fallen woman,” *La Femme de Claude* (1873), exposing the adultress as an immoral influence in society, and *Denise* (1885), portraying the need to forgive the virtuous unwed mother, reflected social and ethical problems, especially as they concerned women.

The naturalistic drama of the late-19th century emerged with the performance of «*Thérèse Raquin*» in 1873, based on the novel (1867) by Emile Zola (1840-1902). The stage at the end of the 19th century portrayed human behavior in detail, and Zola’s views reflected behavior as determined by the environment. Henry-François Becque (1837-1899), the only successful Naturalist playwright of the period, beside Zola, became distinguished for his penetrating observation and merciless depiction of the immorality and corruption of contemporary Parisian life. His ensuing plays constituted *tranches de vie* (“slices of life”), a requisite for Zola, and were characterized by unconventional structure and caustic portrayal of the immoral society that repelled him. His masterpieces, *Les Corbeaux* (*The Vultures*, 1874), first performed in 1881, and *La Parisienne* (1885), maintained the original structure of the drama and were the most successful dramas of this era to portray “brief moments in ordinary lives” (Gassner and Quinn, 299). In addition, *Amoureuse* (*A Loving Wife*, 1891) by Georges de Porto-Riche (1849-1930) created a precedent for plays dealing with the psychological aspect of love and marriage, such as *Amants* (*Lovers*, 1895) by Maurice Donnay (1859-1945). Similar to *Amoureuse*, which, according to Peter France, depicts a “cynical view of marriage and adultery,” *Boubouroche* by Georges Courteline (1858-1929), is a witty farce about a naïve cuckold, performed at the *Théâtre Libre* (1887-1896) in 1893 (France 633). Similar to Becque’s plays, *Nana* evokes a caustic

portrayal of immoral society and the corruption of Parisian life. *Nana* also maintained the structure of the drama and portrayed *tranches de vie* of this era. Moreover, corresponding to *Amoureuse* by Georges de Porto-Riche and *Amants* by Maurice Donnay, *Nana* evokes the psychological aspect of love, as well as a mordant view of marriage and adultery in the case of *Amoureuse*.

Parisian theatres at the end of the 19th century attracted approximately half a million spectators each week, staged lavish sets and costumes and elaborate machinery, as well as provided opulent auditoriums. Stage sets were characterized by pictorialism and historical authenticity, and oil and paraffin lamps were gradually replaced by gas lighting, electric arc lamps and carbon filament bulbs. The lighting changes of this technical age produced such brilliance that changes in acting and staging were required. For example, the formal gestures and poses, as well as the exaggerated elocution characteristic of stage actors of early 19th-century theatre, were replaced by “naturalness, intimacy, and flexibility of voice and movement” (Gassner and Quinn 299). Foreign and provincial towns, like those in which «*La femme X...*» was performed, fostered “star actors,” such as the celebrated Jane Hading (1859-1933), Alexandre Bisson’s “admirable” leading lady, who had originated the role of Madame X on the Paris stage in 1908, and later in 1910.¹¹ Coincidentally, she appeared in «*Le Monde où l’on s’ennuie*» by Edouard Pailleron. The “incomparable” Madame Sarah Bernhardt reprised the role of Madame X in 1910-1911 on the New York stage. Furthermore, during the turn of the 19th century, the *Théâtre de l’Oeuvre* (1893-1899) of Aurélien Marie Lugné-Poë (1869-1940), which succeeded the *Théâtre d’Art* (1890-1893) of Paul Fort (1872-1960), was “the temple of the

¹¹ Jane Hading had first appeared in Paris at the *Palais-Royal*, then the *Renaissance*, and later such Parisian theatres as the *Gymnase*, *Vaudeville*, *Comédie Française* and *Michel*.

avant-garde” (Gassner and Quinn, 299). These theatres, as well as the *Théâtre Libre* (1887-1894) of André Antoine (1858-1943), notable for its extreme realism, revolutionized acting, scenic design and lighting, and incorporated a repertory of German, Russian and Scandinavian players.

The *drame* of Diderot, characterized by melodramatic didacticism, the *sensibilité* of bourgeois society and audience sympathy, then the realistic drama directed toward the prosperous middle class and manifested in the *pièces bien faites* and *pièces à thèse*, as well as the sentimental melodramas reflecting contemporary morality with regard to social mobility, adultery and the redemption of “fallen women,” and finally, the naturalistic drama, epitomized by the *tranches de vie* of Becque, all set the stage for Bisson’s last success: Diderot’s *drame* eventually led to Bisson’s *mélodrame*. «*La femme X...*», a tragic drama that portrays the *bourgeoisie* of the *Belle Epoque*, reflects Diderot’s social *drame* with its accent on *sensibilité*, characterized by love, pity, sympathy, regret and grief.¹² It is also influenced by the sensational and emotionally powerful plays of Dumas *filz*, revealing moral and social corruptions, as well as Augier’s penetrating character studies portraying the virtues of the *bourgeoisie* and marriage. The theater, then, much like the novel, was a vehicle for representing the ascension of the *bourgeoisie*, which despite its success, is haunted by death and demise. Finally, Zola’s analysis of human behavior based on environmental determinism, Becque’s lurid depiction of

¹² The *sensibilité* of the *drame*, characterized by love, pity, sympathy, regret and grief, was sometimes portrayed by broken speech, an effect represented by a profusion of exclamation marks and ellipses, phenomena that prevail in *La Femme X...*, 150 years later. Moreover, *sensibilité* implied kindness, virtue and goodness of heart, recurring attributes in *La Femme X...* that further appealed to the empathy of the audience. Also, life imitated art when *sensibilité* promoted social awareness and, according to Gassner and Quinn, abated “the injustice and abuses of contemporary society,” central themes found in *La Femme X...*, which portrays adultery, jealousy, revenge, blackmail and justifiable murder (296).

contemporary Parisian life, and Porto-Riche's drama on the psychology of love and marriage, all had an influence on «*La femme X...*». But, in the end, it is Bisson's captivating and convincing plot, universal themes, well-developed scenes, monologues of sympathetic characters, development of the principal characters, and especially the indelible portrait of the tragic heroine, that unite to compose a masterpiece of pathos and reflect the astonishing paradoxes of the era.

The film version of 1966, in particular, is most remarkable and, despite a few variations of plot, scene and characterization, quite faithful to Bisson's original play in many respects. Specifically, both the play and this film version evoke the theme of foreshadowing: Jacqueline, named Holly in the film, senses her impending death by drawing cards and, during the first Christmas scene,¹³ which has been added to the 1966 movie in order to emphasize family bonds and subsequent nostalgia, Holly tells her husband, Clay, in the movie, "Someone's walking over my grave," a statement which presages her tragic fate. As in the original play, the film also evokes the theme of forgiveness: Madame X pleads her son's forgiveness on the witness stand, a moment that is critical for her acquittal. Moreover, in the last line line of the play, Fleuriot is compelled to be forgiven by Jacqueline, after not forgiving her 20 years previously, and Estelle, the cruel, aristocratic mother-in-law in the film, who had deliberately orchestrated Holly's fate,

¹³ The theme of Christmas that pervades the fateful episodes of the 1966 film version, the only version that employs this theme, intensifies the drama of this play: the sentimental scene of Holly trimming a resplendent Christmas tree at Fair Acres with her husband and mother-in-law, preceding the unexpected departure of her husband, Clay, an event that will lead to Holly's fall from grace; the nostalgic scene of Christmas in Denmark, where Holly wanders the snowbound streets of Copenhagen, suddenly stopping in front of a holiday toy shop, where she hallucinates that a young Danish boy is her son; and the lamentable scene of glaring Christmas lights illuminating the seedy streets of Tijuana, where Holly, in her desperation and at the last destination of her exile, finds herself in a sordid tavern, where she reminisces about her past days as mistress of Fair Acres.

also appears contrite during the *dénouement*. Another crucial aspect that both the original play and the film share is the strange attraction of the defense attorney for Madame X. Act IV, Scene I and Act V, Scene VI of the play, when he tells her he wishes to hold her against her heart (a sentiment he also expresses during the defense speech in this film version), evoke as much *déjà vu* as the defense attorney's tearful and final statement in the film that "...there was something about her...from the moment I laid eyes on her." Also, the play and the film underline the theme of determinism by presenting the heroine's relentless tendency to perpetuate her past and her inability to transcend her circumstances. Although she travels the world in search of solace, she only keeps running into herself wherever she goes. Furthermore, several aspects prevalent in both the play and the film render this work an *histoire de coeur*: the woeful deterioration of Madame X; the defense attorney's exposure of the truth during his defense speech---without knowing that Madame X is his mother; her sentimental advice to Félicie (the chambermaid in the play) corresponding to her nostalgic advice to her son, regarding his future with his *fiancée*, on her deathbed in the film; Madame X's finally finding peace in death; and the theme of "love conquers all."

Finally, another powerful theme reveals the fascination of an era for the ravages of alcohol, notably the most dangerous kind: absinthe.¹⁴ The critical theme of the destructive power of absinthe, culminating in the courtroom scenes of the 1966 film version in which Madame X evokes a wraith due to suffering from years of anguish and addiction, permeates *«La femme*

¹⁴ Henri-Louis Pernod purchased the formula for absinthe from a French exile, Dr. Ordinaire, of Couvet, Switzerland, and first produced it in 1797. Thus, in Act II, Scene I, Laroque, Jacqueline's lover, requests Victor, the hotel clerk in Bordeaux, to bring him a "pernod." Ironically, the flavored spirit *«extraordinaire»* was prohibited in Switzerland in 1908, the year in which *«La Femme X...»* was written. It was then prohibited in the United States in 1912, and finally in France in 1915.

X...», as well as every subsequent version. The classic absinthe drink was called the absinthe drip: a small amount of absinthe poured in a tumbler and served with a perforated silver strainer containing a lump of sugar and a generous amount of iced water. Madame X, however, is portrayed as never diluting her absinthe with water or ice, or using it to flavor mixed drinks, as was customary. Her absinthe always comes straight from the bottle, a depiction which evokes the extent of her addiction with a realism that was powerfully translated in the 1966 film version by Lana Turner's captivating interpretation.¹⁵

In contrast to the preceding adaptations of *«La femme X...»*, the 1981 television version, "Madame X," its penultimate interpretation, portrays an innovative gender switch: the perennially "fallen woman" abandons her husband and daughter, who, in this second television version, replaces the son and defends her in a case of murder, after twenty anguished years. This unprecedented adaptation, deviating from the original mother-son relationship, portrays the poignant bond between a mother and her estranged daughter. The decline of the tragic heroine witnesses her roaming the major capitals of the world, only to be reunited, ravaged by alcohol, poverty and a broken heart, with a most empathetic daughter, who is also strangely drawn to her, although she does not know her true identity, and with a distinguished, but regretful husband, to whom she confesses on her deathbed after her trial: "I always loved you."

The innovation of the mother-daughter theme could be attributed to the fact that, the most renowned versions having already been remade with the same theme five times over a period of exactly half a century (1916-1966), "Madame X" had become a "celebrated old warhorse"

¹⁵ In this version, Lana Turner also tells her prospective blackmailer: "Absinthe's hard to find...and expensive..." a statement in which art imitates life, because it was, indeed, very difficult to obtain absinthe. In fact, this adaptation represents a *coup de maître* of *cinéma vérité* in which glamour, pathos and melodrama translated into a very lucrative cinematic endeavor.

(Valentino 247). “Madame X” of 1981 rendered a touching portrait not only of the tragic heroine, but also of her long-lost daughter. Unaware of her mother’s identity, she leaves her deathbed looking hopelessly fragile, offering a striking resemblance to what her mother once had been twenty years before and a reflection of the anguish Madame X has left behind in her wake. This poignant portrayal also evokes audience empathy, particularly in that one feels compelled to take care of this beautiful, young girl, deprived of having a mother during the formative years of her life, and obligated to protect her from a cruel world and any further suffering. Also, the depiction of the enduring mother-daughter bond and sense of chagrin when Madame X’s identity is never revealed to her daughter, rendered this version a dramatic and cinematic success, although contrasting the original Bisson play through different characterization and *dénouement*.

“Madame X,” the only film in history to be made more than six times, has appeared on stage, film and television, leaving behind a profound history and universal themes not soon to be forgotten. Reminiscent of the sensationalistic *pièces à thèse* of Dumas fils, the lurid *tranches de vie* of Becque, and the conformity to accepted social standards that characterized the *dénouement* of the farces of Labiche, this hymn to maternal love, the leitmotif that permeates all versions of this drama, conforms to the way the last two centuries have viewed women’s place in a “natural” social order in which motherhood played a crucial role. The 20th century, a predominantly patriarchal age in which society was founded on the father-son lineage, witnessed a prolific portrayal of «*La femme X...*», written by a master playwright more than one hundred years ago. The concept of redemptive motherhood, inherent to this patriarchal order, was viewed as the only salvation for a woman who had abandoned her husband and, especially, her children, the latter considered to be the worst kind of downfall. Thus, «*La femme X...*» and its subsequent cinematic interpretations depict both an adulteress/dangerous murderess and a consoling mother,

a sinner and a saint: a portrait that, corresponding to the realism and melodramatic appeal of mid-18th-century and late 19th-century bourgeois theatre, evokes audience empathy. Moreover, “Madame X,” portrayed by screen goddesses who reflected the ideals of womanhood, appeals to men, because the drama propagates the concept that a woman cannot live without her husband or child. Male viewers might be seduced not only by the beauty and sex appeal of Lana Turner, for example, but by the idea that these attributes, perceived as potentially dangerous by men, lose their threatening power when, older and repentant, the heroine turns to motherhood. In the end, “Madame X” appeals to both men and women, because the audience pities her, suffers for her, and cannot help but imagine what her life could have been, if she had had the courage and endurance to overcome adversity or if the world had been kinder to her.

It is clear that the unanimous acquittal of Madame X in all versions establishes an unprecedented standard: redemptive motherhood triumphs over murder, committed to protect her son/daughter. But, in the last analysis, the timeless heroine, Madame X, and therefore, «*La femme X...*», possess universal values and appeal. In his eulogy in Boulogne-sur-Seine on January 31, 1912, Monsieur Paul Ferrier, President of the Commission of the Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers, stated that Alexandre Bisson had written more than fifty plays, some “jewels...which go from that masterpiece that was *Surprises de Divorce* to that other tragic masterpiece that was «*La femme X...*» (Commission 727). Finally, Monsieur Maurice Hennequin, a talented collaborator of the author with the “heart of gold,” concluded the obsequies of Alexandre Bisson with these words: “We shall keep your memory in the best corner of our heart” (Commission 730).

Indeed, the 21st century has witnessed the resurrection of his consummate tragic heroine in the 2006 musical drama at the Chicago Center for the Performing Arts: Madame X.

CHAPTER II

I. L'ANGE DE CLOCHEGOURDE

[THE ANGEL OF *CLOCHEGOURDE*]

*Déjà déshérité de toute affection, je ne pouvais rien aimer,
et la nature m'avait fait aimant! Un ange recueille-t-il les*

*soupirs de cette sensibilité sans cesse rebutée? Si dans
quelques âmes les sentiments méconnus tournent en haine,
dans la mienne ils se concentrèrent et s'y creusèrent un lit
d'où, plus tard, ils jaillirent sur ma vie.*

Balzac, Le Lys dans la vallée

[Disinherited of all affection, I could love nothing; yet nature
had made me loving. Is there an angel who garners the sighs
of feeling hearts rebuffed incessantly? If in many such hearts
the crushed feelings turn to hatred, in mine they condensed
and hollowed a depth from which, in after years, they gushed
forth upon my life.]

Another famous heroine, who sacrifices herself for love, having psychological ramifications and analogous to Madame X, had appeared 72 years previously: Madame Henriette de Mortsau, the *châtelaine* who reigned in *Le Lys dans la vallée* (1836), a *roman de mœurs* (“novel of manners”) and part of the *Roman-fleuve*, *La Comédie humaine*, by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850). This *magnum opus* portrays a panorama of French life in the years after the fall of Napoléon Bonaparte in 1815. Regarded to be a founder of realism in European literature, Balzac executed a keen observation of detail, as well as an unaltered portrait of French society during the Restoration and the July Monarchy (1815-1848). Balzac also influenced many famous novelists, including Marcel Proust, Emile Zola and Gustave Flaubert.

Madame de Mortsauf represents the image of the quintessential «*ange*» of the 19th century. She devotes herself to her children, who suffer from chronic poor health, and her hypochondriacal husband, whose tyranny she endures without reproach. A marriage of convenience, which enabled her to escape the callousness of her mother, this *liaison* with a jealous, hysterical husband condemned her to a secluded, miserable existence at Clochegourde, a dominated and isolated life which ultimately results in the tragic death of «*l'ange de Clochegourde*» (McEachern 60-61). Although finances are not a source of concern for Madame de Mortsauf, as they are for Emma Bovary, she finds herself trapped by the expectation of her role in society. As a result, she becomes a victim of her own self-imposed anorexia nervosa, a paradoxical battle that she wages to control her life in her desire for physiological, as well as psychological power.

Madame de Mortsauf becomes the pawn of a psychological dilemma: her powerlessness with regard to her husband, because of his insatiable need to dominate her, compounded by her moral duty, dictated by society; and her powerlessness with regard to Félix de Vandenesse, a young paramour who has fallen in love with her and whom she loves passionately. Unable to resolve her psychological dilemma, in her need to yield to her husband's despotism and her refusal to acquiesce to the intimate affection of Félix, her sorrow becomes exacerbated, her powerlessness intensifies and the manifestation of anorexia nervosa reigns. Although Mme de Mortsauf may not be consciously aware that she loves Félix and even desires the culmination of that love, or that she intends a conscious decision to commit suicide, she believes that sorrow could cause one's death; in her case, a demise resulting from an oppressive marriage. Overwhelmed by her inability to satiate either M. de Mortsauf or Félix, *l'ange de Clochegourde*, once the image of beauty, wealth and happiness, succumbs to sorrow. She confides in Félix:

Vous vivrez heureux, je mourrai de douleur! Les hommes font eux-mêmes les événements de leur vie, et la mienne est à jamais fixée. Aucune puissance ne peut briser cette lourde chaîne à laquelle la femme tient par un anneau d'or, emblème de la pureté des épouses. (Balzac 85)

[You will live happily, I shall die of sorrow! Men make the events of their lives themselves, and mine is forever determined. No power can break this heavy chain to which a woman is held by a gold ring, emblem of the purity of wives.]

Moreover, Mme de Mortsauf is unable to reconcile her inherent sexuality with her quest for spirituality, rendering a struggle between temporal desire and ephemeral perfection, a spiritual battle destined by her role in 19th-century society. The trauma that Mme de Mortsauf endures becomes pathological and, paradoxically, the “angel” whom Félix de Vandenesse seeks, personifies a pure, virtuous, albeit powerless, martyr, who finds solace in starvation. Although Félix witnesses the tragedy of Mme de Mortsauf, who pursues the life of a devout saint, despite the strain of marriage and motherhood, he burdens her further with the suffering of his past. On the contrary, Mme de Mortsauf had hoped for a confidant to appease her anguish, having realized her own psychological aberrations. Her resignation to exude saintliness, the deficiency in alleviating her burdens and the expectations of Félix for her perfection, compounded by her sexual attraction to him, result in a psychological resolution: anorexia nervosa, the paradox of control, culminating from the duality of body and spirit and the war between desire and the expectations of society (McEachern 93). Ravaged through self-imposed annihilation, her death masque reflects the beauty of an angel, the brilliance of a star and the attainment of virtuous power. In death, as in life, Mme de Mortsauf epitomizes the ethereal lily of the valley, symbol of purity. Having been subjugated to the demands of her family during her entire life, she does not possess a sense of self and can no longer endure emotional duress. Although she has fulfilled the

ideal of the dictates of 19th-century society, this precisely ends in her downfall, as well as does the domain of her religiosity which not only consumes her, but causes her spiritual empowerment and her impending demise. The psychological danger which Mme de Mortsauf feels compelled to escape resides in her belief that she must avoid her sexuality in order to delay confronting the angel/whore complex propagated by social expectations. The reconciliation of the archetypical angel who inspires and the insatiable carnal desires of a profligate woman is rendered impossible, not only for Félix de Vandenesse, but also for Mme de Mortsauf. Thus, she resolves her psychological dilemma in choosing death by starvation and the attainment of spiritual empowerment.

Expecting Henriette to appease his unendurable suffering and consummate his sexual desire for her, Félix does not realize that her refusal to acquiesce emanates from the authenticity of her virtue: *«Certes, elle aimait comme Laure de Noves aimait Pétrarque, et non comme Francesca da Rimini aimait Paolo: affreuse découverte pour qui rêvait l'union de ces deux sortes d'amour!»* [Certainly, she loved as Laura de Noves loved Petrarch, and not as Francesca da Rimini loved Paolo: a shocking discovery for someone who was dreaming of the union of these two kinds of love!] (Balzac 207) Similarly, reflecting the metaphors of Madonna and Virgin that perpetuate her image, Henriette adamantly rejects the sexual advances of M. de Mortsauf in her fervent pursuit of saintliness.

Moreover, the wrath and abuse inflicted by M. de Mortsauf on his wife augment her suffering, but also bestow her power in deflecting his temperament to protect her children. Unfortunately, however, Mme de Mortsauf believes that abuse is requisite for existence, a mechanism acquired in her youth with an absentee mother which will later parallel her anorexic

thoughts that deprivation is the equivalent of power. In fact, after having forfeited his *liaison* with the insatiable seductress, Lady Arabelle, Félix devotes himself to Mme de Mortsauf in empathy of her condition which controls not only Félix, but the obedience of all she encounters. As her health deteriorates while her self-empowerment inversely escalates, Dr. Origet reveals to Félix that she is dying from an incurable sadness. Ironically, Mme de Mortsauf does not possess the power to relinquish the despotic power she has attained, analogous to the tyrannical power of M. de Mortsauf whose chronic subjugation also presages her destiny. Realizing that she has no other alternative to transcend her circumstances, she chooses to wield a “powerless power” (McEachern 159) through which her unwavering wrath will determine her fate: *«Il n'existe aucun remède, et les souffrances sont horribles. Riche, jeune, belle, et mourir maigrie, vieillie par la faim, car elle mourra de faim! Depuis quarante jours, l'estomac étant comme fermé rejette tout aliment, sous quelque forme qu'on le présente.»* [No remedy exists, and the suffering is horrible. Rich, young, beautiful, and to die emaciated, aged by starvation, for she will die of starvation! For forty days, her stomach, as if it were obstructed, rejects all food, in whatever form it is served.] (Balzac 288) The threshold of death upon her, Mme de Mortsauf relinquishes the “powerlessness of her power,” the oxymoron that will ultimately manifest an agonizing death, and clings to her disillusioned belief that she will survive provided that Félix nourishes her. Alas, Mme de Mortsauf confesses her love for Félix, a confession that echoes the *dénouement* of the 1981 version of Madame X. Unfortunately, however, a portrait of Mme de Mortsauf, analogous to the ravaged features of Mme X on her deathbed, reveals an anguished death:

Ses tempes creusées, ses joues rentrées montraient les formes intérieures du visage, et le sourire qui formaient ses lèvres blanches ressemblait vaguement au ricanement de la mort. Sa robe croisée sur son sein attestait le maigreur de son beau corsage...Ce n'était

plus ma délicieuse Henriette...mais le quelque chose sans nom de Bossuet...que la faim, les désirs trompés poussaient au combat égoïste de la vie contre la mort. (Balzac 298)

Her hollowed temples, her sunken cheeks showed the interior forms of her face, and the smile that her white lips formed vaguely resembled the scorn of death. Her dress crossed over her breast attested to the emaciation of her beautiful bodice...She was no longer my beautiful Henriette...but the nameless something of Bossuet...that starvation, betrayed desires pushed into the selfish struggle of life against death.

Her unsuccessful attempts to deflect familial conflict and diffuse the chronic outbursts of M. de Mortsauf resulted in bitterness, uncharacteristic of this lovely woman as her deterioration consumed her. Although she believes that Félix could rescue her from her tragic fate, she paradoxically believes that she is not worthy of happiness. In fact, she equates happiness to illness, something that overwhelms her. The psychological conflict of Mme de Mortsauf reflects a battle waged as the impossibility of the expression of anger, and as her internal struggle perpetuates, her battle overwhelms her to the realization that her war has been lost. The pervasive powerlessness, the inferior self-esteem and the rueful anguish, endemic symptoms of Mme de Mortsauf, manifest her resolve in anorexia nervosa, a lethal behavior whose etiology reflects the imperatives of society and the belief that she must capitulate to these social expectations due to her perceptions of personal limitation (McEachern 175). Ultimately, although Mme de Mortsauf clandestinely yearns for the realization of her desires, her resolute quest for perfection, as disembodied spirit, culminates in a self-destructive and unattainable pursuit, an unfulfilled longing that witnesses her demise. Thus, the more Madame de Mortsauf and Madame X wield their power, the more they will succumb.

II. LE POISON VERT D'UN AGE OUBLIÉ

[THE GREEN POISON OF A FORGOTTEN AGE]

«La vie est cruellement mêlée d'absinthe.»

Madame de Sévigné

Lettre du 17 février 1672

[Life is cruelly blended with absinthe.]

A central phenomenon of the *Belle Epoque*, absinthe was a symbol of decadence in 19th-century France and a panacea for poets and painters such as Baudelaire, Manet, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Degas, Lautrec, Van Gogh, Monticelli, Gauguin, Jarry and Picasso. Derived from the Greek *apsinthion* (“undrinkable”), absinthe was called *apsinthium* in the first century A.D. and wormwood is known as *Artemisia absinthium*, named for the goddess Diana. In 13th-century France, essence of *assince* or *absince* was given to dogs, and by the 14th century, *assenz* was prescribed for human digestion. In the fifteenth century, absinthe was known as *absynce*, and Rabelais identified it as *absynthe* in 1546. During the 17th and 18th centuries in England, pillows were filled with absinthe, it was hung from rafters and burned to fumigate houses infected with the plague. A French doctor, Pierre Ordinaire, who fled France’s revolution to settle in Couvet, a Swiss village, invented modern absinthe in 1792. Dr. Ordinaire discovered the plant *Artemisia absinthium* in the Val-de-Travers region and the 136 proof elixir became known as *La Fée Verte*

("The Green Fairy"). Upon his death in 1821, he left his secret recipe to two Henriad sisters from Couvet who, in turn, left it to Major Dubied, a visiting Frenchman, whose son-in-law was Henri-Louis Pernod. In 1805, Pernod opened an expanded factory, Pernod Fils in Pontarlier, France. His eldest son, Edouard, remained in Couvet, transferring the company to his name, and had a son, Edouard, who began his own company in 1897. The founder's younger son, Louis, managed the Pernod Fils factory in Pontarlier and built a factory on the Doubs river with a daily production in excess of 400 liters. Following the death of Fritz Pernod, the son of Louis, in 1880, Louis-Alfred, the brother of Fritz, managed Pernod Fils and established a partnership with Arthur Veil-Picard, a banker from Besançon, France. Although the Pernod Fils name was retained, the enterprise assumed the name of Veil-Picard & Compagnie. After Louis-Alfred Pernod retired in 1894, Veil-Picard's sons, Arthur, Edmond, and Léon, operated the company, reaping a daily production of 30,000 liters by the turn of the century and distributing all over the world. By 1896, daily production had increased to 125,000 liters.

The hallucinogenic effects of absinthe on the mind and sense of reality are phenomenal and characterized by a bizarre type of drunkenness, producing a certain clarity of thought, an inebriation that contains between fifty and seventy percent of alcohol. The inexplicable, conscious-shifting effects of absinthe render another perspective of reality, as if a new source of understanding and creativity becomes available and perception is enhanced, unlocking creative powers for ideas, solutions and inspiration. According to one French doctor in 1872, the Green Fairy influences transformations of the mind, illuminations of the mental faculties and the phenomenon of enhancement in sensory perception. Although high in alcohol content, absinthe has the opposite effect: all sensations are perceived by all senses simultaneously, similar to synesthesia. The natural substance, thujone, present in the wormwood plant from which absinthe

is made is responsible for the inexplicable, remarkable effects of this *liqueur*. However, how thujone produces such effects remains a mystery. In addition, thujone compels the mind to yield a different level of awareness, a state in which the mind is able to connect with a universal consciousness or intelligence from which it draws enhanced abilities. Different from a mystical source, the mind taps into a deeply hidden subconscious source which the conscious mind cannot otherwise access. In this state, the docile subconscious mind awakens and works with the conscious awareness; hence, the perception of reality on two levels. As a result, the creative, cognitive and perceptive abilities attain new heights. Moreover, absinthe causes cholinergic receptor binding activity which, according to scientists, has the effect of improving cognitive functions of the brain. On the contrary, a courtroom scene in the 1966 film version of “Madame X” revealed that the prolonged and chronic use of absinthe was not only addictive, but also had an irreversible degenerative effect on the central nervous system. During this scene, it was also proved that Holly Parker, Madame X, who had been transformed into a wraith of anguish, was addicted to absinthe.¹⁶¹⁷

Among the French poets, Verlaine constructed a Bohemian cult around absinthe, which provided him with a sense of exaltation evoked in his poetry and rendered him violent and unpredictable. The death of his cousin, Elisa Moncomble, who had financed his «*Poèmes saturniens*», in February 1867, had a profound influence on the distraught Verlaine: “I became a drunk...so much so that returning to Paris where the beer is awful, it was upon absinthe that I threw myself, absinthe day and night” (Conrad 25). In September 1871, however, his misfortune changed with the arrival of Arthur Rimbaud, a sixteen-year-old aspiring poet, in Paris. Inspired

¹⁷ The recipe for Pernod Fils consisted of six herbs: *la grande absinthe* and *la petite absinthe*, from Pontarlier; hyssop, for the green hue; Melissa, used in *eau de cologne*; fennel, from the Gard region of France and Italy; and anise, from the Tarn region and Andalusia. Pernod Fils also used an *eau de vie* distilled from wine for alcohol from Languedoc and Roussillon.

by Baudelaire's vision of life, Rimbaud believed: "It is through dreaming that man communicates with the dark dream by which he is surrounded" (Conrad 25). By November 1871, Verlaine and Rimbaud were inseparable, and Rimbaud also believed that a poet would sacrifice everything, including honor and sanity, to become a visionary.

ABSINTHE

*Absinthe, mère des bonheurs, ô
liqueur infinie, tu miroites en mon verre
comme les yeux verts et pâles de la
maîtresse qu[e] jadis j'aimais. Absinthe,
mère des bonheurs, comme Elle, tu
laisses dans le corps un souvenir de
lointaines douleurs; absinthe, mère
des rages folles et des ivresses titubantes,
ou l'on peut, sans se croire un
fou, se dire aimé de sa maîtresse.
Absinthe, ton parfum me berce...*

[Absinthe, mother of all happiness, O
infinite liquor, you glint in my glass
green and pale like the eyes of the
mistress I once loved. Absinthe, mother
of happiness, like Her, you leave in the

body a memory of distant pain; absinthe,
mother of insane rages and of staggering
drunkenness, where one can say
without thinking oneself mad that one is
loved by one's mistress. Absinthe, your
fragrance soothes me...]

Gustave Kahn (1859-1936)

In an 1872 letter to Paul Démeny, Rimbaud wrote:

Every form of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself; he
consumes all the poisons in him, keeping only their quintessences. Ineffable torture
in which he will need all his faith and superhuman strength, the great criminal, the great
sickman, the utterly damned, and the supreme Savant! For he arrives at the Unknown!
Since he has cultivated his soul---richer to begin with than any other! He arrives at the
unknown: and even if, half-crazed, in the end, he loses the understanding of his visions, he
has seen them!" (Conrad 26)

Having drunk absinthe in excess, Rimbaud wrote an 1872 ballad about drinking entitled

«*Comédie de la Soif*» ("Comedy of Thirst"):

Come, the Wines go to the beaches,
And the waves by the millions!
See the wild Bitter
Rolling from the top of the mountains!
Let us, wise pilgrims, reach

The Absinthe with the green pillars... (Conrad 26)

Unlike Verlaine, who became brutal and cruel after having imbibed absinthe, Rimbaud regarded drinking as a necessity, distinct from being a pleasure, for his poetry. In fact, his prose poem, “Morning of Drunkenness,” in *Illuminations* reveals the relationship between drinking and his vocation as a poet:

*Petite veille d'ivresse, sainte!...Nous t'affirmons, méthode!...
Nous avons foi au poison. Nous savons donner notre vie toute
entière tous les jours. Voici les temps des Assassins.*

[Little drunken vigil holy!...We pronounce you method!...We
Have faith in the poison. We know how to give our entire life every
day. Now is the time of the Assassins.] (Adams 75)

On September 7, 1872, both poets went to London, accompanied by the artists and political exiles from the Paris Commune of 1870, and a year later, Rimbaud ended the relationship. On July 9, 1873, Verlaine shot Rimbaud and received five years in prison. Rimbaud then terminated his use of absinthe and Verlaine, and wrote a final tribute to visionary poetry, «*Une Saison en enfer*» (“A Season in Hell”). When Rimbaud abandoned poetry, he relinquished the ultimate happiness in his life. Rimbaud died of paralysis on November 9, 1891, after having converted to Catholicism on his deathbed. In 1884, Verlaine had published *Les Poètes maudits*, which enhanced Rimbaud’s literary reputation and, although once regarded as a mystic Catholic poet, the religious inspiration was fading from his poems by 1885. Before his death in 1896, Verlaine

denounced absinthe as “the source of folly and crime, of idiocy and shame which governments should tax heavily if they don’t abolish it” (Conrad 36).

In 1876, Degas painted the famous *L’Absinthe*, portrayed in a Paris *café*, the illustrious *La Nouvelle Athènes* on the *Place Pigalle*, where the exchange of ideas influenced the arts of the *Belle Epoque*. In this portrait, Degas depicted actress, Ellen Andrée, and the engraver, Marcellin Desboutin, a renowned character in Bohemian circles. In comparison to Manet’s absinthe portrait from 1859, Degas’s composition reflects the spontaneity of a photograph, while Manet utilized traditional space evocative of Velázquez. His *café* scene echoes the words of Baudelaire:

Though I have sung the mad pleasures of wine and opium, I thirst only for a liquor unknown on earth which the pharmaceutics of heaven itself could not afford me; a liquor that contains neither vitality or death, neither excitation nor extinction. To know nothing, to will nothing, to sleep and still to sleep, this today is my only wish. A base and loathsome wish, but sincere. (Conrad 44)

This portrait also depicted a time and place: *l’heure verte* (“the green hour”) in a Montmartre *café*. According to H.P. Hugh, a *fin de siècle* writer on this quarter of Paris:

The sickly odour of absinthe lies heavily in the air. The ‘absinthe’ hour of the Boulevards begins vaguely at half-past-five, and it ends just as vaguely at half-past-seven; but on the hill it never ends. Not that it is a home of the drunkard in any way; but the deadly opal drink lasts longer than anything else, and it is the aim of Montmartre to stop as long as possible on the *terrasse* of a *café* and watch the world go by. To spend an hour in a really typical haunt of the Bohemians is a liberal education. There is none of the reckless gaiety of the Latin quarter, but at the same time there is a grim delight in chaffing at death and bankruptcy. (Conrad 44)

This portrays the Montmartre of Zola's novel, *Nana*, about the libertine courtesan, who would inhabit her room on the *Rue de Rochefoucauld*, drinking absinthe and gossiping with her childhood friend and paramour, Satin. This was the world which propagated the reputation of absinthe as an aphrodisiac. The following passage depicts the *demi-mondaine* engaging in absinthe with Satin, hidden from the world of the theatre:

She would chat away for hours, pouring out endless confidences, while Satin lay on her bed in her chemise, with her feet higher than her head, smoking cigarettes as she listened. Sometimes, on afternoons when they were both in the dumps, they would treat themselves to absinthe, 'to help them forget' as they put it. Satin did not go downstairs or even put on a petticoat, but simply went and leant over the banisters to shout her order to the concierge's little girl, a kid of ten who, when she brought up the absinthe in a glass, would look furtively at the lady's bare legs. Every conversation led up to a single subject: the beastliness of men. (Baker 119)

The English Impressionists regarded *L'Absinthe* as a literary performance, a novelette and treatise against drink, and Zola, who had become a symbol of the decadent, had mastered literary art. Also, with regard to the admonition of addiction, Satin relates to Nana *l'histoire* of the former courtesan, now aged, Queen Pomaré:

Oh, she had been such a splendid girl once, who had fascinated all Paris with her beauty. And such go, and such cheek---leading the men about by their noses, and leaving great notabilities blubbing on her staircase! Now she was always getting drunk, and the women of the district gave her absinthe for the sake of a laugh, after which the street urchins threw stones at her and chased her. Altogether it was a real come-down, a queen falling into the mud! Nana listened, feeling her blood freeze. (Baker 126)

In 1887, Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) drew a pastel portrait of his friend, Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), with a glass of absinthe, a *de rigueur* vice for a classic Bohemian. Although he did not adhere to any society, Van Gogh frequented the *Café du Tambourin*, where neo-

impressionist painters such as Lautrec, Bernard (1868-1941) and Anquetin (1861-1932) congregated and exhibited their works. The characterization of his paintings by intense yellow hues and halo effects was attributed to acute mania with delirium or epilepsy. In 1981, Dr. Thomas Courtney Lee concluded that Van Gogh may have suffered from intoxication of digitalis, a 19th-century remedy for epilepsy, which can effect disorientation, yellow vision and coronas of swirling light, phenomena that describe his later paintings, dominated by yellow, his chromatic obsession. However, Van Gogh had never received treatments with digitalis, but he did drink enormous amounts of absinthe. In 1886, he painted a still life of an absinthe bottle and glass, a form of self-portraiture.

The Marseilles artist, Adolphe Joseph Thomas Monticelli (1824-1886), influenced Van Gogh and died while the latter was living in Montmartre. Although these artists never met, Van Gogh admired his paintings with colors that resembled jewels and encrusted surfaces. Supposedly, Monticelli, who frequented the *Café de l'Univers* in Marseilles and bordered esthetic mysticism, died of absinthe consumption. His visionary paintings were composed of nymphs, Don Quixote and Faustus, and Van Gogh pledged to continue Monticelli's painting. In September 1888, Van Gogh painted the *Café de l'Alcazar*, a favorite haunt of *absintheurs*, entitled *Night Café at Arles*, which expresses his idea that a *café* is conducive to ruin, madness and crime. According to Van Gogh, *Night Café* evokes "the powers of darkness in a low public house, by soft Louis XV green and malachite, contrasting with yellow-green and harsh blue-greens, and all this in an atmosphere like a devil's furnace, of pale sulphur": absinthe. On Christmas Eve 1888, Van Gogh excised the lobe of his left ear, after having threatened Gauguin, who had painted *Dans un café à Arles*, depicting the same *café* as Van Gogh had painted, with a razor. On February 9, 1889, Van Gogh relapsed and was again

institutionalized in the asylum, where he suffered hallucinations and suicidal ideation. Finally, on July 27, 1890, he shot himself in the stomach, dying after two days, and some physicians believed he could have had a congenital brain lesion exacerbated by absinthe.

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) began painting *absintheurs* in 1900, when the reputation of *La Fée Verte* was diminishing and became known as “bottled madness” and “the green curse” (Conrad 75). An *absintheur* fascinated by the world of absinthe, Picasso painted pictures of nocturnal Paris that reflect those of Lautrec. The suicide of a fellow artist, Carlos Casagemas, drove him to paint in blue and green, the colors of absinthe, and Picasso returned to Barcelona, Spain’s most *avant-garde* city, where he painted the haunting pictures of his Blue Period for two years. In 1901, he created *Woman Drinking Absinthe*, a psychological portrait of someone under the influence of alcohol: her long extremities embrace her thin body; her eyes wreek of carnal desire; the glass and siphon of absinthe are in the foreground; and the images in the mirror behind become flat and metamorphose. In contrast to early depictions of *absintheurs*, the *fin de siècle* witnessed portraits of absinthe with anguished or unchaste women. Also in 1901, he painted *The Absinthe Drinker*, a powerful, psychological portrait of addiction. In contrast to Impressionist paintings such as *L’Absinthe* by Degas, Picasso’s pictures do not represent *une tranche de vie* (“a slice of life”), but rather express the emotional world of the artist. His 1911 painting, *The Glass of Absinthe*, represents a masterpiece of analytic cubism: a glass of absinthe, a fan and a book on a table are transformed contrary to Renaissance perspective, but drawn from multiple angles in fragmented, interlocking shapes. The objects overlap, analogous to the way in which the human mind allows memory, emotions and time to transect. In 1914, Picasso and his dealer, Kahnweiler, issued the sculpture, “*The Glass of Absinthe*,” in an edition of six bronzes, the last great work of art inspired by absinthe. This cubist translation of the

absinthe glass revealed that absurdity, ambiguity and unconvention could be transformed into a new style of art. Nevertheless, within six months of the sculpture's creation, absinthe would be banned.

The spring of 1915 was bright. A pink mist bathed the hills. One morning, gendarmes were seen riding through the villages. They confiscated the absinthe they had discovered in the cellars, the cabins, the taverns. The distilleries were closed.

On March 17, the fabrication, the sale, either wholesale or retail, and the circulation of absinthe were forbidden throughout France...

Absinthe vanished during the First World War. Sufferings, then the joy of victory, have erased its very memory...

In 1917 the Pernod fils distilleries closed their gates at the east end of Pontarlier...

It is easy, nowadays, to find in the Paris flea market one of those little pierced spoons that the wormwood used to drip through.

...What became of the countless bottles seized by the French gendarmes after March 17, 1915?...

After the war, Paris experienced *les folles années*. People forgot absinthe.

Christophe Bataille, *Absinthe*

III. LE FIN DE SIECLE

Les 35 années qui séparent la naissance de la tour Eiffel de la guerre de 1914 furent appelées rétrospectivement «la Belle Epoque».

Ce fut en effet une belle époque que connut la France et Paris, époque de l'esprit, de l'intelligence, de l'urbanité, de la courtoisie, de l'élégance, de la liberté, de la création sous toutes ses formes: architecture---peinture----sculpture---littérature---musique---sciences et techniques. Wagner se joue à l'Opéra, Debussy à l'Opéra Comique, Sarah Bernhardt est acclamée, Bergson domine la pensée; les peintres créent de nouveaux mondes visuels, les compositeurs de nouveaux musicaux. Paris brûle d'une flamme blanche, le plus degré de la combustion.

Christian de Bartillat (1902-1991)

[The 35 years that separate the birth of the Eiffel Tower from the war of 1914 were called retrospectively “The Belle Epoque.” It was , in effect, a beautiful age that France and Paris knew, age of spirit, intelligence, urbanity, courtesy, elegance, freedom, creation under all its forms: architecture---painting---sculpture---literature---music---sciences and techniques. Wagner plays at the *Opéra*, Debussy at the *Opéra Comique*, Sarah Bernhardt is acclaimed, Bergson dominates thought; the painters create new visual worlds, the composers new musicals. Paris burns with a white flame, the highest degree of combustion.]

The effects of Haussman’s plan for the redevelopment of Paris became evident after 1870, when France was recovering from its defeat and the suppression of the Commune, which produced a social *milieu* of the *bourgeoisie* in the capital, complemented by democratization, as witnessed by the success of the *grands magasins*. The Third Republic and universal suffrage were accompanied by the «*nivellement des jouissances*», the harbinger of consumer society and mass culture, which established the foundations for the enchantment of Paris during the *Belle Epoque*. Also, the *café-concert* and the music hall, and the expositions effected the *nivellement des jouissances*. In fact, at the turn of the century, there were more than two hundred *café-*

concerts, music halls, dance palaces, and *cabarets critiques*, which offered inexpensive and spectacular pleasures and were frequented by all social classes. According to a horrified contemporary regarding the *café-concerts*:

In all of these halls, singing, dancing, and often shameless dramatic performances are given these days in front of princes, wealthy loafers, fashionable ladies, and those who act as if they were. This type of entertainment...manifests, above all, a desire for uninhibitedness, languorousness, spectacle, and debasement that is peculiar to our times...In the *café-concert*, on the other hand, there are none of these limits! One smokes, drinks, comes and goes as one pleases, while watching highly suggestive acts and listening to incredibly risqué jokes. The *café-concert* is the paradise of libertinism and the most determined bad taste. On top of this the prices are low and the incitement of all the senses is practically free. For a few sous one gets everything that refreshes as well as excites. How then could one avoid coming here to still, or seem to still, the freely admitted or secret desire for dissolute excess that currently plagues the *peuple* as much as good society? (Willms 336)

Similar to the *grands magasins*, the *café-concerts* accommodated all members of society

at moderate prices and offered an array of goods and entertainment. In contrast to the theatres, in which the audience had tiered reservations, customers in the *café-concerts* could perch anywhere indefinitely. Although the entertainment depended on the singers, dancers, acrobats or magicians, the spectacle of the crowd in an ambience of extravagance provided another form of diversion. The *Folies-Bergère*, for example,

was embellished with stucco, gilt, allegorical murals, ceiling paintings, a multitude of mirrors and lighting, and an elegant bar commemorated by the famous painting by Manet.

Maupassant describes the bar in his novel *Bel-Ami*:

In the large vestibule that leads to the circular promenade, where elegantly dressed beauties of easy virtue mingle with men in dark suits, a group of women waited for arrivals at one of the three bars, behind which presided three heavily made-up, faded ladies selling drinks and love. The tall mirrors behind them reflected their backs and the faces of the passersby. (Willms 336)

The *Folies-Bergère* and other similar establishments were *rendez-vous* for a metropolitan society desiring to drown its loneliness in the intoxication of sensation. This anonymous public is described to Duroy, the protagonist of *Bel-Ami*, who arrives there for the first time:

Take a look at the orchestra section: nothing but bourgeois with their wives and children; good stupid types who come to look. In the boxes there are some men-about-town, a few artists, several not quite first-class prostitutes; and behind us [in the foyer] the most peculiar mixture in all of Paris. Who are these men? Look at them. Everything is there, all professions and all classes, but the rabble dominates. Over there are white-collar types, bank clerks, salesmen, government clerks, journalists, pimps, officers in civilian dress, dandies in tails who dine in cheap restaurants and hurry out of the opera so as to be on time for the [Théâtre des] Italiens; and finally, a crowd of indescribable, dubious types. As for women, there is only one brand: the tart from the [Café] Américain, the two-louis prostitute, who chases five-louis foreigners but falls back on her regulars when she is free. They've been around for ten years now; they've been seen in the same places every evening all year long, except when they have to go to the Saint-Lazare or Lourcine hospitals for treatment. (Willms 336-37)

The *café-concerts* and music halls also allowed freedom, compared to the discipline of the routine of work, and featured discontinuous segments, in contrast to the sequences of time that characterized the stage. This development reflected the accelerated rhythm of modern life.

Moreover, the attractions of the *café-concerts* and music halls surpassed the three expositions held in Paris during the *Belle Epoque*. According to Eugen Weber, each exposition signaled the *dénouement* of a crisis that shattered France: the exposition of 1878 witnessed the end of the postwar period, the victory of the Republic over royalist restoration; the exposition of

1889 marked the hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution and terminated the Boulanger crisis; and the exposition of 1900 signaled a new century after the conclusion of the Dreyfus affair. These expositions, each more spectacular than the previous, transposed widespread optimism over the chronic fear of crises in the *Belle Epoque*. The construction of the Eiffel Tower during the exposition of 1889 epitomized this feeling of optimism.

Foreign visitors to the expositions propagated the French capital to be the most dissolute metropolis. Apropos the English, who composed the largest contingent of foreign tourists:

Foreigners admire, fill, and enrich Paris, where they...find places of entertainment that they themselves help to flourish by paying the high prices they later boast of having paid. But as soon as they return home and are sitting by their coal fires plagued by boredom, they can be heard to say: "That is the most immoral city in the world," and overlook the fact that they are responsible for at least half of the moral decay of which they accuse us. (Willms 338)

The legend that *Belle Epoque* Paris constituted a capital of pleasure and immorality was more true than exaggerated, since late 19th-century Paris witnessed the social and moral phenomena of modern life, more apparent than in any other metropolis. In view of Haussmann's development, the Commune of 1871 can be regarded as an attempt to recapture life before the Second Empire, hopes destroyed with the suppression of the Commune. The transformation of Paris represented the only successful revolution in Paris during the 19th century, creating the conditions of modern life that witnessed two and a half million inhabitants by 1914.

The festive exuberance of the *Belle Epoque*, "a dance on top of a volcano," represented a way for society to cope with the alienation of modern life (Willms 338). After the literary and artistic bohemians abandoned their *cafés* in the Latin Quarter in the late 1870s, they discovered the idyll of *Montmartre*, replete with *cabarets* and artists' balls. On October 6, 1889,

Montmartre became the center of nightlife after the opening of the *Moulin Rouge*, an institution that has since symbolized Paris all over the world. The narrow streets and blended population of *Montmartre* contrasted Haussmann's expanded and structured Paris, and *Montmartre* realized expectations of nostalgia and utopia as a remedy for modern urbanity. The dissolute nightlife of *Montmartre* manifested freedom from the constraints of daily life and disdain for the norms of the *bourgeoisie*. Ironically, the Paris that witnessed a revolution that pledged "liberty, equality, and fraternity," on the cusp of the 19th century became the Paris of excess of the *Belle Epoque* (Willms 339). The emblem of Paris of a sailing ship signified her endurance, perseverance, timelessness and immortality, even despite the advent of World War I.

*Les lieux que nous avons connus n'appartiennent pas
qu'au monde de l'espace où nous situons pour plus de
facilité. Ils n'étaient qu'une mince tranche au milieu
d'impressions contigües qui formaient notre vie d'alors;
le souvenir d'une certaine image n'est que le regret d'un
certain instant; et les maisons, les routes, les avenues,
sont fugitives, hélas! comme les années.*

The places we have known do not belong merely to the spatial world in which, for convenience, we locate them. They were merely a narrow strip of the dense impressions that formed our life at that time; the memory of a certain image is but the nostalgia for a certain moment; and the houses, roads and avenues are as fugitive, alas, as the years.

Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*

The *Belle Epoque* represented the culminating point of civilization and culture and, following the Second Empire, a period of peace and prosperity, despite political radicalism and anticlericalism. *Cinquante ans de Panache* and *Mon Paris et ses parisiens* by André Fouquières portray the way of life, behaviors and habits of an elegant, refined and cultivated society during the *Années Folles* of the *Belle Epoque*, analogous to that of Proust in *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*. The famous «madeleine», which causes Marcel Proust's desperate search for lost time, evokes the perfume of the *Belle Epoque*. These «madeleines», made in Commercy and Illiers, represent *souvenirs* of his childhood that provoke his memory. Proust gave the name Combray to Illiers, which is the contraction of Cambrai, or Fénélon, and Combourg, which the *vicomte de Chateaubriand* observes in his «*Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*» (Gaillard 5). The framework of Proust's life, however, takes place in Paris of the *Belle Epoque*, with the exception of some journeys to Trouville and Cabourg, Holland and the France of Ruskin, the famous English art critic who praises Gothic architecture. Around 1900, Paris metamorphosed to modernity, witnessing the age of the telephone, for which Proust had an affinity, the first automobiles, cinema, aviation and the *Métropolitain* with beautiful *art nouveau* stations of Hector Guimard. The *Belle Epoque* symbolizes a universal, Parisian melting pot: duchesses, *salons*, intelligence, writers, poets, musicians, wits, and sentiments in an elegant cosmopolitanism that sets the tone and maintains civilization. The *Belle Epoque* also represents the poignantly nostalgic music of Eric Satie, who evoked fleeting, lost time. The music of Satie

during his era reverberated as a distant echo depicting images of a past splendor. In effect, the Third Republic had bestowed France with prosperity and happiness; thus, *la Belle Epoque*. According to Christian de Bartillat, «*Paris brûla alors d'une flamme blanche, le plus haut degré de combustion*» [Paris burned at that time with a white flame, the highest degree of combustion] (Gaillard 5).

At the turn of the 19th century, poetry witnessed great prestige, and the term «*prince de poètes*» could be applied to many men of letters, who produced a collection of poems (Lejeune 136). This included Jules Romains (1885-1972) in 1904, Georges Duhamel (1884-1966) in 1907, and François Mauriac (1885-1970), Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) and Francis Carco (1886-1958) in 1910. Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894), whose work dominated *Le Parnasse*, promoted the triumph of symbolism, which he had opposed, before his death in 1894. *Le Parnasse* espoused serene poetry perpetuating human emotions *vis-à-vis* an informal group of poets, who exalted beauty in a mystical way and revealed profound sentiments. A faithful disciple and friend of Leconte, José María de Heredia (1842-1905), had written his last collection of sonnets, *Les Trophées*, in 1893. He defined *le Parnasse* by the poet who is as truly human as he is impersonal. The last fifteen years of the 19th century witnessed the triumph of *les symbolistes*, who adhered to a sense of mystery, the employ of verbal music, suggestion and, of course, symbol. After the disappearance of Leconte de Lisle, Verlaine became the «*prince des poètes*», while Rimbaud stopped writing in 1875 and died in 1891, and Mallarmé (1842-1898) composed *Divagations*, diverse reflections on the nature of poetry in 1897. Symbolists who appear during the *Belle Epoque* include: Albert Samain (1858-1900), apostle of the «*paysage d'âmes*» (“landscape of souls”); the Belgian, Maeterlinck (1862-1949), who represents the symbolist theatre (*L'Oiseau bleu*, 1909 [*Bluebird*]) and received the Nobel prize in 1911; and Germain

Nouveau (1851-1920) and Saint-Pol-Roux (1861-1940), also known as Paul Roux, one of the last magical poets and precursor of *surréalisme*, who evokes the baroque in symbolism (Lejeune 137). In addition, naturalism and, especially, realism were established, Flaubert having died in 1880, and the application of experimental sciences to the study of human and social realities was made by Zola, influenced by Claude Bernard (1813-1878) and Taine (1828-1893). In 1893, the year of the death of Maupassant, Zola finished *Les Rougon-Macquart*, published from 1894 to 1897. His accidental death in 1902 rendered the publication of *Vérité* posthumous and *Justice* incomplete. Adhering to realism and the truth of interpretation, the *Théâtre Libre* of Antoine assured the triumph of naturalist drama, with the social plays of Octave Mirbeau (1848-1917) (*Les Affaires sont les affaires*, 1903) and *Poil de Carotte* by Jules Renard (1864-1910), brought to the stage in 1900 from the novel in 1894. Charles-Louis Philippe (1874-1909) also wrote realist passages from autobiographical *souvenirs* (*Bubu de Montparnasse*, 1901, *Le Père Perdrix*, 1902), Jules Renard published *Journal*, and J.-K. Huysmans (1848-1907) converted to Christian mysticism (*L'Oblat*, *Les Foules de Lourdes*).

Theodor Fontane (1819-1898), a German novelist and poet of the 19th century and *Belle Epoque*, appealed to a European audience, because his work belongs to traditional narrative realism. His knowledge of European literature, experience as a journalist, traveler and theatre critic, and complementary writings sustained his novels of social life, depicted against the background of Prussia. Fontane transformed the German novel, characterized by introspection and provinciality, and was considered the foremost novelistic chronicler of the new Germany. Although Fontane shares a profound interest

in humanity with Balzac, Dickens and Tolstoy, his novels appear less dramatic and comprehensive than those of his European counterparts, and more muted in tone and scope.

*Il y a dans l'Histoire de la France des âges
plus éclatants que la Belle Epoque: la
Renaissance, le Grand Siècle, le XVIII^{ème},
mais il n'y en a pas qui nous inspire aujourd'hui
une mélancolie plus rêveuse. Il y a dans la
Belle Epoque des grâces d'automne plus
charmante[s] que n'importe quel printemps.*

Jean d'Ormeson

[There are in the History of France ages
more brilliant than the *Belle Epoque*:
the Renaissance, the Great Century, the
Eighteenth century, but there are not any
which inspires in us a more dreamy
melancholy today. There are in the *Belle
Epoque* graces of autumn more charming
than any spring.]

According to recent studies of European Realism, his social portraiture is more concerned with contemporary changes in thought and the symbolization of personal and social life than with detailed presentation of physical realities in texts. Compared to writers of the mid-19th century, Fontane takes the focus off of plot and the panoramic portrayal of social life, revising traditional structures as his narratives become more self-consciously reflective. As a result, his realism is subtle, restrained and allusive, engaging the construct of values and the definition of identity, as well as his perceptions of class, codes of behavior and mechanisms of repression. He emerges as a writer receptive to past styles of narration and creative in his interpretation, as he transforms the 19th-century German novel, despite cultural and personal differences during an age of transition, that compares with other European novels.

After having written about Prussia's war against Denmark in 1866 and the Austro-Prussian War in 1869, followed by imprisonment at Vaucouleurs during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Fontane wrote *Vor dem Sturm* (1878), a historical romance, proceeded by a series of novels of modern life, notably *L'Adultera* (1882), whose subject of adultery was considered *risqué* at the time. His novels *Irrungen, Wirrungen* (1888), *Frau Jenny Treibel* (1892), and *Effi Briest* (1894) revealed his characteristic tone, as well as insights of the lives of the nobility and the commoner, an achievement that manifested as poetic realism. His last finished novel, *Der Stechlin* (1899), witnessed the adaptation of realistic methods and social criticism of contemporary French fiction to the conditions of Prussian life. *Effi Briest*, Theodor Fontane's masterpiece, represents one of the most famous German realist novels of all time, forming a trilogy on marriage in the 19th century from a female perspective, as well as a tragedy on adultery, in conjunction with *Anna Karenina* (1873-77) and *Madame Bovary* (1857).

The *Belle Epoque* revealed Paris to be the capital of the literary, artistic and intellectual worlds, as well as the world of pleasure, a microcosm and model in which a Parisian writer at the turn of the century could discover a universal existence within his chosen city (Bancquart 9).

The charm of Paris evoked the animation of the *rue Royale* and the *Boulevards* near the *Madeleine* and the *Opéra*, and Paul-Jean Toulet (1867-1920), Claude Debussy (1862-1918) and Marcel Proust (1871-1922) frequented the *café* Weber, while men of the world and the *grandes cocottes* inhabited *Maxim*. Also, Montmartre offered provocative women in the style of the *Moulin Rouge* which gave famous shows, operettas, musical revues and pantomimes, one of the rare places that unveiled the feminine physiognomy: Liane de Pougy in 1904; Colette and Mistinguett in 1907. Moreover, the *Belle Epoque* witnessed great progress in science and technology which presaged a promising future. The universal Exposition of 1900 demonstrated the power of electricity, this «*feu céleste*» (“celestial fire”), consecrated in an official hymn by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) (Bancquart 11). With regard to humor, Georges Courteline (1858-1929) describes in his play, *L'Article 330*, the misfortunes of a man, who watches crowds on a sidewalk at the height of his second floor and, weary of the spectators, removes his trousers which leads him to justice. In addition, aviation witnessed a remarkable flight, *l'Aéro-Club de France* having existed from the turn of the century: the first *Salon de l'aéronautique* opened in 1908 and Louis Bleriot (1872-1936) traversed *la Manche* (“the English Channel”) in 1909. *La Tour Eiffel*, scorned by artists in 1889, was painted by Robert Delaunay (1885-1941) around 1910 and celebrated by poet, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918). According to Filippo Marinetti (1876-1944) in 1909: «*Nous voulons exalter le mouvement agressif [...] Une automobile de course [...] est plus belle que la Victoire de Samothrace*» [We want to exalt aggressive movement [...] A race car [...] is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace]

(Bancquart 12). The perception of movement also signaled cubism, which portrayed the different faces of an object and futurism. Moreover, the poetry of Apollinaire and Blaise Cendrars (1887-1961) is traversed by a quest for space, which depicts the impression of living in a world that endlessly offers new possibilities on an innovative trajectory.

IV. UNE NUIT A SE SOUVENIR

[A NIGHT TO REMEMBER]

She was the greatest liner of her time, a vast floating palace. The *Titanic* was larger and more luxurious than any other ship in the world---even her sister ship, the *Olympic*...

Fifteen thousand workers had labored for two years to build her. When the hull was launched, it was the largest man-made object ever moved. Once completed, the *Titanic* was 882½ feet long and as high as an eleven-story building, with space for 2,500 passengers. A ship this size was like a small city at sea, with its own hospital, barbershop, and post office.

Titanic: Ghosts of the Abyss

The motto of a coat of arms that epitomized the spirit of the epoch relates a metaphorical emblem of a sailing ship whose destination was unattainable due to the tossing waves, although the ship does not sink. In contrast, despite the fact that the *Titanic* also symbolized hope for the future, power, immortality and desire, the greatest liner of the *Belle Epoque* had an unattainable destination, because she was not unsinkable. Thus, the imaginations of Europeans were shattered as a result of this unforgettable tragedy. The *Titanic* became a metaphor for disillusionment and tragic fate, even to the extent that many passengers questioned the existence of God. One can say that the *Titanic* reflects the image of the *Belle Epoque*, a triumph of illusion and its catastrophic demise.

On April 10, 1912, the *Titanic* set sail on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York, where she was expected to arrive in six days. The largest liner ever built,

at a cost of \$7.5 million, approximately \$123 million in today's currency, she was 92½ feet wide and 53,800 tons (Brewster 6). On Sunday, April 14, 1912, 400 miles southeast of the coast of Newfoundland, the North Atlantic remained dark and calm with the air cold and sharp. At 11:40 P.M., the majesty of an era collided with fate.

Preceding the collision, the ship had been speeding at 22½ knots into a region where several reports had warned of an ice field. When the iceberg was sighted at around 500 yards, it was too late to do anything but initiate evasive precaution. Most of the passengers felt the collision as a shudder and were not alarmed. The fallacy that prevailed was that the iceberg had cut a 300-foot gash below the waterline toward the bow on the starboard side. On the contrary, two expert metallurgists from the U.S. government's National Institute of Standards and Technology claim that the quality of the rivets used to join the steel plates of the ship was compromised. They also attest that the company, Harland and Wolff, of Belfast, Northern Ireland, was constructing two other vessels simultaneously which added to the competition of acquiring the millions of rivets needed, as well as reasonable cost and timeliness. Furthermore, the company was aware at that time of purchasing weaker rivets, although it did not realize that this substandard could be catastrophic. Despite company disputes that inferior rivets were at fault, evidence from extensive research of the Harland and Wolff archives and surviving rivets culled from the *Titanic* proves the contrary. An analysis indicated that weaker iron rivets were used for the stern and bow, where it was believed there would be less pressure; however, the ship's bow struck the iceberg. The loss of the weak rivets put more pressure on the strong rivets, thereby causing six compartments to flood, whereas the ship could stay afloat only if four compartments were flooded. The semi-watertight compartments breached, the weight of the sea pulled the ship down by the bow, and she vanished at 2:20 A.M. There were 2,227 passengers and crew on

board and only 705 survived in 20 lifeboats, which were insufficient due to a British Board of Trade regulation that based the number of lifeboats on a ship's tonnage, not on the number of passengers. In actuality, the lifeboats available could have saved 1,200 people. The first rescue ship was the Cunard liner, *Carpathia*, which was 58 miles away when she received the SOS from the *Titanic*, and arrived at approximately 4 A.M. The *Carpathia* arrived in New York with the survivors on the evening of April 18, 1912.

Many people in 1912 believed that more than 50,000 tons of steel could be unsinkable. The shipbuilders, Harland and Wolff, however, insisted that the *Titanic* was never advertised as an unsinkable ship, and claimed that the unsinkable myth originated from interpretations of articles from the Irish News and the Shipbuilder magazine. They also attested to the fact that this myth proliferated after the disaster. Nevertheless, when the New York office of the White Star Line was informed of the catastrophe, Vice President, P.A.S. Franklin, stated that they had absolute confidence in the *Titanic*, which was unsinkable. Tragically, the *Titanic* was already lying on the bottom of the ocean.

It is difficult to ascertain where or when the term "unsinkable" was first used, but there are many possibilities. An extract from a White Star Line publicity brochure produced in 1910 for the twin ships, *Olympic* and *Titanic*, stated that they were designed to be unsinkable. On June 1, 1911, the Irish News and Belfast Morning News reported the launching of *Titanic*'s hull, describing the system of watertight compartments and electronic watertight doors, and concluded that the *Titanic* was practically unsinkable. A deck hand responded that God himself could not sink this ship, when asked if *Titanic* was really unsinkable. A passenger, Margaret Devaney, stated that she took passage on the *Titanic*, because she thought it would be safe and had heard it could not sink. Another passenger, Thomas Beattie, wrote home that they were changing ships

and returning in a new unsinkable boat. Although the origin of the belief was unestablished, people believed that the *Titanic* was unsinkable, and had absolute faith in science and technology at the *début* of the 20th century. As a corollary, the sinking of the “unsinkable” *Titanic* shattered confidence in science, making people more skeptical.

The collective consciousness with regard to the belief that the *Titanic* was unsinkable parallels the psychology expounded by Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), a French social psychologist and sociologist. In the case of this unification, the unconscious emerges and the heterogeneous submerges into the homogeneous, the individual exhibiting characteristics not formerly possessed. According to Le Bon, the primary factor for this phenomenon is that the individual acquires a sense of invisible power which yields to instincts that would otherwise have been restrained, and the dominating sense of irresponsibility vanishes. Freud, on the other hand, emphasizes the influence of the conditions that allow the individual, having acquiesced with the collective, to reject the repressions of the instinctual impulses of the unconscious. Furthermore, the new characteristics that the individual exhibits represent manifestations of the unconscious which harbors and predisposes all evil endemic to the human mind. In fact, although the people of 1912 had a collective tendency to believe that the *Titanic* was unsinkable, they could also have nurtured a subconscious fear that she could have, indeed, been sinkable.

With reference to the fact that the conscious mind has the ability to communicate with the subconscious mind, the intervention of the contagion, resulting from the collective unification, manifests the trends of the group, sacrificing individual affinities and pursuits, and the collective interest reigns. The most important cause regarding the alterity of the individual, suggestibility, refers to the influence of suggestions that deprives the individual of a conscious personality. The unconscious personality predominating, the feelings and ideas of the individual unify with those

of the group, and suggestions readily transform into acts. As a result of the collective, an individual transforms into a creature of instinct, becoming spontaneous, violent and savage, or enthusiastic and heroic about a belief. Thus, by the psychological tenets established by Freud and Le Bon, a tragic destiny could have manifested that fateful night of April 14, 1912.

Furthermore, two distinctive omens presaged the tragedy of the *Titanic*'s maiden voyage. First, as the *Titanic* was leaving the dock, the nearby liner, *New York*, suddenly snapped her moorings and almost rammed the colossal White Star Line vessel. Although collision was averted, some passengers on the *Titanic* feared the incident was a bad omen (McMillan 31). Again, the element of collective fear could have contributed to the destiny of the *Titanic*. Secondly, a struggling author, Morgan Robertson, created a novel in 1898 about a luxurious, transatlantic liner, larger than any that had previously been built. Filled with rich, complacent people, his ship was destroyed by an iceberg one cold April night. Indicative of the futility of the events that transpired, the author entitled his book, *Futility*, which was published by M.F. Mansfield. In 1912, fourteen years after the publication of *Futility*, the British shipping company, White Star Line, built a steamer remarkably similar to the one in this novel. The new liner was 66,000 tons displacement; Robertson's was 70,000. The real ship was 882½ feet long; the fictional one was 800 feet. In addition, both vessels were triple screw and could make 24-25 knots, carry about 3,000 people, and had lifeboats sufficient for only a fraction of this number (Lord xix). However, this did not matter, because they were labeled "unsinkable." On April 10, 1912, the real ship left Southampton on her maiden voyage to New York. Her cargo included a priceless copy of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám and a list of passengers collectively worth two hundred fifty million dollars. She also struck an iceberg and foundered on a cold April night. The name of Robertson's ship was the *Titan*; the ship of the White Star Line was the *Titanic*.

Morgan Robertson's prescient novel constituted a powerful omen that presaged the manifestation of the events of an era's most renowned ocean liner.

As the RMS *Titanic* departed on her maiden voyage on April 10, 1912, her hull stretched more than four city blocks and towered eleven stories high. Released from her moorings in Southampton, she sailed as the embodiment of the belief that human minds and hands had produced a signature technological achievement at the turn of the century. The *Titanic* boasted unprecedented size and power, and surrounded her passengers with the best maritime engineers, designers and crafters: luxurious accommodations and amenities that included supremely elegant restaurants for the first class, staterooms that ranged from lavish to extraordinarily comfortable, and public rooms that featured plush carpeting, elaborate carvings and the finest paneling. Her owners, passengers, and the whole world knew she was grand. In an era in which the *Social Register* listed the vessels on which the socially prominent sailed, prestige was affiliated with sailing on the maiden voyage of the newest, largest and most luxurious ship. Captain Edward Smith stated that he could not imagine any condition that could cause a ship to founder. He also could not conceive any vital disaster happening to this vessel, since modern shipbuilding had transcended that (McMillan 16).

The advent of public fascination with the *Titanic* had begun long before the disaster via posters and newspaper articles which advertised superior accommodations, fine food and remarkable speed. The allure of an opulent maiden voyage on the grandest transatlantic liner appealed to the wealthy, and for others, beyond status, the appeal lay in an encounter with a hopeful future. As a result, in addition to the mountains of luggage and mail, the cargoes of the *Titanic* were laden with leisure and pleasure for some, and trepidation, hope and desire for

others. In an era renowned for opulence, the White Star Line's *Titanic* and her twin, the *Olympic*, were the last word in elegance and comfort.

In the crow's nest, the lookout, Frederick Fleet, sighted a mass a mile ahead in the moonless night, rang the three-bell alarm and telephoned the bridge. Efforts to steer around the iceberg proved fatal, as the *Titanic* veered to port, grazing the iceberg on her starboard side. Although there was no sign that the ship had been seriously damaged, the sea poured in under tremendous pressure, flooding six compartments. Inexorably, disaster began to unfold: the *Titanic* was sinking. By 2:00 A.M., freezing seawater was lapping within ten feet of the promenade deck. Meanwhile, the Cunard ship, *Carpathia*, commanded by Captain Arthur Henry Rostron, *en route* from New York to Gibraltar, had received the *Titanic*'s distress signal when her wireless operator was closing for the night. Rostron turned the *Carpathia* around and headed toward the scene of the disaster, becoming a hero. Aboard the *Titanic* and adrift in her lifeboats, resembling waifs in the North Atlantic, other heroic figures were also emerging.

A stunned world attempted to comprehend what had happened: "It was the most awful thing that anyone could ever conceive," a pure, horrific tragedy, ending with the glorious ship appallingly vulnerable to error and chance (McMillan 108). As the loss of the *Titanic* would prove, beyond amazement or anger, our collective sense of tragedy endures. Built to crown an epoch, the *Titanic* was lost on the sixth day of her maiden voyage; her aftermath was heartbreak. The saga of the *Titanic* signaled the *dénouement* of the *Belle Epoque*, era of opulence, luxury and leisure, and the awakening from a dream, and the loss of the *Titanic* symbolized the end of the *Belle Epoque* two years preceding the apocalypse of World War I at the advent of the millenium.

CHAPTER III

FREUD, LACAN, GIRARD: *DAS ES, L'AUTRE, SKANDALON*

After the *Belle Epoque*, Sigmund Freud discovered that the Ego represents the coherent structure of mental functions, the id signifies the unconscious, and the super-ego reflected actions against the choices of the id. In addition, the distinction of the conscious and the unconscious is imperative for psychoanalysis to comprehend the psychopathological functions of the mind. According to Gustave Le Bon, the unconscious emerges and the suggestibility of the group deprives the individual of a conscious personality, emphasizes the need for illusions, and the supernatural power of words have a magical influence over the collective psyche, as well as

the collective psyche of the age. This herd instinct, according to Trotter, has its source in repression derived from the ego.

Moreover, Jacques Lacan focused on identification and the centrality of language which exhibits a chronic lack of meaning, relative to the pervasive unconscious. «*Le stade du miroir*» reveals the function of the “I,” the structure of subjectivity as permanent, and identification functions as a catalyst in the formation of the Ego. The achievement of «*le stade du miroir*» signifies that *jouissance* is illusory. This developmental stage reflects a *manque-à-être* which prevents a unified self. Also, ego is affected by *méconnaissance*, resulting from a misconception of the image, or alienation of the self (Imaginary Order). Lacan also revealed that *désir* must be exposed to the “other” and functions as an inherent dimension of society, due to a missing signifier (*manque*). Lacan advocated that literature reflects paradigms of the unconscious. The mimetic theory of René Girard also manifests in the novel and in theatrical literature. Girard’s theory of desire is found in the behavioral imitation in social and cognitive development and the adaptation to society and culture. Girard advocates that human desire is imitative, originating from the model or mediator.

The psychoanalytic perspectives of *autre* (“ego”) and *Autre* (“unconscious”), the concept of «*le stade du miroir*» and the ideology of *désir*, and mimetic theory, sacrifice and *skandalon* render an analysis of representative masterpieces, *Nana*, «*La femme X...*» and *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea*, to bring to light a new understanding of literature of the *Belle Epoque*. In particular, these tenets are especially pertinent to complicated heroines: Nana, Madame X and Mari-Gaila.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who attended the University of Vienna in 1873 where he decided to relinquish his intention to study law and pursue unconventional medical studies that included scientific and philosophical investigations, ultimately found his vocation in the disciplines of physiology and neurology. Freud was a brilliant researcher, cultivating a reputation for keen observation and working under the auspices of international, predominantly German, professors of whom the illustrious physiologist, Ernst Brücke, confirmed that Freud was not only congenial to skepticism, capable of transforming his mentors' theories of mind, but also to atheism. Moreover, Freud worked with Jean-Martin Charcot, a celebrated French neurologist, in Paris from October 1885 to February 1886. Charcot advocated that hypnosis could heal medical conditions and that both women and men could be susceptible to attacks of hysteria. As a result, Freud was influenced by the theoretical and therapeutic aspects of mental disorders and their healing, and by the 1890s psychology became his obsession. In fact, he discovered the psychoanalytic theory of mind during this period.

In 1887, Freud met Wilhelm Fliess, a medical specialist from Berlin who developed intriguing theories and subversive ideas which Freud could explore, and this endeavor effected his discovery of psychoanalysis. In 1895, Freud and his friend, Josef Breuer, a renowned internist, published Studies on Hysteria, which propelled Breuer's former patient, Anna O., to become the distinctive patient of psychoanalysis. Freud's specialization in female hysteria resulted in his discovery that hysteria originates from sexual malfunctioning and that its symptoms could disappear through therapeutic dialogue. In July 1895, Freud also fully analyzed his own dream, "Irma's injection," which would function as a paradigm for psychoanalytic dream interpretation, a phenomenon which he published in his Interpretation of Dreams in 1900,

a work that reflected his adherence to the traditional physiological interpretations of mental processes. Eventually, however, Freud implemented psychological theories to explain psychological phenomena, and in the Spring of 1896 he coined the fateful term, “psychoanalysis,” a discovery that provided an unprecedented impetus to analyze the poignant effect of the death of his father (Freud, Group xiii). After having written Interpretation of Dreams, he was propelled to champion his “seduction theory,” which proposed that all neuroses originate from premature sexual activity, specifically child molestation (Freud, Group xiii).

Ultimately, however, Freud abandoned the seduction theory on the basis that the rape of a male or female child does not constitute the only cause of a neurosis. Relinquishing this improbable theory, Freud acknowledged the fantasies of mental life and discovered the Oedipus complex, his theory that purports the universality of the familial triangle. This decisive turn-of-the-century work revealed that all dreams express the fulfillments of wishes, mental strategies originate from the causes that effect the curious drama remembered by the dreamer, and a comprehensive theory of mind. Although his landmark publication did not witness a popular reception, the advent of his Psychopathology of Everyday Life in 1901 proved a success with audiences and established the fundamental precept that the mind is governed by unwavering rules, despite appearances of mental dysfunction. For example, an Austrian parliamentary official rejected this work as a “coincidence,” resulting from his clandestine disdain for future sessions of his government.

The inherent premise of psychoanalysis is the distinction of the conscious and the unconscious, a requisite principle for psychoanalysis to comprehend the psychopathological functions of the mind. A state of consciousness (*Bewusstsein*), such as contemplating an idea, is essentially transitory and an idea becomes latent or unconscious with the ability to reappear. The

condition in which ideas reside in the unconscious before becoming conscious is repression, a state supported and maintained by resistance. The theory of repression reveals the concept of the duality of the unconscious: the latent unconscious (preconscious) capable of becoming conscious, and the repressed unconscious incapable of consciousness.

The ego (*das Ich*), representing the coherent structure of mental functions, adjoins consciousness, controls behavior in the external world, censors dreams and creates repressions. An unconscious idea becomes preconscious through a connection with corresponding “word-presentations,” mnemonic perceptions that are able to transform again into conscious thought. Through psychoanalysis, preconscious links transform repressed thoughts to consciousness. The psychical id (*das Es*) represents the unconscious through which the repressed is able to communicate with the ego. In contrast to the ego, where reason and common sense reside, the id bears the passions. In relation to the id, the ego is analogous to a man on horseback, obliged to monitor the superior strength of the horse, and transforms the will of the id as if this will belonged to the ego (Freud, Ego 15). The super-ego or ego ideal (*das Uber-ich*) represents a residue of the unconscious, as well as reactions against the choices of the id. With regard to the ego, the reactions of the super-ego may be permissive or prohibitive. The degree of domination of the super-ego over the ego depends on the degree of power of the Oedipus complex and the extent of its repression, manifesting in the form of conscience or an unconscious sense of guilt.

In contrast to individual psychology, comprising the predispositions, instinctual impulses, motives and aims of a human being, collective psychology effects thoughts, feelings and actions differently than what would have been expected, due to the occupations, character or intelligence of the individuals who compose a psychological group. According to Gustave Le

Bon (1841-1931), a French social psychologist and sociologist who expounded theories of national traits, racial superiority, herd behavior and crowd psychology, as well as theories of the unconscious, specific ideas and feelings would not exist or are not transformed into actions without this provisional group, and the characteristic bond that unifies this psychological group causes the acquisitions and distinctiveness of the individual to become obliterated (Freud, Group 7-8). In the case of this unity, the unconscious emerges, the heterogeneous submerges into the homogeneous, and the individual exhibits characteristics not formerly possessed (Freud, Group 9). Le Bon believes that the primary factor for this phenomenon is that the individual acquires a sense of invincible power which yields to instincts that would otherwise have been restrained, and the prior sense of responsibility vanishes, aided by the anonymity and irresponsibility of a given group. Freud, however, does not emphasize the emergence of these characteristics, but rather the influence of the conditions that allow the individual, having acquiesced to the collective, to spurn the repressions of the instinctual impulses.

This mechanism is operative in Chapter 7 of *Nana* when, after having beseeched Almighty God for divine help, Count Muffat succumbs to his need for Nana, thereby spurning the repressions of his instinctual impulses. This mechanism reappears in Act III, Scene IV, the penultimate scene of *Divinas palabras*, when the villagers, such as Milón de la Arnoya and Quintín Pintado, acquiesce to the collective in persecuting Mari-Gaila.

Furthermore, the new characteristics exhibited by the individual represent manifestations of the unconscious which harbors and predisposes one to all the evil endemic to the human mind. The second cause of the new characteristics resulting from unification with the collective is the intervention of contagion, which exhibits traits and trends of the group in which

all sentiments and actions are shared so that individual affinities and pursuits are willingly sacrificed, and the collective interest reigns. Suggestibility, the most important third cause regarding the alterity of the individual, refers to the influence of suggestions of the group that has deprived the individual of a conscious personality. As a result of suggestibility, the individual loses the powers of will and discernment, committing acts that contradict his character, and surrendering feelings and thoughts to a hypnotic collective. The unconscious personality predominating, the feelings and ideas of the individual unify with those of the group, and suggestions are readily transformed into acts. Although an individual may be a rational, cultivated person in isolation, he is transformed into a creature of instinct *in corpore*, becoming spontaneous, violent and savage, but also showing enthusiastic and heroic traits, characteristic of primitive beings.

Subjugated by the collective to the extent of altering his instinct of self-preservation, the individual experiences an intensification in affect and a reduction in intellect which assimilate to the other members of the group, characteristics that can be achieved only through the eradication of his inhibitions and the forfeiture of his own peculiar inclinations. The psychological reason for this transition of the individual exposed to the group reverts to suggestibility, or ‘suggestion,’ also known as ‘imitation,’ the fundamental factor that distinguishes groups (Freud, Group 27). In the realm of suggestibility, the libido represents the energy instincts concerning love, essentially with regard to sexuality, but inclusive of other forms of love expressed by the individual, such as self-love, love for parents, children and humanity, and attachment to objects and ideas.

According to psychoanalysis, these are expressions of similar impulses, and in the case of the sexes, these instincts yield a sexual union. The *liaisons* of love, in fact, epitomize the

collective mind, for behind the veil of suggestibility dwells a cohesive power that unites not only the group, but the world. Moreover, having relinquished distinctiveness and capitulated under the influence of suggestion, the individual reveals the need for harmony with and acceptance by the group, perhaps even '*Ihnen zu Liebe*' ('for their sake.' Literally: 'for love of them.')

(Freud, Group 31).

According to Le Bon, whose *La psychologie des foules* (1895) (The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind, 1896) was critical for group psychology during the first half of the 20th century and for Freud's *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (1921) (Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 1922), the collective consciousness also expresses impulsivity, transience and petulance, and is almost exclusively governed by the unconscious. As with the mind set of primitive people and children, the impulses that govern the group always supersede any individual interest, including that of self-preservation. Despite the passionate desires of the group, perseverance in reaching an objective remains elusive and the fulfillment of desire does not tolerate delay.

Moreover, the group possesses a sense of omnipotence, since the concept of impossibility disappears for the individual, and is unusually credulous, due to a deficiency in critical thought. The thought process of the group reflects an association of images whose convergent reality is never verified. The group is also characterized by hyperbole to the extent that doubt does not exist, and suspicions metamorphose into incontrovertible truth, as a result of the inclination to extremes. Demonstrating an aversion to innovation, the group sustains an affinity for tradition and harbors the cruelty and destructive instincts dormant in the inhibitions of individuals.

Influenced by the power of suggestion, however, the group may achieve self-sacrifice, altruism and dedication to an ideal, and ethical behavior may surpass or plunge below that of the individual whose intellectual life always far exceeds that of the group. Similar to the contradictions that coexist in the unconscious of individuals, children and neurotics, those of the group are compatible without conflict, and the supernatural power of words possesses a magical influence over the group mind, evoking chaos or peace and defying reason or argument. In contrast to the quest for truth, the group emphasizes the need for illusions, for these are requisite for survival, and there tends not to be a distinction between what is true and untrue, as the unreal supersedes what is real.

This life of illusion and fantasy, originating from an unfulfilled desire, governs the psychology of neuroses in which psychological reality takes precedence over objective reality. A sense of guilt in an obsessive neurosis, for example, could emanate from an evil intention that was never enacted. The mental life of the group, like that in dreams and hypnosis, focuses on impulses of desire and cathexes, the concentration of emotional energy on an object or idea, due to the absence of a critical faculty to evaluate reality. The subservient herd also instinctively obeys an authority figure, since its survival depends on a master who demonstrates a strong belief in a concept, as well as a powerful will that can be imposed upon the group that does not possess a will and would otherwise remain uninspired. Le Bon further ascribes an irresistible power to the ideas and the leader, 'prestige' or domination that paralyzes the critical faculty of the obsequious herd that becomes full of fascination and respect (Freud, Group, 19). Le Bon makes the distinction between acquired or artificial prestige, attained by virtue of reputation or tradition, and personal prestige, assigned to few leaders who wield the power to affect an

obedient herd as if by some mysterious magic. Both acquired and personal prestige, however, pivot upon success, and failure would usher in loss.

Although a deficiency in independence and initiative, as well as the conformity of reactions and intensified emotional bonds of the individuals, characterize the group, other aspects reveal a portrait of mental regression. Specifically, the weakness of the intellect, the lack of emotional restraint, the incapacity of moderation and delay, and the propensity to exceed limitations in the realm of emotions, represent features that depict the stage of development that characterizes primitive people or children. As a result of these imperfections, the individual acquires a state of dependency and vulnerability to the attitudes of the sovereign mind of the group, and the power of suggestion becomes not only the domain of the leader, but also of the individuals who influence each other. According to Trotter, these phenomena are classified as ‘a herd instinct’ or ‘gregariousness’ delineated by repression which psychoanalysis has demonstrated to derive from the ego (Freud, Group 63). With regard to libido theory, the herd instinct is a manifestation of the affinity emanating from the libido and shared by all species to propagate the herd. An example of this phenomenon is revealed in Act III, Scene IV, the penultimate scene of *Divinas palabras*, when the voices of the young villagers and Quintín Pintado and the brutish Milón de la Arnoya, begin to exclaim the chant of the magical goat-goblin, expressing the ‘herd instinct’ or ‘gregariousness,’ as the fugitive, Mari-Gaila appears, running out into the road, screaming, following fornication with Séptimo Miau. Moreover, miscellaneous voices make exclamations to torment Mari-Gaila, who is sullen and resigned as she displays her nakedness with majestic grace and elegance.

Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan (1901-1981), a prominent French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst whose concepts focused on Freudian psychology, influenced French philosophical

thought through interdisciplinary work. A controversial figure in the psychoanalytic movement, he emphasized a renewal of Freudian texts and focus on identification and the centrality of language, a function that translated as the realization of the pervasive unconscious. According to Lacan, the unconscious represents an irremediable link to the dynamics of language in which the signifier is separated from the signified due to a chronic lack of meaning. Lacan revealed in “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud,” that the structure of the unconscious corresponds to the structure of a language. Specifically, the unconscious does not represent an undeveloped or archetypal component of the mind separated from the conscious and linguistic ego, but a complex and sophisticated structure that parallels the essence of consciousness. As a result, the restoration to a point of reference would be denied to the self in the case of having endured a trauma or identity crisis.

Another concept propagated by Lacan is *le stade du miroir* (“the mirror stage”) which relates the function of the *I* in psychoanalysis and the structure of subjectivity as permanent. The paradigm of this phenomenon exposes a conflictual duality: a decisive turning point and a libidinal relationship with the image of the self. The mirror stage also expresses the critical aspect that identification functions as a catalyst in the formation of the Ego. The developmental “mirror stage” having been achieved, the realization of desire is only illusory, and the fulfillment of desire (*jouissance*) as well as the continuity of signifier (“word” or “idea”) and signified (“object”) become impossible. As a result, Lacan refers to the “Real,” a mythic ego that reflects a *manque-à-être* (“lack-of-being”) which prevents a unity of self or wholeness of being. In contrast, that mythic age, the *Belle Epoque*, characterized by the *nivellement des jouissances*, not only realized a plenitude of desire, but attained a fulfillment of pleasure and achievement unsurpassed until that time. Paradoxically, the *Belle Epoque* and the tragic years following the

fin de siècle dictated the culture and identity of an era, corresponding to Lacan's Symbolic order of culture which not only determines identity, but results in alienation of the self or "otherness." In addition, the ego is affected by *méconnaissance* ("misunderstanding"), a depressive reaction resulting from a precarious perception of the image, or alienation of the self: the Imaginary order.

This concept of "otherness," Freud's «*das Andere*», parallels Zola's metaphor of "the golden fly" («*la mouche d'or*») that depicts Nana, who came from a Paris slum and was avenging the poor through her sexuality. While the underprivileged wretches stagnated in degrading circumstances, she would contaminate the aristocracy, becoming a force of nature and the epitome of corruption. The end of Fauchery's article, 'The Golden Fly', reveals the comparison with the buzzing, dazzling creature: a precious stone bearing deadly germs, poisoning men in palaces. This metaphor symbolizes Nana's "otherness" and alienation of the self, affected by *méconnaissance*. Similarly, Valle-Inclán poptrays the "otherness" of Mari-Gaila, the heroine who finds herself in adulterous encounters with Comrade Miau, after having confessed to Miguelín Padronés that she had lived like a "queen" and that her life had been virtuous. She also confesses to Séptimo (Comrade) Miau that she would not be worthy for him to commit suicide over her. This experience of *méconnaissance* results from a precarious perception of the image, otherwise known as alienation of the self.

Whereas Freud designated *der Andere* ("the other person") and *das Andere* (otherness), Lacan referred to the "other" as "A" (*Autre*) and "a" (*autre*), a distinction that is essential for the analyst so he could empathize with the "Other," as opposed to the "other," which is a reflection of the Ego. The "a" (*Objet petit*) is the perceived image derived from others and the specular reflection which compose the Imaginary order, and the "A" (*Autre*), as an extreme alterity,

transcends the illusion of the Imaginary due to a lack of identification. This “Other” comprises the Symbolic order which resolves the rapport with the “other,” and functions as the locus for language which originates in the “Other,” not in the Ego. Lacan conceives the “Other” as the unconscious, described by Freud as “the other scene.” Moreover, he affirms that the mother represents the “Other” of her child and sanctions the needs of the child as a message. After having discovered that a *manque* (“lack”) pervades the “Other,” the child develops a castration complex. As a result, a critical signifier which should otherwise be inscribed within the “Other” is always missing from the trove that composes the incomplete “barred Other.”

Indeed, in the Freudian context, «*La femme X...*» (“Madame X”) portrays a *manque* that pervaded the “Other” for twenty years, resulting in a missing signifier from the trove that constitutes the incomplete “Other.” This portrait is similar to that of Madame Henriette de Mortsau of *Le lys dans la vallée*: the paradox of a *manque* that pervades the “Other” in the form of anorexia nervosa, and in retrospect, the poignant scene of «*l’ange de Clochegourde*» teaching her son and daughter to gather chestnuts for posterity, as sanctioning the needs of her children. Another example of “the other scene” is Zola’s portrayal of Nana as m(Other) to her three-year-old, Louiset. She would forget about him for a couple of weeks, and then dash to Batignolles with oranges and biscuits for him upon her return from Bois de Boulogne. She would wonder why he appeared so ill, when she, his loving mother, was so healthy. This paradox of motherhood also reveals a pervasive *manque* that remains without resolution.

Another concept of Lacan, *désir*, is fundamental to his theories in that through psychoanalysis, which occupies a linguistic dimension, the analysand must unveil the truth of desire only through articulation in order that the “other” becomes apprised of this new existence in the world. Although the recognition of desire is the goal of psychoanalysis, this action and the

revelation of discourse prove to be insufficient, because discourse, attempting to expose desire, always effects a surplus in which the truth is incomplete. In fact, the *raison d'être* of desire does not dictate fulfillment as its goal, but propagates the desire. Furthermore, desire functions as an inherent dimension of society, because of the relation to a missing signifier (*manque*), not a relation to any object.

Lacan also advocates that literature reflects paradigms that enable the psychoanalyst and the client to fathom dreams, symptoms and parapraxes, and adheres to Freud in the tenet that there is a *liaison* between real case studies and the literary domain. In reference to literary criticism and psychoanalysis, Lacan responds:

It is because the Unconscious needs the insistence of writing that critics will err when they treat a written work in the same way as the Unconscious treated. At every moment, any written work cannot but lend itself to interpretation in a psychoanalytic sense. But to subscribe to this, ever so slightly, implies that one supposes the work to be a forgery, since, inasmuch as it is written, it does not imitate the effects of the Unconscious, an equivalent no less real than it, as it forges the Unconscious in its curvature. And for the work, the writer who produces it is no less a forger, if he attempts to understand while it is being produced... (Rabaté 3)

Refusing to psychoanalyze the author or the works, Lacan emphasizes the paradox that writing cannot be reduced to an expression of psychological aberration. Similar to his perspective towards a text, Lacan regards a symptom of a client as a palimpsest. In order to discern the levels of the palimpsest, a just interpretation should be applied:

The literary work fails or succeeds, but this failure is not due to the imitating of the effects of the structure. The work only exists in that curvature which is that of the structure itself. We are left then with no mere analogy. The curvature mentioned here is no more a metaphor for the structure than the structure is a metaphor for the reality of the Unconscious. It is real, and, in this sense, the work imitates nothing.

It is, as fiction, a truthful structure. (Rabaté 4)

Lacan adheres, however, to the concept that language holds the key to the structure of the unconscious, and that this structure reflects the most intrinsic codes of society. Also, Lacanian theory proposes that metalanguage does not exist. In other words, discourse composed of fundamental concepts could never capture truth, and language emanates from the Unconscious or the Other.

The discourse of the Other represents unintentional language of the Unconscious, as opposed to the intentional discourse of the ego, and reveals truth. According to psychoanalysts, the interruptions of the Other discourse conceal a veil of logic, the clandestine key to effect change. Lacan identifies this apparently foreign aspect of inherent linguistic effects as the Other of language (*«l'Autre du langage»*), a collection of all of the expressions intrinsic to a language. Furthermore, this universe of language propagates desire and, paradoxically, induces alienation of the self. In contrast to the Other discourse, the ordinary, conscious ego discourse does not reflect the self as imagined, due to the presence of the Other which permeates the self, alienated as a result of language.

Lacan affirms that language composes the unconscious and translates Freud's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen* ("ideational representatives") as *représentants de la représentation* ("representatives of representation"), the linguistic equivalent of signifiers (Fink, Lacanian 8).

According to his interpretation of Freud, Lacan avers that although repression of a word or part of a word occurs, the word remains accessible to consciousness. However, having been repressed, the word or part of a word begins to assume a different role, establishing connections with other repressed “representatives” and developing complex *liaisons* with them. Lacan also asserts that the unconscious has a structure that corresponds to a language, not analogous to a modern or ancient language, but in the sense that language operating in the realm of the unconscious obeys rules that govern the transformation and recombination of phonemes and morphemes, the chain of signifiers that becomes linked according to laws which the ego or the self are absolutely unable to control.

For example, the last scene, Act III, Scene V of *Divinas palabras*, reveals Pedro Gailo, the sacristan, characterized by a language of religiosity, the Latin refrain: «*Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat*» (“He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.”) (Valle-Inclán 135). These “divine words” are the “ideational representatives” of Freud and the “representatives of representation” of Lacan that are the linguistic equivalent of signifiers that transform the wrath of the villagers into an ambience of peace, forgiveness and redemption. Similarly, a language of religiosity pervades Zola’s narrative, particularly in reference to Count Muffat, who epitomizes the duality of saint and sinner: the sudden thought of God and divine help came to him; previously God never refused His mercy and at the slightest affliction, he would enter church, kneel down and humble himself, a miserable sinner, before the power of Almighty God; and he would exit, strengthened by prayer, prepared to give up all worldly things, concerned only with his eternal salvation; but now he attended church only when his fear of hell revived; his morality had been undermined, because of Nana. Seeking refuge in *La Trinité* in the *Rue de la Chaussée-d’Antin*, he had fallen on his knees in the chapel, clasped

his hands, seeking words to pray, trying to surrender to God's will and lift his soul to heaven. A victim of an inexorable fate, he apostrophizes God three times to help him, to not desert Thy creature, who surrenders himself to Thy justice, and to adore Thee, and willst Thou make him suffer to perish beneath the blows of Thine enemies. When Muffat and Nana find themselves alone in her bedroom, he again apostrophizes God three times, a cry of distress at failing to resist his sinful temptation, although he knew he would be eternally damned, for which he sought heavenly assistance. A third example of this language of religiosity in reference to Count Muffat occurs when he is *en route* to the *Rue Richelieu* and promises himself not to return to Nana, which he regards as a warning from Heaven. He would dream of being redeemed and pardoned, and see himself and Nana kneeling before God the Father. He attended Mass and confession, and combined the delights of sin and contrition with deep remorse. He was accustomed to this exercise in damnation, redeeming himself by bursts of religious fervor and humble piety. In expiation of his sin, he offered his own atrocious suffering which was becoming harder to bear. He was on a path of martyrdom, a sincere believer whose greatest torment was Nana's constant promiscuity. This pious man, who thrilled with lust and a desire for obliteration, experienced heavenly bliss in beautiful chapels and religious ecstasy when he surrendered to solemn organ music or the scent of incense, kneeling before a stained-glass window. Nana possessed his body and soul, offering him spasms of joy, hours of torment, fearful visions of hell and eternal damnation, and suffering. This language of religiosity represents language operating in the realm of the unconscious that obeys rules that govern a chain of signifiers.

The unconscious also expresses desire, which coexists with language, foreign to consciousness. In fact, the unconscious overflows with not only one's own desires, but also the perspectives and desires of others via conversations, goals, aspirations and fantasies, the

Lacanian discourse of the Other, also known as conscience, guilty conscience or what Freud classified as the superego. Although the conscious mind does not remember the discourse of the Other, Lacan explains that the chain of signifying elements that compose the unconscious does remember this dialogue. Moreover, Freud expresses that these unconscious elements are permanent, whereas Lacan confirms the indestructibility of these aspects only through the Symbolic Order, one's adopted view with regard to the Other as language or law. The Other represents a foreign language in that the discourse and desires of others remain foreign and separated from subjectivity, as well as having an overwhelming significance within oneself.

Having viewed language as a catalyst for desire, Lacan perceives subjectivity in terms of two distinct processes: alienation and separation. His concept of alienation depicts the unbalanced conflict between the child, who has absorbed the discourse that determines desires and fantasies, and the Other, a struggle in which the child inevitably submits to the Other and loses. However, in surrendering to the Other, the child acquires, paradoxically, an identity in becoming a subject as a result of language. Thus, the child (signified) disappears beneath the Other (signifier), although this conquest does not need to be absolute. Moreover, a reverse victory, in which the child vanquishes the Other, would constitute psychosis, the child relinquishing the advent of identity as subject by not conceding to the Other as language. Similar to Freud, who refers to choosing or electing neurosis, Lacan concurs that the child decides not to be defeated by the Other, a choice that would translate as the loss of self. Conversely, the choice to allow the Other to subdue the child would be requisite to prevail as a subject, but the rejection of subjectivity would remain a choice. This concept of alienation relates that the child chooses to yield to language, expresses needs and desires through a limited medium, and allows representation via words.

The second premise that Lacan renders, separation, concerns the confrontation of the alienated subject with the Other, not as linguistic effect, but as desire. This scenario delineates the child, surrounded by discourse before and after birth, who attempts to confront the desire of the Other as manifested in the world of the subject. As the child endeavors to understand the desire of the Other, the separation persists as the child discovers that the Other has desires beyond that of the child. For example, a mother may temporarily neglect her child, as she becomes involved in other interests, and the unity between mother and child in terms of the fulfillment of all needs is rarely absolute. Thus, the attempts by the child to fulfill the desire(s) of the Other are unsuccessful and result in an expulsion of the subject's yearning to be the only object of desire and a separation.

Lacan's premise of separation is reflected in the case of Louiset, Nana's three-year-old son, whose circumstances confront the m(Other), not as linguistic effect, but as desire. Specifically, Nana neglects her child, visiting him only on occasion, although he is quite sickly, as she becomes involved in her life of paramours. Although Louiset had eczema on the back of his neck, pus collecting in his ears, and there was fear of bone decay in his skull, pallor, tainted blood and yellow-spotted flesh, Nana would relapse into her monotonous life of drives in the *Bois*, dining at the *Maison d'Or* or the *Café Anglais*, music-halls, the races, not to mention the hollowness and *ennui* of her profession. Nana would be absent for a couple of weeks at a time, yet there is no indication that Louiset endeavors to understand the desire of the Other. Obviously, however, the separation persists, as the child discovers that the Other has desires beyond that of the child.

Furthermore, Lacan's concept of alienation is depicted in Act II, Scene IX, of *Divinas palabras*, in the unbalanced conflict between Mari-Gaila, the heroine, upon her return from the

Trasgo Cabrío, and her daughter, Simoñina, whom she treats derogatorily and with condescension in her request for Simoñina to transport the cart bearing the deceased, Laureano, to her aunt, Marico del Reino. The struggle eventually results in the child's submission to the Other; however, in surrendering to Mari-Gaila, Simoñina acquires an identity in becoming a subject as a result of language. Thus, the child (Simoñina) chooses to yield to language, expresses needs and desires through a limited medium, and allows representation via words; specifically, through her dialogues with not only her m(Other), but also with her father, Pedro Gailo, and Séptimo Miau, Mari-Gaila's paramour.

Moreover, alienation does not represent a permanent condition, but rather a *vel* ("either/or") choice that involves the survival of either the subject or the Other, or neither (Fink, Lacanian 51). In the *vel* of alienation, the subject capitulates in the confrontation with the Other, while acquiescing to subjectivity, and elects to disappear, which echoes the subject as *manque-à-être*, implying that the subject exists, still surrounded by discourse, yet without being. The paradox of alienation, however, is the potential of being, despite this conspicuous lack, and alienation engenders the Symbolic Order, since the subject endures an eclipse of language and becomes a trace overshadowed by the ontic power of the signifier.

Lacan also expresses that lack and desire are reciprocal; specifically, the child is devoted to the fulfillment of the lack and desire of the mother to the degree that the child becomes aligned with all of her whims and desires which represent the child's demand. In fact, her desire subordinates that of the child: «*Le désir de l'homme, c'est le désir de l'Autre.*» ("The desire of man, it is the desire of the Other.") (Fink, Lacanian 54). For Lacan, man not only desires what the Other desires, but the structure of his desire is the same: man desires as the Other, as if he were another identity. Nevertheless, the need of the child would not superimpose all of the

desires of the mother, because these would not absolutely coincide, and the palette of desire would preclude the omnipresence of the subject. In alienation, the Other dominates the subject, whereas separation witnesses the desire of the Other, object *a*, subordinating the subject, and the subject's cause of existence, object *a*, becomes a metaphor of the ability to desire *sans objet*. In fantasy, the subject embraces the *liaison* between mother and child in an attempt to achieve fulfillment, and object *a* symbolizes the *jouissance* object, the desire of the Other, that essence that characterizes the separation, that foreign aspect of existence which translates as the subject during analysis.

Although Freud never suggests that objects are lost or that their rediscovery signifies that they were always lost, Lacan attributes his concept of the "lost object" to him:

Experience has taught that it is important not only for a thing [ein Ding] (an object which affords satisfaction) to possess the property of being "good"---thus deserving to be taken into the ego---but also for it to be there in the outside world, ready to be seized when needed. In order to understand this step forward [from the simple judgment of attribution of the quality "good" or "bad" to the judgment of existence], we must recall that all representations [mental images] come from perceptions and are repetitions thereof. At the outset, the very existence of a representation thus guarantees the reality [the existence in the outside world] of that which is represented [imagined or pictured in the mind]. The opposition between subjective and objective does not exist from the first. It is only constituted by the fact that thought has the ability to make present a second time something that was once perceived, by reproducing it in a representation, the outside object no longer having to be present. Thus the first and most immediate aim of reality testing is not to find an object in real perception corresponding to what is represented [in the mind], but

to refind such an object---to convince oneself that it is still out there...[A]n essential precondition for the institution of reality testing is clearly that objects shall have been lost which formerly afforded real satisfaction. (Fink, Lacanian 93)

Freud relates that the child has encountered an object and reactivates the memory of the experience either through the primary process of hallucination or the secondary process of seeking in the external world. As a result, a refinding (*Wiederzufindung*) of an external object displaces and substitutes any initial finding (*Objektfindung*), because the finding of an object constitutes a refinding. On the contrary, a lost object constitutes a remembrance of an unsatisfactory experience; however, an object could only be considered lost subsequent to the first encounter and the subject could not rediscover such object except in a fantasy or dream. In addition to the concept of the “lost object,” Lacan designates that object *a* symbolizes a prized possession for the subject, analogous to the highest standard to which all other values are compared, and the subject seeks this value with regard to all activities and relations.

Ostensibly, desire emanates from lack, and fulfillment extinguishes the desire, similar to interpretation in psychoanalysis. The psychotherapist reveals to the analysand, sometimes at the nexus when the analysand is approaching the same interpretation in order to ensure that the patient will understand and possibly concur with the interpretation, what the therapist believes is the meaning of the projected thought, dream, fantasy or symptom. The psychotherapist, as listener or Other, usually communicates a precise meaning, specifying to the analysand that this meaning is true. Interpretation in analysis, however, should seek several meanings to preclude an “adjustment” in the ego of the analysand, who learns that the psychotherapist has formed a perspective about the patient or the dream and attempts to merge this view with the analysand’s self-image (Fink, Clinical 45). In this way, the analysand adjusts conscious ideas with regard to self-image, according to those of the analyst, who usurps the role of the Other from the unconscious of the analysand to determine meaning or interpretation. The Lacanian view, on the

other hand, posits a dual role in which the Other extracts something different from the analysand's demand and then abdicates such a role for the advent of interpretation. Providing the analysand with exact meanings propagates dependency difficult to forfeit, since the analysand apprehends interpretation upon request, and the analyst, represented by the metaphor of the full vase, is omniscient, whereas the analysand, represented by the metaphor of the empty vase, knows only the communication received by the analyst. This structure between the analyst and the analysand fosters an endless cycle of response and demand, yielding a predicament in which the analyst devotes excessive time developing the interpretation. Despite the brilliance or insightfulness of prospective interpretations, the analyst must arouse the associative process of the analysand so that the latter must fathom the significance of the interpretations. The analysand attempts to solve the enigma of interpretations on the conscious and unconscious levels and the interpretations resonate or make the unconscious accessible. As a result, conscious thoughts end, averting ambiguity and polyvalence in their search for one truth. In contrast, these associations incite the unconscious and the analyst unveils dreams and fantasies; thus, rational thought yields to the association of unconscious desire.

According to Freud and an array of other psychoanalysts, the validity of an interpretation hinges not on truth or accuracy, but rather on productivity as related to the unconscious, opposed to the discourse of the ego. The crucial aspect is what the unconscious of the analysand projects upon the interpretation in assuming the role of omniscient Other. This represents the "oracular speech" described by Lacan in which the analyst, similar to the "Delphic oracle," prompts the analysand with words that, although incomprehensible, resonate and elicit curiosity, as well as a desire to reveal the reason for these words, and encourage other projections (Fink, Clinical 46). Instead of univalence which disallows ambiguity, interpretation should endeavor to derail

accustomed thought of the analysand and be unpredictable so that the analysand does not always expect the perspective of the analyst. With regard to motifs of sexuality, analysands eventually emphasize such themes, without the previous, habitual prompting by the analyst; however, the analysands are always unable to apprehend some innuendo in the pursuit of genuine interpretation.

The vulgar exchanges between Mari-Gaila, upon returning from a *rendez-vous* with Séptimo Miao, and her husband, Pedro Gailo, in Act II, Scene IX, approximate a relation between analyst and analysand. The “oracular speech” of Mari-Gaila (analysand) results from the prompting and provocation of Pedro Gailo (analyst), who corresponds to the “Delphic oracle,” with words that resonate, elicit curiosity and a desire to reveal the reason for these words and other projections. The resulting banter between the “harlot” and the “cuckold” signifies the crucial aspect of the unconscious, and according to Freud and other psychoanalysts, an interpretation hinges on production related to the unconscious, as opposed to truth or accuracy. Thus, the implication that Pedro Gailo speaks “drivel” and has no “self respect,” or that Mari-Gaila is a “whore” reveals a dialogue of projections or semantics, having layers of interpretation.

Another facet of analytic interpretation involves the “real,” or the topic that the analysand encircles without the ability to focalize and formulate (Fink, Clinical 48). At the same time, the analyst senses that the analysand reverts to the topic again and again, approaching it from different perspectives. Despite these attempts to address the topic, the analysand remains unfulfilled, realizing an unsuccessful conquest. The “Lacanian real,” manifested in the discourse of the analysand, provokes the analysand to return to the same issue *sans cesse*. The analysand persists in this obsession, paralyzed to resolve the critical real, the unformulated subject. At this juncture, the analyst could suggest an interpretation which might restore the link in the

analysand's chain of thoughts. In essence, this interpretation could manifest the "oracular speech" or symbolize an issue which had not yet been formulated. Once the palimpsest is unveiled, the meaning appears due to the interpretation composed of ambiguities emerging from the discourse of the analysand. The real, then, depicts a link between two thoughts that has surrendered to repression and must yield to restoration. Freud classifies the real as trauma, usually libidinal, that has never been verbalized and exposed. Similarly, Lacan emphasizes that the real must be symbolized through analysis: verbalized by means of signifiers. According to Jacques-Alain Miller, effective analysis implies the dissipation of the real for the symbolic. Through targeting the real, interpretation enables the analysand to verbalize what has caused desire to succumb.

Psychoanalytic cases often reveal that the analysand endures stasis in the domain of desire and *jouissance*. The resolution of this libidinal predicament emerges with the realization that the crucial aspect is not the affinity of desire for the object, but rather the intrinsic characteristic or trait elicited by the object. Thus, the cause of desire functions as the catalyst of attraction, the object possesses the feature that provokes the desire of the analysand, and after the cause has been eradicated, the analysand relinquishes the object. The Lacanian view asserts that the realm of human desire does not have objects, since after these are attained, and desires have been satisfied, they perish. In this sense, the fulfillment of desire does not incite the desire. On the contrary, obsession is characterized by unattainable desire and hysteria strives to maintain an unsatisfied desire, strategies that sustain desire. Similar to Freud, who regards this concept as "a wish for an unsatisfied wish," Lacan translates this as "a desire for an unsatisfied desire" (Fink, Clinical 51). For the obsessive and the hysteric, obstacles preclude the fulfillment of desire with the exception of dreams and fantasies which arouse desire. In the case of neurosis, the pursuit of

desire becomes impeded by many factors, including fears, inhibitions, guilt, anxiety and revulsion. Nevertheless, Lacan states that, following effective analysis, desire propagates desire and, due to the rapport between the subject and the cause of desire, the Lacanian object *a*, the pursuit of satisfaction resumes.

Moreover, object *a* may assume an array of guises, such as “a certain kind of look someone gives you, the timber of someone’s voice, the whiteness, feel, or smell of someone’s skin, the color of someone’s eyes, the attitude someone manifests when he or she speaks,” specific characteristics that hold the cause on which desire is fixated (Fink, Clinical 52). Also, the ambivalence of language allows many interpretations in that people may say something and mean another, may not desire something that they affirm they desire, or may not desire what they demand. For example, Chapter 10 reveals that Nana may not desire what she apparently demands. She was bored to death, despite being surrounded by her admirers and all her luxury. Also, she felt like a vacuum, a void in her life, although men filled her nights and money filled the drawers of her dressing-table. Nevertheless, she remained unsatisfied, monotonously leading an idle existence. She had no thought of tomorrow, a lethargic, acquiescent victim of her profession, cloistered as in a convent. Thus, the Lacanian “object *a*” assumes an array of guises in which the pursuit of satisfaction will resume. In the case of parental desire, children need to discover a niche within these desires in order to satisfy or foil the ambitions of their parents. According to Lacan, “Man’s desire is to be desired by the Other,” and children need to be desired by their parents (Fink, Clinical 54). In addition, the objects of desire of the parental Other become models for children, and this assimilation of desire translates as alienation of the self.

Similar to Freud, Lacan relates that detachment from the desires of the Other is critical and that neurotics, although opposed to these desires, remain dependent on them, since they lack a *raison d'être*. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the analysand discovers forgotten desires linked to others and realizes a sense of alienation, because these desires belong to someone else. As Freud stated, all symptoms, such as the inability of the repressed neurotic to pursue a goal, transpire from at least two conflicting desires, such as love and hate, or lust and inhibition. The subjugation of the neurotic proves omnipotent due to the fact that the desire of the neurotic never reached subjectification, the purpose of analysis: to subjectify the desire of the Other as cause.

The “fundamental fantasy,” expressed by Lacan, depicts the rapport between the subject, composed of conscious and unconscious and distinct from ego, and the cause of desire on which the analysand is fixated, and is predominantly unconscious. This concept correlates to the Freudian theory of a “primal scene” which influences the sexuality and life of the analysand. The reaction to this scene, whether real or fantasy, determines one’s existence, including parental and amorous relationships, libidinal preferences, and sexual satisfaction. The fundamental fantasy is projected into the present as the analysand construes the desire of the Other; however, the analyst, acting as cause of the analysand’s desire, transforms his role, abrogating the needs and assumptions of the analysand, so that the desire of the Other becomes questionable, even an enigma of desire. Such intervention renders an interpretation on the part of the analysand in order to reveal another aspect of the scene and unveil the truth of the palimpsest, the fundamental fantasy. This interpretation of the desire of the Other succeeds provided that the analyst contravenes the expectations of the analysand, remains unpredictable and maintains a clandestine plan, an enigmatic desire.

Lacan's view of the desire of the analyst (Other) precludes identification with the analyst on the part of the analysand to either obviate transference with the former or approval of the neurotic by the next Other. This permanent transference contrasts with the Freudian "liquidation of transference" and the analogous notion of Lacan in which the analysand no longer believes that the analyst has useful knowledge regarding their relationship (Fink, Clinical 63). The task of transference consists of two stages: the analyst evades the demands of the analysand so that the desire of the analysand, inexorably submerged in the desire of the Other, will be revealed; and the analyst must effect a reconfiguration of the interpretation, or fundamental fantasy of the analysand with regard to the desire of the Other, as well as a change in subjectification. These crucial stages witness the transition of a subject who demands or is subjugated to the demands of the Other to the subject who desires or is exposed to the desire of the Other, and finally, to the subject who experiences *jouissance*, independent of the Other. For example, the revelation of the desire of the analysand, the truth of the palimpsest or the fundamental fantasy, occurs in Chapter 10 of Nana in which the heroine feels like a stranger in her drawing-room, amazed at what she has become (Other). The magnificence of her house reflects an accumulation of precious objects, antique furniture, silks, gold embroideries, ivories and bronzes that evoke a feeling of luxury. This accumulation of majestic reception rooms, the vast dining-room and the reverent staircase represent an extension of her personality, her need for power and pleasure, her urge to possess in order to destroy. She had never before felt the power of her sexuality or experienced such *jouissance* until now.

In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud suggests that shell-shocked soldiers have recurring nightmares, because the psyche revives trauma in order to endure it in a different way, as opposed to experiencing a manifestation of death. Freud hypothesizes that anxiety, in the

guise of preparedness, functions as a retroactive means to distance the traumatic event. Although Freud eventually abandons this hypothesis, his theory of symptom formation states that an event can become retroactively traumatic, resulting in a symptom, due to the effect of a later event. Furthermore, the psyche could retroactively reverse the pernicious effects of trauma. With regard to Lacan's perspective of reconfiguration, the analyst establishes a retroactive distance through reliving the encounter with the analysand and the desire of the Other on which the analysand is fixated.

The fundamental fantasy exposed by Lacan comprises two aspects of Freud's theory: his early emphasis on excessive sexuality as the cause of neurosis and his later emphasis on the loss of sexual pleasure. The loss of autoeroticism or alloeroticism, sexual gratification that involves someone else, represents "castration," a sacrifice of *jouissance*, symbolized by the lost object *a*, according to Lacan (Fink, Clinical 66). Moreover, the prohibitive factor eroticizes the act of *jouissance*, so that sexual pleasure connotes something sordid, shameful or evil. Thus, the fundamental fantasy or "subjective position" establishes the rapport between the subject and the lost object, and gratification determines the desire, fixated by the prohibition. For Lacan, "Law and repressed desire are one and the same": the subject desires precisely what he sacrificed (Fink, Clinical 67). In the case of «*La femme X...*», Jacqueline Fleuriot (Holly Parker in the definitive film version of 1966, "Madame X"), sacrifices her husband and only son for twenty years in order to protect them from her questionable past; yet, she desires precisely what she sacrificed. The fundamental fantasy, then, being reunited with her long-lost family, establishes the rapport between the subject (Madame X) and the lost object, because the act of *jouissance* (her adulterous affair) connotes something sordid, shameful or evil.

In “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” Freud discloses that, in the case of neurosis, analysis reaches an impenetrable level, the “rock of castration,” unable to go beyond the discovery of castration, the sacrifice of pleasure (Fink, Clinical 69). Regarding the Lacanian view, the analysand surrenders *jouissance* to the Other, adamantly regrets the sacrifice, propagates the loss, and rejects the Other’s indulgence in the sacrifice; neurosis encompasses resentment with regard to satisfaction of the Other. According to Freud, psychoanalysis rarely surpasses the rock of castration, since the sacrifice is insurmountable. On the contrary, Lacan proposes the reconfiguration of the fundamental fantasy of the analysand vis-à-vis the desire of the analyst, revealing the desire and *jouissance* of the Other. Through the interventions of the analyst and the scansion of the session, the fixated desire of the analysand transposes and no longer precludes the pursuit of gratification. Also, during analysis the analysand constructs and reconstructs the fundamental fantasy which emerges from a chrestomathy of fantasies. Eventually, the cause of desire on which the choices and actions of the subject hinge is revealed, although the fundamental fantasy will have changed. In a similar way, Freud’s primal scene becomes transformed, being an aggregate of scenes constructed by the analysand.

The revelation of desire through the Symbolic Order, or language, signals a triumphant resolution of analysis. Lacan states in Seminar VIII that “Desire is a remedy for anxiety,” because desire diminishes fixation and anxiety (Fink, Clinical 205). His renowned essay on Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Purloined Letter” portrays the characters’ desires determined by their viewpoint within a symbolic or signifying structure. Similarly, Lacan emphasizes that “purloined letters,” pastiches of the Other’s discourse, determine patients’ lives. For this reason, the import of the letter lies in the signifiers affiliated with it, a phenomenon that Freud classifies as “verbal bridges,” or the concatenation of letters, which causes symptoms (Fink, Clinical 206).

The literal relationship between words, then, the link that connects signifiers, determines the fate of the subject and the cause of desire. With regard to a victorious analysis, the subjectification of this fate manifests the desire of the subject, an uninhibited desire no longer subjugated by the Other and that is able to reject the continuation of analysis. Lacan also admonishes that the subject should not surrender desire, or allow the desire of the Other to prevail, for in doing so, guilt would reign.

In the later stages of his work, Lacan also maintains that the goal of analysis is separation from the Other, so that the subject may progress *sans* the inhibitions and influences from others surrounding the subject, or the internalized values and judgments from the Other. Contrary to the subversive force he once perceived, Lacan realizes that unconscious desire absolutely depends on the law, or the Other, from which desire derives. As a result, desire is permanently inscribed within the Other, since the Other is the cause of the existence of desire, and the subject is no longer conceived as the entity of lack from which desire emanates. In comparison to Freud, the subject, independent of the Other, is represented by the id, which is the provenance of the drives, regardless of appropriateness or approval. Jacques-Alain Miller states:

The drive couldn't care less about prohibition; it knows nothing of prohibition and certainly doesn't dream of transgressing it. The drive follows its own bent and always obtains satisfaction. Desire weighs itself down with considerations like "They want me to do it, so I won't," or "I'm not supposed to go that way, so that's the way I want to go, but perhaps at the last second I won't be able to do it anyway."...

During a whole period of his theoretical elaboration, Lacan tries to prop up the life functions on desire. But once he distinguishes the drive from desire, a devaluation of desire occurs, as he emphasizes above all the "not" on which desire is based. What then becomes essential, on the contrary, is the drive as an activity related to the lost object which produces *jouissance*...

What is essential to desire is its impasse. Its crux, says Lacan, is found in impossibilities, and we can say that its action essentially reaches a dead end. That is more or less what Lacan says in his “Proposition de 1967”: “Our impasse [is] that of the subject of the unconscious.” One might say: our impasse is that of the subject of desire. The crux of the drive is not found in impossibilities...The drive never comes to an impasse. (Fink, Clinical 208)

In fact, Lacan transitions from the identification of the subject with unconscious desire to the identification of the subject with his or her drives, and he now emphasizes the goal of satisfaction, as opposed to the aspects of desire. This subject remains repressed by the ego, the superego, and by desire based on language and the discourse of the Other, which conveys the desires, values and ideals of the Other. In his earlier work, Lacan expressed that the subject quelled the drive for satisfaction *vis-à-vis jouissance*. Contrary to this perspective, repressed desire that hinders satisfaction becomes transformed during analysis, not with regard to the demands and desires of the Other, but with regard to what renders satisfaction: object *a*. Moreover, in contrast to his view in which the demand of the subject responds to or counters the demand of the Other in a vicious cycle, Lacan changes his perspective of the transformation of the drive which surrounds and isolates object *a*. As a result, the drive is not isolated from the symbolic register, or the Other as language, although the demands of the Other becomes obsolete. The transformation of the drive includes subjugation by the demands of the Other, then subjugation by the desire of the Other, and finally, the pursuit of object *a*. This chronology correlates to Lacan’s three logical moments: alienation, when the subject as drive or satisfaction is dominated by the Other; separation, when the subject is dominated by object *a* as the desire of the Other, the same desire of the subject; and the traversing of fantasy, when the subject as drive dominates object *a*. Subservient to the desire of the Other, the desire of the analysand emerges through the interpretation of the desire of the Other in the fundamental fantasy. This endeavor

elicits the transformation of the fundamental fantasy so that the pursuit of satisfaction may be achieved. The three stages that correspond to the transformations of the drive witness the subject in the imaginary register in relation to demand, the subject in relation to desire of the symbolic Other, and finally, the subject as authentic drive. Thus, the subject traverses the imaginary, the symbolic and the real which predominate at intervals during analysis, the aim of which is for the analysand to transpose these three moments, so the subject as real could be revealed.

The configuration of unconscious desire expressed by Lacan, then, delineates drives no longer subjugated to the ego and superego, but allowed to fulfill their desire in pursuit of satisfaction and *jouissance*. The distinction between desire, or the signifier, and *jouissance* parallels the distinction related by Freud between representation, affiliated with unconscious desire, and affect, associated with *jouissance*. The differentiation between the subject as desire and the desire of the Other achieved, the object of desire is perceived to be linked to language, or the signifier, identification based on language, and interpretation, whereas *jouissance* transcends these aspects. Although deciphering and interpretation are crucial components of analysis, Lacan developed the traversing of the fundamental fantasy, or the “pass,” for the Ecole Freudienne de Paris, his psychoanalytic institute, and the Ecole de la Cause Freudienne, the institute he founded shortly before his death and which still implements this procedure (Fink, Clinical 213). This process involves the subject divulging the case with two other analysands, who discuss the analysis with experienced analysts, to acquire information on “the beyond of analysis.” In this way, the subject traverses the fundamental fantasy and experiences the drive, after analysis was unable to transport the subject to the pass (Fink, Clinical 213).

Although analysis is characterized by a crisis of satisfaction, Freud states that “the subject is always happy,” on some level, even if the subject is content with dissatisfaction (Fink, Clinical

216). This scenario epitomizes Nana, who suffers from *ennui* and extreme dissatisfaction, despite being surrounded by her admirers, all her luxury and her wealth. Her discontent manifests in lethargy and listlessness and reverting to her childhood ways. Moreover, she would wearily submit to some man, only to oblige in her discontentedness. Although her predictable schedule yielded an idle existence, Nana was always content with dissatisfaction.

Similarly, Jacques-Alain Miller, a prominent French Lacanian psychoanalyst who married Lacan's daughter, concurs that the subject is "always happy at the level of the drive...so happy that the subject repeats that satisfaction, even if it seems to bring dissatisfaction (Fink, Clinical 216). According to Lacan, the subject envisions desire, not *jouissance*, and proposes to modify the rapport between desire and satisfaction, inhibition and drive, the subject of desire and the subject of *jouissance*. The analyst, then, must unravel the knots that impede the relationship between desire and *jouissance* through abdication of the role of master of reality, as well as master of discourse, in order to sustain vulnerability to the subject, who often substitutes exposed *jouissance* for anxiety. As Freud asserts, "Anxiety is the universal currency of affect, in the sense that every emotion can be converted into it. It signals an emotion---that is, a satisfaction, which is unwanted or disturbing at some level" (Fink, Clinical 215). Moreover, the link between affect and *jouissance* parallels the Freudian link between affect and libido, and the goal is to overcome the resistance of the analysand to identify the *jouissance* and the drives that yield satisfaction via the id. Through subjectification of the drives, the attainment of *jouissance* becomes possible.

Nana's pursuit of an identical routine reflects subjectification of the drives through which the attainment of *jouissance* becomes possible. Nana, who also suffers from anxiety which is disturbing, comes to life only after having followed her daily pursuits:

awakening at ten o'clock; playing with her little Scottie, Bijou, which made Count Muffat jealous; bathing in her dressing-room; preparing for her elaborate hairdressing session with Francis at eleven; lunch with the mysterious Madame Maloir; *bezique* with an old friend between lunch and dressing for the evening, or reading items on the theater or society news in the *Figaro*, or opening a book, because she took pride in her literary taste; and, finally, getting dressed by five. Only then, after having fulfilled these diurnal desires, could *jouissance* be achieved: leaving in her carriage; receiving a host of male visitors at home; frequently going out to dinner; and getting to bed very late. Her anxiety now dissipated, Nana would commence this same routine the following day. Her great distraction, however, was to go to *Batignolles* to visit her little son, Louis, at her aunt's on intermittent Sundays.

Similarly, in *Divinas palabras*, Act II, Scene V, Mari-Gaila, the heroine, has envisioned desire through which *jouissance* is possible. Mari-Gaila invites Séptimo Miao to the sentry box on the beach where she has arrived, dragging the cart bearing Laureano, the hydrocephalic dwarf. Although she tells Séptimo Miao that her reputation is at risk, she finds him charming and reacts in an amorous manner, teasing him, while leaning her head against his chest. She stops resisting, modifying the rapport between desire and satisfaction, inhibition and drive, the subject of desire and the subject of *jouissance*, and they enter the sentry box where she encourages him to take her in his arms. Séptimo Miao then bites her lip, and she relaxes in his arms, sighing in ecstasy. Thus, the link between affect and *jouissance* parallels the Freudian link between affect and libido, identifying the *jouissance* and the drives that yield satisfaction via the id.

René Girard (1923-), a French historian, literary critic and philosopher, reveals in *Mensonge romantique et vérité Romanesque* (1961) (*Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and*

Other in Literary Structure, 1965) his mimetic theory that witnesses the collapse of the autonomous self and an experience of conversion to attain enlightenment. His perspective develops the concept that a sacrifice of the self represents the recourse from mimetic violence and rivalry, and that this sacrifice also represents the foundation of human culture. Although Girard approached his study of human interrelations as an atheistic intellectual characteristic of his era, his attitude of demystification manifested a conversion experience, also thought of as a realization or actualization of death and resurrection. According to Girard, the novel expresses this experience of collapse and recovery whether or not the author intended a leitmotiv of religiosity. Similarly, this phenomenon of the novel, a genre that reveals truth regarding the autonomy of human desire, also becomes manifest in theatrical literature. In *Divinas palabras*, for example, Girard classifies the process of resolution of a crisis as the ‘scapegoat mechanism,’ in which the selection of the scapegoat is random and chosen based on vulnerability and marginality. Contrary to acquisitive mimesis, accusatory mimesis witnesses a sacrificial crisis, characterized by a unanimous scapegoat that results in a violent catharsis. Girard identifies this convergence of violence as surrogate victimage, and the concept of *skandalon* signifies a temptation that represents desire.

A classic prototype of mimetic theory, as a direct re-enactment of human action, is the knight errant, Don Quixote, created by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616). The protagonist, Quixote, who aspires to perfect chivalry after having become an avid reader of courtly literature, sabotages his own independence in his pursuit of imitating Amadís de Gaula, the most prominent literary hero. In effect, Don Quixote abandons his own judgment as he desires only that which this fictional hero chooses. Girard’s triangular desire can be expressed as

follows: subject (Don Quixote); object (chivalrous knight errant); and mediator or model (Amadís de Gaula).

Contrary to acquisitive mimesis characterized by the appropriation of the same object, accusatory mimesis reveals a sacrificial crisis characterized by a unanimous scapegoat that results in a violent catharsis. Asymmetrical victims, or even figures whom are perceived to be different, become the focus of hostility of the *esprit de corps*, because they threaten the established cultural and psychological tenets of a society. Girard identifies this convergence of violence as surrogate victimage, in that the aggression is transferred toward a victim who is vulnerable and available. Moreover, Girard discovered that individual works of fiction portray characters who have evolved within a system of relationships, identified as common structural properties. However, he made the distinction that great authors portray these characters truthfully within a system of relationships that is less variable. This literary system, such as the psychological laws of Proust, for example, reveals a reality conceived by the authors: the mimetic desire as propounded by Girard is classified as metaphysical in the sense that desire represents an aspiration, a dream of fulfillment attributed to a mediator. According to Girard, mediation is external when the social status of the mediator (Amadís de Gaula) is superior to that of the hero (Don Quixote), whose aspirations are optimistic, yet unfulfilled. On the other hand, internal mediation signifies equal social status of both the mediator and the subject; however, the transformation of the mediator into a rival and an obstacle precludes the acquisition of the desired object. The behavior of characters portrays universal behavior, as well as the authenticity of desire and the illusion that the mediator symbolizes unattainable virtue. This mimetic desire, influenced by Jacques Lacan's theory of desire, paralleled convergent research that followed the unpopularity of Girard's focus on and development of human imitation.

Regarding the rejection of Girard's mimetic theory, the stress on imitation in humans was not a popular subject when Girard developed his theories, but today there is support for his claims coming from empirical research in psychology and neuroscience. In fact, his work is attracting interest from empirical researchers investigating human imitation, among them Andrew Meltzoff and Vittorio Gallese. According to clinical psychologist, Scott R. Garrels, Girard's insights are so remarkable, not only because he discovered the role of psychological mimesis during a time when imitation was quite out of fashion, but he did so through investigation in literature, cultural anthropology and history to further evidence of mimetic phenomena.

Girard also exposes his concept of *skandalon*, translated as *pierre d'achoppement* ("stumbling block"), a psychopathological designation rendered as obstacle or scandal. This "model-obstacle," or model of an obstacle, signifies a temptation that represents a desire, which is an antithesis of Christianity. According to Judeo-Christian scriptures, only the Cross conquers the avatar of the *skandalon*, Satan ("the accuser"), contrasted with the paraclete ("defender of the accused"). According to Girard, sacrilege, apocalypse and decline are not necessarily irrevocable; however, neither are they harbingers of liberated desire inasmuch as they foretell progress:

Those who claimed to be governed by the pleasure principle, as a rule, are enslaved to models and rivals which make their lives a constant frustration. But they are too vain to acknowledge their own enslavement. Mimetic desire makes us believe we are always on the verge of becoming self-sufficient through our own transformation into someone else. (Fleming 141)

In this sense, mimetic desire transcends *skandalon* through conversion based on a

model, as opposed to the harbingers of desire that presage enslavement and victimization.

In Deceit, Desire and the Novel, for example, Girard reveals that the authors under study share an experience of conversion or an experience of death and resurrection, a collapse and recovery to the degree that this experience constitutes the genre of the novel. He also contrasts the novel, which reveals the truth of human desire, and romantic literature, which perpetuates the fallacy about the autonomy of human desire. The first author, Cervantes, expresses that Don Quixote desires to be a knight errant, similar to those found in courtly literature. Quixote tells Sancho Panza, his servant, the reasons for which he has chosen Amadís de Gaula as his model:

I want you to know, Sancho, that the famous Amadis of Gaul was one of the most perfect knight errants. But what am I saying, one of the most perfect? I should say the only, the first, the unique, the master and lord of all those who existed in the world...when a painter wants to become famous for his art he tries to imitate the originals of the best masters he knows...In the same way Amadis was the pole, the star, the sun, for brave and amorous knights, and we others who fight under the banner of love and chivalry should imitate him. Thus my friend Sancho, I reckon that whoever imitates him best will come closest to perfect chivalry. (Kirwan 16-17)

Don Quixote abandons his independence through his desire, because the most prominent literary hero, Amadis, functions as the mediator who directs his attention toward becoming a perfect knight errant. Essentially, Quixote has no independent self, given Girard's triangular structure of desire: Quixote, as subject; perfect knight, as desire; and Amadis, as mediator or model.

Moreover, the convergence of more than one subject upon the same object or desire could result in rivalry or conflict. In this case, the subject, or imitator, and the desired object

reside along the base of the triangle, and the model, who indicated the desirability of the object, dwells at the apex, a schema not exclusive to people. In fact, literature stimulates mimetic passions, not only for Don Quixote, but also for Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary, when she commences the first of her adulterous affairs, a desire nurtured by romantic literature which she read avidly while in the convent:

She remembered the heroines of novels she had read, and the lyrical legion of those adulterous women began to sing in her memory with sisterly voices that enchanted her. Now she saw herself as one of those *amoureuses* whom she had so envied: she was becoming, in reality, one of that gallery of fictional figures; the long dream of her youth was coming true. She was full of a delicious sense of vengeance. How she had suffered! But now her hour of triumph had come; and love, so long repressed, was gushing forth in joyful effervescence. She savored it without remorse, without anxiety, without distress. (Kirwan 21-22)

Similar to the enraptured Madame Bovary for whom words suggest the bliss of romance, the young Marcel, an avid admirer of Bergotte, the writer, and the theatrical posters of the Champs-Élysées, reveals the relationship between reading and desire in Marcel Proust's

A La Recherche du temps perdu:

But I was incapable of seeing a thing unless a desire to do so had been aroused in me by reading...I knew how often I had been unable to give my attention to things or to people, whom afterwards, once their image had been presented to me in solitude by an artist, I would have gone leagues and risked death to rediscover. (Kirwan 22)

The analysis in Deceit, Desire and the Novel reveals the theme of mimetic desire exposed by Cervantes, Flaubert, Stendhal, Dostoevsky and Proust, authors ranging from the 17th to the 20th centuries. In the case of Cervantes, rivalry or conflict does not exist between Don Quixote, the adventurer, and Amadís, the fictional model, because Quixote cannot transgress the hierarchical boundary that separates them. In a similar way, the social hierarchy that divides Quixote, the master, and Sancho Panza, his squire, precludes conflict between them. These social distinctions prevent the realization of any potential conflict with regard to mimetic desire, and this version of mimesis is classified as external mediation or external mimesis. Dostoevsky, on the contrary, employs internal mediation in which the subject and model exist in proximity on the same social level, culminating in conflict, peril and mimetic destruction, as witnessed in the patricide in The Brothers Karamazov (1879-1880). Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground (1864) also depicts mimetic rivalry for social status through the anti-hero, obsessed with the opinions of others, repulsed by his peers, yet attracted to them, and who seeks revenge on an army officer who publicly humiliated him:

Smiling scornfully, I paced backwards and forwards... I was trying with all my might to show that I could do without them... 'I am walking to please myself and nobody can stop me.'... To humiliate oneself more shamelessly and willfully was impossible, and this I fully, all too fully understand, yet all the same I continued to pace... 'Oh, if only you know what thoughts and emotions I am capable of, and how enlightened I am!' I thought sometimes, turning in imagination to the sofa where my enemies sat. But my enemies acted as though I wasn't even in the room... they all ceased talking at once and silently watched me... attentively and seriously, as I walked... *without paying them the slightest attention*. But nothing happened; they did not speak to me and after two minutes they ignored me again. (Kirwan 26-27)

This avoidance behavior in which the anti-hero loathes his enemies, yet at the same time, has an obsessive need to attract their attention, compares to this passage from

Within a Budding Grove in which Proust describes strollers by the sea at Balbec who pretend to avoid each other in passing, but sustain a mutual attraction, despite their aversion:

All these people...pretending not to see, so as to let it be thought that they were not interested in them, but covertly eyeing, for fear of running into them, the people who were walking beside or coming towards them, did in fact bump into them, became entangled with them, because each was mutually the object of the same secret attention veiled beneath the same apparent disdain. (Kirwan 27)

The Russian writer's exposition of mimetic desire, internal mediation, intensifies the potential for conflict, rivalry and violence, because the distance between the subject and model pales in comparison to that for external mediation. Thus, Dostoevsky contrasts Cervantes, although both authors illustrate the same psychological principle. Moreover, the Underground Man, as well as other Dostoevskian heroes, suffer from *ressentiment*, an affective condition in which someone, an Other, dictates the emotional life of the hero and that has severe results. The play and film, *Amadeus*, also illustrate mimetic desire in which Antonio Salieri, the pious, imperial court composer, rivals Mozart, the dissolute genius. The confrontation has catastrophic consequences when Salieri, determined to destroy his rival, becomes imprisoned in an asylum due to his jealousy and regards himself as the 'patron saint of mediocrity' (Kirwan 30). Similar to the Underground Man, Salieri personifies *ressentiment*. The classic study, *Ressentiment* (1912), by Max Scheler, the German philosopher, analyzes this phenomenon:

Ressentiment is a self-poisoning of the mind which has quite definite causes and consequences. It is a lasting mental attitude, caused by the systematic repression

of certain emotions and affects, which, as such, are normal components of human nature. Their repression leads to the constant tendency to indulge in certain kinds of value delusions and corresponding value judgments. The emotions and affects primarily concerned are revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract, and spite. (Kirwan 34)

In the case of Zola, rivalry or conflict does not exist between Nana, the heroine, and Queen Pomaré, the ideal model, because Nana cannot transgress the hierarchical boundary that separates them. Similarly, the social hierarchy that separates Nana, the courtesan, and Satin, her childhood friend and paramour, prevents conflict between them. These social distinctions prevent the realization of any potential conflict with regard to mimetic desire, and this version of mimesis is also classified as external mediation or external mimesis.

On the contrary, Valle-Inclán's exposition of mimetic desire, internal mediation, intensifies the potential for conflict, rivalry and violence, because the distance between the subject (Mari-Gaila), the heroine, and model (Marica del Reino), her sister-in-law, who is an heiress, pales in comparison to that for external mediation. In addition, Mari-Gaila suffers from *ressentiment* in that her emotional life has severe results: she exiles herself with the cart bearing Laureano, her nephew, who is a hydrocephalic dwarf,

a profitable inheritance. Moreover, Act II, Scene IX of *Divinas palabras*, reveals Pedro Gailo's endurance of *ressentiment* when Mari-Gaila finds herself on his doorstep following her absence with the Trasco Cabrío, the magical goat-goblin. This revelation of *ressentiment* occurs through vulgar exchanges between Pedro Gailo, the hero, and Mari-Gaila, his adulterous wife.

In contrast to acquisitive mimesis, which escalates conflict due to an object of desire, metaphysical mimesis replaces the object, such as envy, with the conflict of the opponents and encompasses unity. In this case, violence against the subject(s) will be imitated by others, and the collective consciousness will either repudiate, expel or kill the victim. This new mimesis is characterized by unification as a result of the reconciliation of the collective will which now directs violence and hatred toward the victim. Also, the collective consciousness blames the victim for this mimetic crisis as the personification of evil. Girard classifies the process of resolution of this crisis as the 'scapegoat mechanism' (Kirwan 49). A distinction should be made between the common use of 'scapegoat' and that found in Leviticus 16 which relates a conscious religious rite in which the high priest conveys the sins of the people onto a goat, who is banished to the wilderness. In lieu of this conscious ritual, Girard refers to an unconscious psychological mechanism that comprises false accusation and victimization. Although the selection of the scapegoat is random, the victim is chosen based on vulnerability or marginality. A stranger, for example, would qualify as a prospect, since friends or family would probably not be available to come to a defense.

The scapegoat mechanism witnesses all blame and negativity borne by the victim, who has reconciled the collective and become imbued with positive aspects. Girard refers to this paradoxical effect as a 'double transference': a transference of aggression from persecutor to

victim and a transference of reconciliation due to the victim implicated in a catharsis (Kirwan 52). The persecutors attribute both good and evil to the victim, who incarnates the horror of the crisis. Similarly, the collective perceives the victim as exalted and transcendent, dominating the persecutors:

...[O]ne must postulate a mimetic crisis of such duration and severity that the sudden resolution, at the expense of a single victim, has the effect of a miraculous deliverance. The experience of a supremely evil and then beneficent being... cannot fail to be literally *gripping*...such a community would be henceforth wholly animated by a desire for peace... In summary, the community attempts to consolidate its fragile hold on things under the still strong impressions of the crisis and its resolution, believing itself to be under the guidance of the victim itself (Kirwan 52-53).

The religiosity of designating a scapegoat is differentiated from an omniscient, sacred God, separate from the human realm, or profane society, since the former represents an unconscious phenomenon. Reconciled by violence and unified by a transcendent force, the persecutors are consumed in their religiosity, whose origin is sacrifice, or violence to eradicate the scapegoat.

In *La Violence et le sacré*, Girard reveals that Freud served as his model and that his theory of mimetic desire resulted from his struggle to comprehend Freud. Despite the similarities between the Oedipus complex and mimetic desire, the model or rival for Girard is not limited to the father, and the object of desire is not always the mother. In fact, the model and the object are not predetermined. Thus, mimetic theory takes into consideration psychosocial dynamics without the implications of the Oedipal hypothesis. Girard's perspective parallels that of Lacan, who uses psychoanalytic theory to interpret formative social behavior without depending on the Freudian configuration. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud reveals the essence of tragedy and the enigmatic 'tragic guilt' that is ascribed to the Hero:

But why had the Hero of tragedy to suffer? And what was the meaning of this ‘tragic guilt’?...He had to suffer because he was the primal father, the Hero of the great primeval tragedy...the tragic guilt was the guilt which he had to take on himself in order to relieve the Chorus from theirs...The crime which was thrown on to his shoulders, presumptuousness and rebelliousness against a great authority, was precisely the crime for which the members of the Chorus...were responsible. Thus the tragic Hero became, though it might be against his will, the redeemer of the Chorus. (Kirwan 59-60)

Freud’s tragic hero parallels Girard’s surrogate victim, and for both, tragedy represents an event that happened, but is subjugated to inversion. However, Freud recounts the murder of an oppressive father, who transforms into a hero upon death, whereas Girard’s mimetic theory is not limited to one victim, but encompasses multiple sacrifices over time. In comparison to Oedipus the King, this version relates unconscious desires that remain unfulfilled. Furthermore, the concept of the surrogate victim would supersede those of Oedipus as repressed desire and Oedipus as parricide. Contrary to Girard, Freud fixates on family structure and sexuality, emphasizing obscure vision and psychoanalysis. For Girard, the identity of the victim is insignificant, compared to the role of reconciler or scapegoat who unifies the group. The vulnerable element in the patricide theory is not the murder of the father, but the father himself. Nevertheless, both Girard and Freud recognize the significance of the surrogate victim.

The *dénouement* of Divinas palabras, Act III, Scene V, exposes the role of reconciler or scapegoat, Pedro Gailo, who unifies the villagers, the collective conscience, and recognizes the significance of the surrogate victim, the “cuckold” or “eunuch.”

Paradoxically, Mari-Gaila is also represented as a surrogate victim, who has unified the peasantry through the exposition of her sexuality. Moreover, the psychopathological designation of *skandalon* has reconciled the heroine through the liturgical Latin words, signifying the

transformation of the vale of tears to her forgiveness, redemption and eternal life. Thus, the superstitious and miraculous world of rustic souls was conjured by the mysterious “divine words.”

The most distinctive aspect of Girard’s theory of desire is found in the imitation of behavior in social and cognitive development. Without this ‘*mimétisme primaire*’ (‘mimesis of apprenticeship’), adaptation to society and culture would be impossible (Fleming 10). Girard views human desire as imitative and mimesis, more than representing only an act of memory, encompasses intentions of acquisition or a ‘*mimésis d’appropriation*’ (‘mimesis of appropriation’) (Fleming 10). For Girard, desire is acquired from others, as an imitation of their desires, and mimetic desire not only does not originate from objects or ourselves, but from the model or mediator, whom we strive to resemble. Girard also contrasts his concept of *désir* with Freud’s psychoanalytic and sexual perspectives, and correlates human mimetic desire to the imitative behavior of other animals, although the needs of the latter do not necessarily constitute ‘desire,’ which originates in the imagination. Girard’s hypothetical triangular desire depicts a subject, who consciously or unconsciously imitates the desire of the real or imaginary Other, who is a model for the desired object. The object is not desired, for example, as the intrinsic ‘maternal object’ that characterizes Freud, nor as a conscious choice of the subject. On the contrary, desire functions as *le désir selon l’Autre* (desire according to the Other), as opposed to *le désir selon soi* (desire according to one’s own preferences) (Fleming 11-12).

In *Mensonge romantique*, Girard cites Miguel de Cervantes’ hero, Don Quixote, who relates to his squire, Sancho Panza, that he yearns to be a knight of chivalric romances of yore, the epitome of whom is Amadis of Gaul:

I think...that when a painter wants to become famous for his art he tries to imitate the originals of the best masters he knows...Amadis was the pole, the star, the sun for brave and amorous knights, and we others who fight under the banner of love and chivalry should imitate him. Thus, my friend Sancho, I reckon that whoever imitates him best will come closest to perfect chivalry. (Fleming 16)

According to Girard, Amadis, the mediator of desire, chooses the object of desire for Don Quixote, who is no longer autonomous. The Quixotic dream is a mimetic adventure in that his emulation of his hero influences his vision and his actions. In fact, Quixote, like his hero, selects a beloved, Aldonza Lorenza, an undistinguished farm girl, to whom he can dedicate himself and experience the throes of romance and who is transformed into the love of his hero, Dulcinea del Toboso. Quixote's imitative behavior transforms his perception: although he only admires Aldonza from afar, he performs chivalric deeds for her and does penance for her in the Sierra Morena mountains, similar to Amadis who was ordered to do this by Oriana, another love. As Quixote and Sancho search for glory, their obsession to emulate Amadis transforms the Spanish countryside: damsels in distress; perfidious knights; a barber's basin metamorphoses into the legendary helmet of Mambrino; windmills transform into magnificent giants; and sheep become malevolent warriors. For Girard, mimetic desire transfigures its objects, and Cervantes reveals this through the mediator of desire.

Zola reveals external mediation through Nana's dream of acquiring luxurious possessions in emulation of her heroine, Queen Pomaré. In this scenario, the desiring subject (Nana) and the mediator or model (Queen Pomaré) are not rivals for the object(s) of desire, because Queen Pomaré belongs to another time in history, rendering rivalry impossible. Specifically, Nana lives in a mansion in the *Avenue de Villiers* on the corner of the *Rue Cardinet*, that luxurious district

developed on the plain of *Monceau*. Her palatial Renaissance-style building was purchased by Count Muffat, full of furnishings, knick-knacks, Oriental hangings, antique sideboards and Louis XIII armchairs. Nana was surrounded by furnishings of various periods and an arrangement of rooms, consisting of a conservatory, a Louis XVI drawing room, a smaller drawing-room filled with Italian cabinets, Spanish and Portuguese chests, Chinese pagodas, a plush Japanese screen, Turkish silk hangings embroidered in gold, antique faience-ware, bronzes and *petit-point* tapestries, and a dining-room on the first floor next to her bedroom and dressing-room. Although she was brought up in the streets of Paris, Nana had an instinct for elegance, luxury, opulence and refinement.

With regard to the possibilities of mediation, external mediation implies that the desiring subject and the mediator or model are not rivals for the object of desire. In other words, sufficient space exists to buffer the center of the spheres in which the subject and mediator reside. Don Quixote can attain the chivalric glory of Amadis without rivalry, because Amadis is fictional and the historical time renders rivalry impossible. The determining factor, however, for external mediation consists of social prestige, a symbolic or spiritual issue. In the case of the aspiring knight errant, Don Quixote reveres Amadis and is conscious of his imitative behavior.

Although Quixote and Sancho share La Mancha, a similar symbolic distance separates them. Quixote acts as an external mediator for Sancho, who emulates the chivalric deeds of his master, in the same way as Quixote admires those of Amadis. In fact, Sancho does not demonstrate the autonomous desire of a peasant farmer, but adapts the desires of the Other in accordance with the image of a squire:

Some of Sancho's desires are not imitated, for example, those aroused by the sight of a piece of cheese or a goatskin of wine. But Sancho has other ambitions besides filling his stomach. Ever since he has been with Don Quixote he has been dreaming of an 'island' of which he would be governor, and he wants the title of duchess for his daughter. These desires do not come spontaneously to a simple man like Sancho. It is Don Quixote who has put them into his head. (Fleming 18)

This mimesis in Cervantes' novel shows Amadis, a fictional hero and representation, as the external mediator of Quixote, who propels the narrative. The distinguishing aspect is that, although the model or mediator affects the other, distance in status, space or time precludes rivalry.

In contrast to external mediation, internal mediation witnesses mimesis in which distance does not sufficiently separate the model and the subject to avert rivalry in an effort to acquire an object. The primary cause of conflict in internal mediation converges on the relationship between the desiring subject and the persuading model:

Rivalry does not arise because of the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather, *the subject desires the object because the rival desires it*. In desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object. The rival, then, serves as a model for the subject, not only in regard to such secondary matters as style and opinions but also, and more essentially, in regard to desires. (Fleming 19)

The double-imperative through which the model requests imitation and then contradicts, as rival, by demanding the prohibition of imitation, yields a model for desire and an obstacle to fulfillment. Girard classifies this form of mediator as the 'model-obstacle' or the 'rival model'.

Thus, internal mediation, or conflictual mimesis, observes a model who attracts, yet excludes, imitation:

As I borrow the desire of a model from whom nothing separates me, neither time and space, nor prestige and social hierarchy, we both inevitably desire the same object and, unless this object can be shared and we are willing to share it, we will compete for it. (Fleming 20)

The revelation of internal mediation, or conflictual mimesis, occurs in Act I, Scene IV, of *Divinas palabras*, when Valle-Inclán exposes the competition for Pedro Gailo's inheritance, the prosperous cart, from his deceased sister, Juana La Reina. In this case, the model, Marica del Reino, rivals her sister-in-law, Mari-Gaila, claiming that her sister requested that she take sole custody of the cart. Thus, the 'rival model' attracts, yet prohibits imitation. With the aid of Bastián de Candás, a local mayor, it is agreed that the sisters-in-law will share the cart for three days each, with Sundays undivided. Eventually, however, Mari-Gaila disappears with the cart, roaming the earth under the influence of Séptimo Miao, who becomes her lover.

In *L'Enfer des choses: René Girard et la logique de l'économie*, Jean-Pierre Dupuy

expresses the following with regard to internal mediation:

It is neither the subject nor society that determines what is desirable, but the *Other*. Or rather, since the subject and his *alter ego* have become perfectly interchangeable doubles, it is their involuntary cooperation that makes the object spring forth from nothing. Each discovers in the desire of the Other the absolute proof of the reality and value of the object. As these rival desires increasingly exacerbate one another as their human bearers become closer, they become capable of creating a world more real and desirable than any object of physical and social reality. (Fleming 20)

The Other possesses desires, whether real or imagined, prior to manifestation, and these desires are attributed by the subject. In Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le noir*, for example, the aspiring bourgeois rivals, Monsieur de Rênal and Monsieur Valenod, desire to obtain Julien Sorel to tutor their children. Both rivals covet Julien Sorel, not because they need a tutor, but because they realize that the other wants one. This scenario of 'double' or 'reciprocal' mediation witnesses the model or mediator in mimesis in which the desire of the Other is imitated (Fleming 20). At the same time, these rivals do not attribute their desires as originating from those of the Other, but rather on the intrinsic desire of the object, the tutor. According to Girard, as intensification of internal mediation ensues, the identities of the subject and the model differentiate and rivalry and mimesis escalate. The paradox of individuation, however, reflects the rivals becoming doubles of each other, sustaining reciprocity. Moreover, in the minds of the rivals, the object of desire loses its central locus, emphasizing the importance of the mimetic conflict of which the rivals become the *raison d'être*.

The triangular model of internal mediation reappears in *Le Rouge et le noir* when Julien Sorel, now in Paris as the secretary of the marquis de Mole, attends the ball at the Hôtel de Retz

and finds himself attracted to Mathilde, the daughter of the marquis, only after observing that other young men are attracted to her. Similarly, Mathilde becomes attracted to Julien due to her infatuation with her ancestor, Boniface de Mole. These amorous attractions depend on third parties or mediators. Furthermore, the love affair having begun, a different triangulation occurs: the subject or lover; the sexualized beloved as the object of desire; and the beloved as mediator. Through mediation, allowance to the object of desire is equivalent to defeat by a rival.

The triangular model (*ménage à trois*) of internal mediation also appears in Chapter 13, the penultimate chapter, of *Nana*, when Count Muffat (subject or lover) discovers his elderly father-in-law in his nightshirt in the new bedroom, glittering with royal opulence, of Nana (object of desire). Thus, through mediation, allowance to the sexualized beloved is equivalent to defeat by a rival (the Marquis). This clandestine discovery results in Count Muffat apostrophizing the Lord in solemn prayer with passionate fervor, until Monsieur Venot, his confessor, intervenes before his final collapse, signaling the end of the relationship between Nana and the Count. A similar triangulation occurs in Act II, Scene IV, of *Divinas palabras*: Pedro Gailo (subject or hero) realizes through the revelations of his sister, Marica del Reino, that his wife, Mari-Gaila (sexualized object of desire), is romantically involved with the diabolical, Séptimo Miau (mediator). Both Zola and Valle-Inclán reveal that these amorous attractions depend on mediators, particularly after the love affair has already begun.

In summary, after having published *Studies on Hysteria* in 1895, Freud coined the term “psychoanalysis” in 1896, and after having published *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900, he abandoned his improbable “seduction theory” and discovered the Oedipus complex, his theory that purports the universality of the family triangle. His *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* in

1901 established that the mind is governed by unwavering rules, despite mental dysfunction. The inherent premise of psychoanalysis is the distinction of the conscious and the unconscious for psychoanalysis to comprehend the psychopathological functions of the mind. A state of consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) is transitory and ideas become latent or unconscious and can reappear. The theory of repression reveals the duality of the unconscious: the latent unconscious (preconscious), and the repressed unconscious incapable of consciousness. The Ego (*das Ich*) represents the coherent structure of mental functions and adjoins consciousness and creates repressions. An unconscious idea becomes conscious via corresponding “word-presentations,” mnemonic perceptions which, through psychoanalysis, transform repressed thoughts to consciousness. The id (*das Es*) represents the unconscious which bears the passions. The super-ego (*das Uber-ich*) represents the actions against the choices of the id which may be permissive or prohibitive.

According to Gustave Le Bon, a specific psychology would not exist without the exception of a provisional group which causes the distinctiveness of the individual to become obliterated. In this case, the unconscious emerges and the heterogeneous submerges into the homogeneous, and the suggestibility of the group deprives the individual of a conscious personality, including self-preservation. Also, the supernatural power of words possesses a magical influence over the collective mind and, in contrast to the quest for truth, the group emphasizes the need for illusions, as the unreal supersedes the real. This suggestibility or ‘imitation’ constitutes the fundamental factor that distinguishes groups, and in this realm, the libido represents the energy of instincts concerning all forms of love. According to psychoanalysis, the *liaisons* of love epitomize the collective mind, for behind the veil of suggestibility dwells a cohesive power that unites the group and the world. In fact, having

capitulated under the influence of suggestion, the individual reveals acceptance by the group. Conformity to the group reveals a portrait of mental regression in which the individual acquires a state of vulnerability to the sovereign mind of the group, and the power of suggestibility becomes the domain of the leader and the individuals who influence each other. This herd instinct, according to Trotter, is delineated by repression derived from the ego and the affinity originating from the libido to propagate the herd.

Furthermore, Jacques Lacan focused on identification and the centrality of language, the functional realization of the pervasive unconscious in which the signifier (“word”) is separated from the signified (“object”) due to a chronic lack of meaning. His “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud,” revealed that the structure of the unconscious corresponds to the structure of a language, and the unconscious is linked to the conscious and the linguistic ego, and parallels the essence of consciousness. «*Le stade du miroir*» (“the mirror stage”) relates the function of the “I” in psychoanalysis and the structure of subjectivity as permanent. The paradigm of this Lacanian concept reveals a conflictual duality: a decisive turning point and a libidinal rapport with the image of the self. This phenomenon also reveals that identification functions as a catalyst in the formation of the Ego. The achievement of the developmental mirror stage signifies that *jouissance* (“the fulfillment of desire”) and the continuity of signifier and signified are illusory. Thus, the “Real” refers to a mythic ego that reflects a *manque-à-être* (“lack-of-being”) which prevents a unified self. The *Belle Epoque*, in contrast, was characterized by a *nivellement des jouissances*, a mythic age attaining a fulfillment of pleasure and achievement unsurpassed until that time, and corresponding to Lacan’s Symbolic Order of culture which determines not only identity, but results in alienation of the self or “otherness.” Another tenet of Lacan is that the ego is affected by *méconnaissance*

(“misunderstanding”), a depressive reaction resulting from a misconception of the image, or alienation of the self, known as the Imaginary Order. Regarding the designations of the Imaginary Order, Freud used *der Andere* which refers to the “other person” or the Ego, whereas Lacan used *autre* («a») or “other.” Similarly, Freud used *das Andere* which refers to “otherness,” the unconscious or the “other scene,” whereas Lacan used *Autre* («A») or “Other” which represents the “extreme alterity” or the mother that designates the Symbolic Order, composed of missing critical signifiers (*manque*). Also, the *objet petit (objet a)* represents the perceived image derived from others and the specular reflection which compose the Imaginary Order. The unconscious transcends the illusion of the Imaginary due to a lack of identification, and comprises the Symbolic Order which resolves the rapport with the conscious and functions as the locus for language. However, there exists a *manque* (“lack”) of critical signifiers which should be inscribed within the trove of signifiers of the unconscious, resulting in an incomplete “barred Other.”

Another concept of Lacan is *désir* which must be revealed to the “other” through psychoanalysis. This revelation of discourse, however, proves to be insufficient, because articulation always effects a surplus in which truth is incomplete. Moreover, *le désir* functions as an inherent dimension of society, due to a missing signifier (*manque*), not an object. Lacan also advocates that literature reflects paradigms of the unconscious; yet, writing cannot be reduced to an expression of psychological aberration. He also regards the symptoms of a client as a palimpsest that must be discerned through interpretation and that literature is not an imitation, but a “truthful structure.” Lacan adheres to the concept that language holds the key to the structure of the unconscious, the “Other” («l’Autre du langage»). This universe of language propagates desire and induces alienation of the self.

Lacan translates Freud's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen* ("ideational representatives") as *représentants de la représentation* ("representatives of representation"), or signifiers. According to Lacan, repressed words establish connections with other repressed "representatives" and develop complex liaisons with them, and language governs the phonemes and morphemes, the chain of signifiers linked according to laws which the ego or self are unable to control. The unconscious also expresses desire, the chain of signifiers remembers the dialogue with the conscious, and language functions as a catalyst for desire. The *vel* ("either/or") of alienation dictates that the subject capitulates in the confrontation with the Other, while acquiescing to subjectivity. The subject thus disappears which echoes a *manque-à-être* ("lack-of-being"), implying that the subject still exists surrounded by discourse, yet without being. The paradox of alienation, however, is the potential for being, and alienation engenders the Symbolic Order. In alienation, the Other dominates the subject, whereas separation witnesses the desire of the Other, object "a," the *jouissance* object, subordinating the subject.

Regarding the Freudian concept of the "lost object," a refinding (*Wiederzufindung*) of an external object displaces and substitutes an initial finding (*Objektfindung*). According to Lacan, object "a" symbolizes a prized possession for the subject, who seeks this value in all activities and relations. The "Lacanian real," manifested in the discourse of the analysand, invokes the analysand to return to the same issue *sans cesse*. The "real," then, depicts a link between two thoughts that has surrendered to repression and must yield to restoration. The Lacanian "fundamental fantasy," Freud's "primal scene," depicts the rapport between the subject, distinct from ego, and the cause of desire, the lost object, which is predominantly unconscious. Desire is permanently inscribed within the Other, since this is the cause of the existence of desire, and the subject is represented by the id, the provenance of the passions, regardless of approval.

According to Lacan, the identification of the subject with unconscious desire transitions to the identification of the subject with drive, emphasizing the goal of satisfaction, as opposed to the aspects of desire. This subject remains repressed by the ego, the superego, and by desire based on language and the discourse of the Other. This repressed desire becomes transformed not relevant to the demands and desires of the Other, but with regard to what renders satisfaction: the pursuit of object “a,” not isolated from the symbolic register. This correlates to Lacan’s three logical moments: alienation, when the subject as drive or satisfaction is dominated by the Other; separation, when the subject is dominated by object “a” as the desire of the Other, the same desire as the subject; and the traversing of fantasy, when the subject as drive dominates object “a.”

Thus, the subject traverses the imaginary, the symbolic and the real in order to reveal a veritable subject. The Lacanian configuration of unconscious desire, then, delineates drives not subjugated to the ego and superego, but allowed to fulfill desire, or the signifier, in pursuit of satisfaction and *jouissance*. Through subjectification of the drives, the attainment of *jouissance* becomes possible.

In comparison, the mimetic theory of René Girard witnesses the collapse of the autonomous self and a conversion experience thought of as a realization of death and resurrection to attain enlightenment. This phenomenon becomes manifest in the novel and in theatrical literature. Contrary to acquisitive mimesis characterized by the appropriation of the same object, accusatory mimesis witnesses a sacrificial crisis characterized by a unanimous scapegoat that results in a violent catharsis. Through the behavior of characters, universal behavior is portrayed, as well as the authenticity of desire and the illusion that the mediator symbolizes unattainable virtue. The Girardian concept of *skandalon* translated as *pierre*

d'achoppement (“stumbling block”) represents a model-obstacle signifying a temptation that represents a desire, an antithesis of Christianity. Although Girard reveals that Freud served as his model, the model or rival for Girard is not limited to the father, and the object of desire is not always the mother, for they are not predetermined. Although for Girard the identity of the victim remains insignificant, both Girard and Freud recognize the significance of the surrogate victim.

Girard’s theory of desire, ‘*mimétisme primaire*’ (‘mimesis of apprenticeship’) is found in the imitation of behavior in social and cognitive development and the adaptation to society and culture. For Girard, human desire is imitative, emanating from the model or mediator, and mimesis includes intentions of acquisition, ‘*mimésis d’appropriation*.’ Girard’s concept of triangular *désir* contrasts with Freud’s psychoanalytic and libidinal perspectives, and depicts a subject who imitates the desire of the Other, who is a model for the desired object. This desire functions as *le désir selon l’Autre* (“desire according to the Other”), as opposed to *le désir selon soi* (“desire according to one’s own preferences”). In the scenario of ‘double’ or ‘reciprocal’ mediation, the desire of the Other (model or mediator) is imitated. According to Girard, the identities of the subject and the model differentiate, and rivalry and mimesis escalate, as intensification of internal mediation ensues: the rivals become the *raison d’être* of the mimetic conflict.

Thus, the psychoanalytic perspectives of *autre* (“ego”) and *Autre* (“unconscious”), the concept of «*le stade du miroir*», the ideology of *désir*, mimetic theory and *skandalon* apply to the analyses of literary texts, especially those of the *Belle Epoque*. Specifically, the fundamental fantasy, the analytical crisis of satisfaction, the subjectification of drives to attain *jouissance*, the scapegoat mechanism and *skandalon* are applicable to «*La femme X...*», *Nana* and *Divinas palabras*, respectively. Moreover, with regard to mimetic theory, internal and external mimesis

relate to Nana, and conflictual (internal) mimesis applies to Divinas palabras. Mimetic theory can also be applied to such literary texts as Don Quixote, Madame Bovary, A la recherche du temps perdu, Le rouge et le noir and Notes from the Underground, the latter which also manifests *ressentiment*.

CHAPTER IV

NANA: LA FEMME FATALE INSOUMISE ET LA BONNE FILLE

Emile Zola was a foremost exemplar of the literary school of naturalism and a prolific author of the collection, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, examining the legitimate and illegitimate genealogies of a family for five generations. He was a political activist whose article, «*J'accuse*», defended Captain Dreyfus against obstruction of justice and anti-Semitism by the highest levels of the French Army. Zola reveals psychological aspects introduced by Freud, Le Bon, Lacan and Girard in *Nana* (1880) which portrays the effects of heredity and the *demi-monde* of the Second Empire of France, as well as the duality of Other («*Autre*») / other («*autre*»). The novel also dramatizes in the character of Nana/Venus the paradox of innocence and destructiveness, sacrality and profane desire. In addition, *Nana* represents a novel of mediation in the acquisition of the object of desire and the duality of the heroine as «*la bonne fille*» / «*la mouche d'or*».

Symbolically, the overture of *Nana* that occurs in an empty theater, corresponds to the *dénouement* in which Nana/Vénus expires in an abandoned, empty hotel room.

Similarly, the demise of Nana correlates to the *dénouement* of the Second Empire.

Indeed, Nana symbolizes Paris, radiating «*l'Autre*» and «*le désir*» which culminate in «*autre chose*». Moreover, the leitmotiv of duality transcends an authentic self, resulting in a condemnation of the self and «*l'Autre*» in which the *femme fatale* becomes a victim of moral corruption, tragic fate and a cathartic conclusion. The oxymoron of Nana's psychology is represented by the coexistence of masculine and feminine characteristics that constitute a «*femme insoumise*», and the paradox of the heroine is revealed by the overexposure of the image of her life that becomes the harbinger of her death. Nana becomes a mirror reflecting sexuality and desire, a threat to society that transcends the patriarchal structure. Her death represents an allegory, symbolizing

corrupt French society on the eve of the Franco-Prussian war and the destruction of the

Second Empire. In fact, «*la reine soleil*» becomes a metaphor for the Empire.

In *Nana*, with regard to psychological development, the register of the Symbolic Order renders that of the Imaginary Order, the world of objects and others, obsolete, because «*le désir*» is indestructible. Also, the Mirror Stage of development is threatened by a process of contamination of metonymy in which meaning constantly changes through a chain of signifiers, resulting in the child (heroine) becoming a victim of desire. The register of the Symbolic Order includes not only the world of objects and others, but also the self. During «*le stade du miroir*», identification effects the formation of the Ego, and this «*Gestalt*» (psychological configuration) makes the ego into a structure that alienates the self. Such is Nana's duality as a decipherable (sexual) image opposed to an elusive, unattainable (maternal) reflection: the Temptress/Mother. *Nana* reveals «*le stade du miroir*» in the portrayal of an innocent idyll with Georges Hugon; «*Autre*» vs.

«*autre*»; the Lacanian “Real”, effecting «*la reine de Paris*»; the consequences of *désir*;

and the metaphorical majesty of Nana during the episode of the *Grand Prix de Paris*.

The novel also illustrates Girard’s *mimésis d’appropriation* (“acquisitive mimesis”),

accusatory mimesis (sacrificial crisis) and *skandalon* (enslavement and victimization),

and constitutes a «*pierre d’achoppement*», the antithesis of Christianity, «*l’objet de*

désir», and throws into relief the leitmotifs of religiosity and royalty.

Nana represents the ninth volume in the *Rougon-Macquart* series by Emile Zola (1840-1902), who reveals his contempt for the society of the epoch by means of a complex, mythical heroine, who symbolizes the decadent Second Empire (1852-1870) which she leads to destruction. Although Zola was concurrently writing *Roman expérimental*, a work that defended his theory of naturalism, Huysmans (1848-1907) regarded *Nana* as «*un sacré coup d’aile*» (“a tremendous winged thrust”), a perspective that transcends naturalist methodology, and the author referred to his novel as «*Le poème des désirs du mâle*» (“The poem of male desire”), a view that counters the detached objectivism of naturalist theory (Minogue 121). The realistic details of the

novel and the reality of the Second Empire commence in the first chapter, an introduction to Zola's heroine, his principal characters and themes of the novel, and portrayal of the theater as metaphor which he perceived as «*une étrange époque de folie et de honte*» ("a strange era of folly and shame") (Minogue 122). The gilded image of wealth concealing the clandestine corrosion and the *début* of the spectacle, «*La Blonde Vénus*», reflect the irreverence, lust and greed of a corrupt, debauched and waning age.

Nana, born Anna Coupeau in *L'Assommoir* (1877), is a reflection of the pernicious effects of heredity and the social milieu, contrasting with the sentimental 'fallen women' of Romantic literature, and she is a heroine who will fulfill Zola's quest to portray realistic behavior and the *demi-monde*. Her role as Venus transcends the stage, foreshadowing her life and death. Although her roles as a respectable housewife with Fontan, a devoted mother with Louiset, and a romantic virgin in her tryst with Georges all fail, Nana does succeed in transforming herself from street prostitute to wealthy and fashionable courtesan. Her mirror images reflect a state of entrapment, a victim of Zola's determinism which allows no escape. As «*une invention de Bordenave*», the theater manager, Nana dances in the second act of «*La Blonde Vénus*» in a dance hall similar to that of *L'Assommoir*. She and her childhood friend, Satin, reminisce about the cruel life in the slums, Nana's laundress mother and drunken father, and her youth in the *rue de la Goutte-d'Or*. The net of determinism falls again when Nana responds derogatorily to a novel about a veritable prostitute, an ironic rejection. After Nana departs from Paris, rumors abound in her absence as she has become a distant, wealthy icon.

The leitmotiv of Nana/Venus signifies a duality that portrays Nana as supernatural Other («*Autre*»). Similar to the scent of Venus, the waltz from «*La Blonde Vénus*» follows Nana, manifesting the power of her presence. Moreover, Nana as Woman the Temptress contrasts with

her role as Woman the Mother. Nana will destroy Georges and Philippe Hugon, the two sons of Mme Hugon, who represents a respectable social order, and Nana's child, Louiset, will die, and she will miscarry another. However, her episodes of maternal concern are fleeting, like theatrical roles quickly assumed and quickly discarded, and when she discovers she is pregnant, she reacts indignantly, exasperated at such interference in her affairs. Zola employs the language of narrative, the words of the character whose perspective evokes empathy. From the first scene in *Les Variétés*, Zola portrays a power of sexuality that could destroy a society without harming itself, and this power functions as a weapon for Nana in the opening chapters. As the novel progresses, however, her sexuality becomes more urgent and virulent.

Another aspect of Nana's psyche is that of the «*bonne fille*», glimpses of which permeate the novel until the end. This facet of Nana allows that her story might have been different in another age and environment. Her delight in the countryside and fresh air in the Bois de Boulogne and her enchantment with the countryside at La Mignotte, for example, reveals another Nana («*Autre*»). Similarly, the idyll with the adolescent Georges Hugon reveals elements of «*la bonne fille*», characterized by empathy for someone deprived of opportunity and without hope for a decent life. Although Nana is destructive, she is a victim of heredity, of her upbringing and the era in which she lives, a society that offers the exploitation of her only resource: sexuality.

In contrast to her desire for money, luxury and prestige, this aspect of «*la bonne fille*» reveals a deficiency of an act of malice. Although she is culpable of ruthless financial demands and cruelty toward Muffat, «*la bonne fille*» emerges as a leitmotiv, deferring any cruelty or savagery as characteristics that are shared. This duality represents a contradiction in her character, an aspect that dictates innocence, despite the destruction she causes. When Georges Hugon tries to commit suicide, for example, and his brother, Philippe, is imprisoned for having

stolen money for her, Nana becomes a victim of injustice. At the same time, however, there is an element of truth to her cry of injustice in that she remains unaware of what she has done, of the wake of destruction she has provoked, and the fact that she is a portrait of «*la bonne fille*», who has avenged her people from the squalor and misery of the slums.

The leitmotiv that permeates the *Rougon-Macquart* series, the majesty of a corrupt humanity, is reflected in «*La Blonde Vénus*» and the offstage life of Nana as «*la reine Vénus*». The visit of the royal prince exposes the heir to the throne cavorting with actors who masquerade as royalty. The degrading images of princes and prostitutes abound, like that of royalty woven through Nana's life. Irma d'Anglars, the infamous prostitute known for her majestic façade, and Queen Pomaré, another renowned prostitute who has become a drunk of the gutter, represent emblems for Nana who dreams of majesty and respect, yet fears the destiny of Queen Pomaré whose ravaged visage portends that of Nana in the final chapter. In fact, some critics view the horror of her death as Zola's representation of patriarchal misogyny, punishing the heroine for male domination and narcissism. The end of the novel, prior to Nana's departure from Paris, contrasts her image as untouched with her severe punishment, having been transformed from radiant beauty to suppurating decay and disfigurement.

Despite his castigation of the heroine, Zola also punishes the patriarchy that fosters debauched women and sympathizes with them. Specifically, Nana is distraught when her maid, Zoé, leaves, her friendship and affair with Satin symbolize her decadence, and she becomes reminiscent of their love when Satin is dying and rushes to see her in the hospital. The women of the theater are characterized by camaraderie, attending Nana's parties in Paris and visiting her in the country. Regardless of the rivalries among these women, Rose Mignon, her nemesis, brings her to the Grand Hotel, and despite the danger of contagion, they surround her deathbed,

while Muffat and the other men assemble in the street, avoiding harm. The horror of her death from smallpox, contracted from her neglected son, is overshadowed by the remembrance of her friends of her theatrical role of Mélusine, the beautiful and legendary fairy of the crystal grotto. In stark contrast to her hideous visage, the radiance and beauty of her hair are all that remain to destroy the corrupt world she inhabits. The image of Nana/Venus abandoned in the empty room at the end of the novel echoes the emptiness of the theater at the overture, while the crowds herald the advent of war in which the demise of Nana reflects the humiliating *dénouement* of the Second Empire.

In effect, *Nana* represents a novel of mediation that reflects desire and the transference or shift of emotions of the object of desire, essentially sexuality and religiosity, *vis-à-vis* an exceptional woman. At the same time, Zola portrays the passion of a destructive society that unconsciously corrupts, innocently claiming characters and events in its wake. The mythological figure that Nana portrays and the allegory of *la Mouche d'Or* reveal a syncretism of mediation in which she constitutes the seductive Venus and the golden fly that contaminates her victims effecting their ruin, disgrace or dishonor by which they will die. Similar to the various roles which Nana portrays, such as *Vénus*, *Petite Duchesse* and *Mélusine*, that of *la Mouche d'Or*, chosen by Fauchery, the journalist, represents interior aspects of Nana, contrasting with the figure of «*la bonne fille*», collecting potatoes under the rain at *La Mignotte* or waddling gracefully on the boards of *Les Variétés*. Moreover, Nana symbolizes the «*vérité du temps*» (“truth of the time”), an incarnation of the society of the Second Empire, reflected in the allegorical construction of the novel (Reverzy 260). There are three decisive theatrical scenes, including the first in which Zola presents most of his characters and introduces his young *ingénue*, a rehearsal in which Nana plays a hidden role, and the image of Mélusine remembered

by the friends of the courtesan on her deathbed. At the *première* of «*La Blonde Vénus*», Nana's appearance is eagerly awaited, the inspiration of the object of desire:

Un murmure grandit comme un soupir qui se gonflait. Quelques mains battirent, toutes les jumelles étaient fixées sur Vénus. Peu à peu, Nana avait pris possession du public, et maintenant chaque homme la subissait...Et Nana, en face de ce public pâmé, de ces quinze cents personnes entassés, noyées dans l'affaissement et le détraquement nerveux d'une fin de spectacle, restait victorieuse avec sa chair de marbre, son sexe assez fort pour détruire tout ce monde et n'en être pas entamé.

(48-49)

[A murmur spread through the house like a rising wind. A few people clapped and every opera-glass was focused on Venus. Gradually, Nana had asserted her domination over the audience and now she held every man at her mercy...And facing this ecstatic audience of fifteen hundred people, all crammed together and overcome by exhaustion and nervous prostration inevitable at the end of any show, Nana's body, as smooth and white as marble, was all-conquering, her sexuality powerful enough to destroy all these people and remain unscathed.] (26-27)

This aphoristic discourse reveals the desirability of the *ingénue*, and her appearance among the other characters distinguishes the identification of the heroine. Similar to her incarnation as Venus, Paris regarded her role as Mélusine as the epitome of radiance amid a crystal grotto and mirrors, symbolic of Nana, an evocation in the final chapter that foils the morbid portrait of the heroine. The hypostasis of Mélusine reveals Nana, the luminous, coruscating seductress, in an ice palace:

Un corps comme on n'en retrouverait plus, des épaules, des jambes et une taille!...Autour d'elle, la grotte, toute en glace, faisait une clarté; des cascades de diamants se déroulaient, des colliers de perles blanches ruisselaient parmi les stalactites de la voûte; et, dans cette transparence, dans cette eau de source,

traversée d'un large rayon électrique, elle semblait un soleil, avec sa peau et ses cheveux de flamme. (471)

A figure you'll never see the like of again, those shoulders and legs and that lovely slim waist!...The grotto round her, made up entirely of mirrors, was glittering with cascades of diamonds, streams of white pearl necklaces amongst the stalactites of the vaulted roof, and in this sparkling mountain spring, gleaming in a broad beam of electric light, with her skin and fiery hair she seemed like the sun.] (415)

This showcase exhibit displays Nana who becomes transformed as the inspiration of desire, a function of the scenic device that heightens the essence of seduction. Despite the intrigue of the novel, the theatrical fable, the repetition of events, the countless lovers, the gifts that they bear, the destruction that awaits them, and their successes, the heroine as object of desire reigns in an allegory depicting imperial France. Indeed, Nana symbolizes the epoch, the society and the debauched Second Empire in which she dwells.

The aspect of omnipotence also appears in the narcissistic episode of *«la Mouche d'Or»* that witnesses the duality of the heroine in the specular passage. While Muffat reads Fauchery's article, a work that functions as a *«mise en abyme»* of the novel, Nana worships her reflection, *«souriant à l'autre Nana»* ("smiling at the other Nana"), transformed as *«Autre»*, *«l'objet de désir»* (Roy-Reverzy 172). This duplication of the courtesan creates a myth of Nana through the participation of Muffat and Fauchery. Contrasting her *début* as Venus on the stage, the episode of the mirror reflects Nana's desire, an act of narcissism designated not for an audience, but for herself, the image of Muffat invisible to the frame of the mirror. This vision of Nana, consumed by her reflection, may be compared to the literary excess of the journalist, who was a former lover of the courtesan and agent between the world of the theater and high society. The allegory

emanating from dual perceptions of the heroine also reveals her reality as daughter of the slums and courtesan in the mirror, and signals her myth. The moral and social allegory in which Nana avenges her own class combines with the moral and religious allegory characterized by a lubricious woman, culminating in Muffat's vision of «*la bête d'or*», influenced by Fauchery's passage (Roy-Reverzy 174). Coexisting with the myth created by the omniscient author, the revelation of reality appears during Muffat's first visit of the wings of the theater when he perceives Nana on stage:

Chaque soir, le même effet se produisait à l'entrée de Vénus, dans sa nudité de déesse. Alors, Muffat voulut voir; il appliqua l'oeil à un trou... Il l'apercevait de dos, les reins tendus, les bras ouverts...Et, en la voyant ainsi, pliée et les hanches élargies, venir à reculons vers le trou par lequel il la regardait, le comte se releva, très pâle. (170)

[...every night as Venus, the naked goddess, made her entrance, she'd created the same effect. Muffat had put his eye to a hole to look at the stage...Muffat was watching her from behind, with her back arched and arms outspread...Seeing the plump curves of her hips, made even plumper by her attitude, moving backwards towards the hole through which he was peering, the count straightened up, as white as a sheet.] (136-37)

This passage echoes that of the episode of the mirror, both visions of Muffat gazing upon

the heroine/goddess, transformed into an allegorical myth, culminating in a paradox

within the satirical novel.

According to Bordenave, the theater manager who fabricated the actress, Nana possesses a quality that distinguishes her, something that evokes «*l'Autre*» in the realm of alterity. More

than the concept of difference, the supplementary quality, as expressed by Derrida, harbors two significations: the affirmation of a presence, assigned by the mark of a void. This paradoxical notion accentuates the duality of her personage characterized by lack and excess, while the quest for the indefinable quality focalizes not on the being of a character, but on the place of existence. Moreover, the characters of the *Rougon-Macquart* are represented by two contradictory movements: remembrance of the past and preoccupation with interior life, and fascination with origin and ambition for growth. The structure of the novel manifests itself through this dual movement of repetition and expansion, and the metamorphosis of Anna into Nana bears witness to the reversibility of the character and her power to become *Autre* while remaining the same. Also, Nana expands, while conquering Paris, transformed in her image that hides that ‘something else’ and radiates «*le désir*». In fact, the dramatization of the novel hinges on the passionate exchanges that determine fortunes and destinies as a result of the power of woman who wields «*autre chose*» (Gural-Migdal 315).

Thus, the feminine becomes the bearer of alterity, the writing of which witnesses Nana as *Autre* in an «*entre-deux*» with the self (Gural-Migdal 315). Also, the representation of the feminine emanates from a journey replete with encounters and transformations of the self, effecting the promiscuity and mystery of the heroine, not only in gender, but in space and time where she constructs and deconstructs herself, propelled from the margin of society to the center of her world of characters. Moreover, this representation occurs within an «*entre-temps*» in which the present derives from past deception and becomes an illusion of the future.

In fact, the duality of the heroine within a framework of attitudes transcends a representation of an authentic self, as in the episode in which Muffat, upon gazing at the actress on stage, feels as if he is about to faint, overcome by an intoxicating dizziness that will annihilate

him. As he contemplates this vision, he becomes afraid of this golden warrior evoking an animal quality, a sensation borne of anguish and desire. This description of Nana constitutes an oxymoron that depicts the coexistence of feminine and masculine characteristics. Her strength and allure of a warrior connote the masculine aspect, and the attributes of rolling cigarettes and drinking absinthe with her friend, Satin, complement her refusal to marry and have children. For Nana, marriage and maternity are hindrances to pleasure, and she considers her unforeseen pregnancy as an exasperating artifice. This masculine aspect is also expressed in her relationships with men whom she unscrupulously dominates and regards as objects. The young woman, for example, discovers her 'self' as «*Autre*» when she makes a parody of Georges Hugon as «*femme-objet*», a disguised puppet of her subverted whim, and her narcissism continues through her sadomasochistic fantasy with the count whom she treats as an animal (Gural-Migdal 317).

From her first appearance on stage, Nana becomes an apparition for the audience, a sublime image of femininity that melds the identity of the actress with that of Venus, an event that sets the scene for seduction. Although Nana/Venus registers in the domain of masculine power, Nana transposes her role from passive *objet de désir* to active subject, possessing her public and ultimately altering the destinies of the victims of her seduction, the manifestation of *l'Autre* of the actress who evoked *autre chose*. At the same time, however, her ephemeral seduction bears death in its wake, because it inveigles and destroys «*le désir de l'Autre*» (Gural-Migdal 320). The encounter of the self with *l'Autre* reveals the recognition of intrinsic duality: lack and excess, death and life, truth and falsity. When Nana becomes the center of society, the dual aspect of these characteristics disappears.

Regarding the temporal aspect of the heroine, Nana perceives the present as a reflection of her youth, reminiscent of her lack and revealing a need to overcome an emptiness, capture lost time and create a past that was inexistent. The past also became the ephemeral dream of the future, as illustrated in the idyll with the young Georges Hugon, a pure love which Nana had not yet experienced. Similarly, her tryst with Fontan, the comic actor from *les Variétés*, reflected an ideal of her youth, her infatuation reminiscent of the time when she was a flower-girl dreaming of «une armoire à glace en palissandre et d'un lit tendu de reps bleu» (Zola 249) (“a rosewood wardrobe with a mirror and a bed draped in blue repp”) (Zola 210). Their conjugal *ménage* in the Rue Véron, in Montmartre, however, does not manifest this illusion, but rather transports her to her youth, Nana inexorably beaten by Fontan. Her chimerical future resulting from *le spleen* (“melancholy”) and unfulfillment appears during an excursion to the *château de Chamont*, when she dreams of her triumph, a vision of wealth and proclamation personified by Irma d’Anglars, the powerful and venerated *châtelaine* whom she emulates. In contrast to this sense of euphoria, Nana is overwhelmed by anguish and a feeling of incompleteness, having lived in an «*entre-temps*», similar to the other characters. Also, she seems unable to step across the threshold of the crises of life and bridge the past and the illusory future. Incapable of surpassing this existence in an «*entre-temps*», Nana overexposes her image of life which will be the harbinger of her death. The decomposition of her death mask signifies the end of her specular image, surrendering to a virus, the metastasis and victory of which condemns the self and «*l’Autre*»:

*Vénus se décomposait. Il semblait que le virus pris par elle dans les
ruisseaux, sur les charognes tolérées, ce ferment dont elle avait
empoisonné un peuple, venait de lui remonter au visage et l’avait pourri.* (481-82)

[Venus was decomposing; the germs which she had picked up from the carrion people allowed to moulder in the gutter, the ferment which had infected a whole society, seemed to have come to the surface of her face and rotted it.] (425)

This discourse that delineates corporeal pleasure, knowledge and power also interprets the body as signifier in which Nana represents an *objet de désir*, punished for being excessively natural and sexual and depicted as a courtesan without rationale, characterized by greed and instinct. Her incarnation of sexuality that yields inverted signals belies corruption, danger and disease, and the *femme fatale* becomes a victim of moral corruption. In the cathartic conclusion of the novel we witness that physiognomy reveals moral truth and that her inspiration of desire and the wake of her destruction ends, showing the body as a reflection of the innate evil of the heroine. The disfigurement caused by the disease precludes physiognomical pretense, manipulation and seduction. The tragic fate of the *femme fatale* represents a manifestation of disease or illness as punishment, a metaphor of moral corruption:

In the Middle Ages, the leper was a social text in which corruption was made visible; an exemplum of decay. Nothing is more punitive than to give a disease meaning---that meaning being invariably a moralistic one. (Rivers 141)

According to Susan Sontag (1933-2004), American author and literary theorist, this concept evolved to be an expression of character:

In the nineteenth century, the notion that the disease fits the patient's character as the punishment fits the sinner, was replaced by the notion

that it expresses character...Disease is the will speaking through the body, a language for dramatizing the mental: a form of self-expression.

(Rivers 141)

As Sontag indicates, epidemics such as smallpox signified social disorder. Moreover, the *femme fatale* represents an allegory of corrupt French society, vulnerable to infection. Also, in *Le Roman expérimental*, Zola expresses:

Dans la Société comme dans le corps humain, il existe une solidarité qui lie les différents membres, les différents organes entre eux, de telle sorte que, si un organe se pourrit, beaucoup d'autres sont atteints et qu'une maladie très complexe se déclare. (Rivers 142)

[In Society as in the human body, there exists a solidarity that links the various members, the various organs to each other, such that if one organ rots, many others are affected and a very complex disease presents itself.] (Rivers 142)

A contagion of immoral behavior permeates the novel preceding the appearance of the allegorical disease. This contagion results from the promiscuity of courtesans who reflect the dregs of society and form *liaisons* with lovers who originate as high society. Nana, who represents the lower stratum of society, nature and woman, forces revealed through the metaphor of «*la mouche d'or*», ascends from the underclass to attain the aristocracy, menacing the social structure and denouncing the separation of classes, transcending barriers and bearing carrion to palaces, and spreading poison via brilliant gems and snowy thighs. The underclass signifies physiognomy as the cause of catastrophe as realized by the courtesan emanating from the slums of the *Goutte-d'Or* from the diptych of *L'Assommoir* and *Nana*, and corrupting all levels of

society. In contrast to the eighteenth century in which smallpox symbolized associations of royalty, in the nineteenth century the disease connoted an epidemic of the masses. The smallpox pandemic of 1870-1875, only five years prior to the appearance of *Nana*, was a result of the Franco-Prussian War, synchronous with the collapse of the corrupt Second Empire and the death of Nana. According to Chantal Bertrand-Jennings, “The conclusion of *Nana* tolls the bell for the Second Empire and for an entire era” (Rivers 144).

The personage of Nana also reveals a transgression of gender in that feminine emotions are lacking, as well as showing the power to manipulate, and sometimes to emasculate, men. Although she exhibits temporary episodes of sentimentality, bouts of wounded pride, surges of anger or jealousy, and impromptu infatuation, Nana remains devoid of any real emotion. Zola portrays his heroine as having an animal quality, incapable of a human relationship based on love, driven by unconscious urges. The reversal of traditional gender roles is also manifest in a narcissistic desire to exert power over men and assert her superiority. The impassive courtesan is empowered by not experiencing emotion, and by deriving satisfaction from and guarding her ability to conquer. According to Naomi Schor (1943-2001), a noted literary critic and theorist, in her assessment of the *femme fatale*:

To kill off a character is in some sense to interpret him: by inflicting on Nana an end worthy of an eighteenth-century moralist, Zola does more than judge and condemn his main protagonist; he also traces the limits of mediation by the love-object. In essence the mediator and leader functions are incompatible because the leader is defined by *his* will to power and the mediator by *her* passivity. (Rivers 145)

Moreover, the transgressions of the *femme fatale* result in her punishment, revealing the truth of her character through her physiognomy, and the horrific *dénouement* that manifests a recovery of

the epistemological desire. The appearance of her soul upon her visage represents justification for society to ostracize her. This legibility of her physiognomy unites the physical and metaphysical, transparent aspects that witness the destruction of the transgressive «*femme insoumise*» (“unsubdued woman”) (Rivers 146). This fusion of appearance and morality accomplishes the corporeal signification of pleasure, knowledge and power. Possessing the dual characteristics of pride and vanity, yet deficient in sentiment and virtue, Nana does not represent a viable model of the feminine, rendering her downfall and demise. This archetypal *femme fatale*, who is extraordinarily beautiful, but ignominiously corrupt, contradicts Lavater (1741-1801), a Swiss poet and physiognomist, who advocates that beauty corresponds to virtue, until the end of the narrative. In «*De l’harmonie entre la beauté morale et la beauté physique*» [“On the Harmony Between Moral Beauty and Physical Beauty”], Lavater writes:

La beauté et la laideur du visage ont un rapport étroit avec la constitution morale de l’Homme: ainsi, plus il est moralement bon, plus il est beau; plus il est moralement mauvais, plus il est laid. (Rivers 147)

[Beauty and ugliness of the face are closely related to the moral constitution of Man: thus, the more morally good he is, the more beautiful he is; the more morally bad, the uglier.] (Rivers 147)

Contrary to this Lavaterian notion, Zola expresses that beauty is synonymous with immorality, until the fateful conclusion which signifies a return to this ideal. The physiognomy and the soul of *la femme insoumise*, consumed by her aberrant behavior, coexist in a symbiotic relationship in which beauty is a manifestation of virtue and ugliness is a signification of vice.

The rapport between physiognomy and literary passages also signifies an «*objet de désir*», revealed through the unveiling of Nana, who progressively exposes her corporeal secrets

to capture Paris. The first chapter of the novel witnesses the appearance of Nana in the operetta «*La Blonde Vénus*», and the third act overwhelms the audience, because Nana is veiled in gauze, leaving the public to imagine her clandestine figure, hidden by her golden hair. Not until chapter five, when the Count Muffat and the prince traverse the wings of the theater to her dressing room where Nana is nude to the waist, do the allusions to her nudity become realized. Finally, chapter seven finds her nudity completely exposed in the episode of the mirror when the Count Muffat becomes lost in a reverie, looking at Nana gaze upon herself. In this scene, Nana is completely unveiled as she stares in the mirror, her back directed toward the Count. However, the body of the courtesan, even in this vulnerable condition, bears a provocative veil.

The appearance of Nana *déshabillée* in «*La Blonde Vénus*», a parody of the myths of antiquity, represents an inspiration of «*La Belle Hélène*» of Meilhac, Halévy and Offenbach, as well as the leitmotiv of the staging of nudity of the heroine. Whereas the first act presents Mount Olympus focused on Venus, Vulcan and Mars, the second act depicts the world of the carnival, a realm in which Nana portrays a degraded Venus. The *début* of this mythological play corresponds to the inauguration of the Universal Exposition of 1867 which signified the apogee of the industrial and political power of the Second Empire, a reflection of Paris as the capital of luxury and pleasure. Thus, the unveiling of Nana corresponds to the Universal Exposition, similar to bodies of the painting expositions encountered while traversing *les Variétés* to *le Champ de Mars*. An outstanding example was *La Naissance de Vénus* (1863) by Alexandre Cabanel whose escutcheon announced that the buyer was His Majesty the Emperor. Zola defined this painting as “academic art” that adapts antiquity to modernity: «*La déesse, noyée dans un fleuve de lait, a l’air d’une délicieuse lorette, non pas en chair et en os---cela serait indécent---, mais en une sorte de pâte d’amande blanche et rose*». [The goddess, drowned in a

river of milk, seems like a delicious woman of easy virtue, not in flesh and bone---that would be indecent---, but in a kind of pink and white almond paste.] (Brooks 69). This retrospective of French painting also included *Nymphe enlevée par un faune* (1861) by Cabanel, *L'Enlèvement d'Amymone* (1865) by Félix-Henry Giacomotti, and *Phryné devant l'Aréopage* (1861) by Léon Gérôme, a work that evokes modesty, in contrast to Nana's appearance in «*La Blonde Vénus*», when Phryné's clothes are removed to charm the judges, all of which were purchased by the Emperor. The Exposition of 1867 also signaled *Bacchante* (1863) by William Bouguereau as the preferred painting of the *bourgeoisie*.

Beyond the paintings of the Universal Exposition of 1867, *Vénus* (1875) by Cabanel approaches the publication of *Nana* (1880) about which Zola wrote: «*c'est un génie classique qui se permet une pincée de poudre de riz, quelque chose comme Vénus dans le peignoir d'une courtisane*» [“it is a classical genius that allows a pinch of rice powder, something like Venus in the dressing-gown of a courtesan”] (Brooks 69). Other famous paintings, such as *Nymphes et satyre* and *Nymphée*, both by Bouguereau, appeared at the Exposition of 1878 where he was bestowed the medal of honor. In 1879, *La Naissance de Vénus*, also by Bouguereau, was exposed at the same time that Nana appeared in the installments of *Le Voltaire*. According to Zola, Bouguereau est «*l'apothéose de l'élégance; un peintre enchanteur qui dessine des créatures célestes, des bonbons sucrés qui fondent sous les regards*» [“the apotheosis of elegance; an enchanting painter who designs celestial creatures, sugared candies that melt under glances”] (Brooks 69).

Upon her presentation, Nana differs from the music-hall *cocottes* represented by Toulouse-Lautrec, due to her beauty and bearing, and from the dancers and actresses of Degas when she is seen from the wings of the theater or in the intimacy of her dressing-room, because

she is an «*objet de désir*». The esthetic preference of Nana diverges from that of the novel in that she has an affinity for more noble literature. Conversely, when she appears nude, as captured by the French caricaturist, Gill (1840-1885), during the same epoch in his drawing, «*La naissance de Nana-Vénus*», Zola reproves his heroine, finding her disconcerting, provocative, erotic and without his blessing. Although Zola criticized this style of painting, because it betrayed nature, he justified his staging of nudity through classicism and propagated the realism of Courbet and Manet, whose works had been excluded from the Universal Exposition of 1867, resulting in a private exposition of Manet, following protestations by Zola. The form of nudity, however, which Zola approved was found in *Baigneuses* (1853) by Courbet in which the body contradicts classical form within a portrait atypical of the era. In fact, Zola considered *Olympia* (1863) by Manet as the great nude of his epoch. According to Zola: «*lorsque nos artistes nous donnent des Vénus..., ils mentent. Edouard Manet s'est demandé pourquoi mentir, pourquoi ne pas dire la vérité; il nous a fait connaître Olympia, cette fille de nos jours*». [“when our artists give us Venuses...they lie. Edouard Manet wondered why lie, why not tell the truth; he made us know *Olympia*, this daughter of our days”] (Brooks 71-72). Nevertheless, this does not constitute a definitive resolution of the esthetic of nudity, considering Zola’s analysis of *Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe*, presented at the *Salon des Refusés* in 1863, which he regarded as the greatest painting by Manet, the dream of painting of natural figures within a landscape, the scandal of a nude woman between two dressed men:

Ainsi, assurément, la femme nue du Déjeuner sur l’herbe n’est là que pour fournir à l’artiste l’occasion de peindre un peu de chair. Ce qu’il faut voir dans le tableau, ce n’est pas un déjeuner sur l’herbe, c’est le paysage entier, avec ses vigueurs et ses finesses...; c’est enfin cet ensemble vaste, plein d’air, ce coin de la nature rendu avec une simplicité si juste. (Brooks 72)

[Thus, assuredly, the nude woman of “Lunch on the grass” is only there to furnish the artist with the chance to paint a little flesh. What is necessary to see in the painting, it is not a lunch on the grass, it is the whole landscape with its strengths and finer points...; it is, finally, this vast entirety, full of air, this corner of nature rendered with such an accurate simplicity.] (Brooks 72)

Given the prototype and justification of *Olympia* and the subtle problems of *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, Zola seeks a model of nudity in a naturalistic setting as his *raison d'être*, ultimately relying on tradition to justify the portrait of nudity within natural scenery, yet concluding that the success of a painting does not depend on these subtle distinctions.

The leitmotiv of nudity in *Nana* corresponds to the resolution of *Olympia*, compared to the intrigue of *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, since *le déshabillage* represents *le métier* of courtesans. The second half of the 19th century also witnessed the reference to antiquity, such as debauched women and portraits of the birth of Venus, and exoticism of the body which rendered this leitmotiv of nudity.

This representation of nudity correlates with the narcissistic scene of the *déshabillage* (“undressing”) of Nana in front of a mirror, while Muffat watches as he reads from an article from the *Figaro*, «*La Mouche d'Or*», describing Nana as an insect from the filthy hovels whose advent signals the infestation of the upper classes, a catalyst of destruction who represents a product of four or five generations of alcoholics, corrupting Paris. A powerful female sexuality corresponds to the lower classes, representing an «*objet de crainte*» (“object of fear”) (Brooks 76). After having read the article, Muffat continues to contemplate Nana, his eyes cast on her glances upon her body, the essence of the portrayed nudity:

C'était la bête d'or, inconsciente comme une force, et dont l'odeur seule gâtait le monde. Muffat regardait toujours, obsédé, possédé, au point qu'ayant fermé les paupières pour ne pas voir, l'animal reparut au fond des ténèbres, grandi, terrible, exagérant sa posture. Maintenant, il serait là, devant ses yeux, dans sa chair, à jamais. (229)

[She was the Golden Beast, a mindless force whose very scent could poison the world. Muffat was continuing to look, obsessed and possessed to such an extent that when he closed his eyes to stop watching, the beast loomed up again still larger out of the darkness, terrifying and even more menacing. And now he would see this beast in his mind and feel it in his flesh for ever.] (192)

This mirror scene in which Nana indulges in narcissism corresponds to the staging of «*La Blonde Vénus*» in which the unveiling reveals the unknowable woman, while the male perspective evokes the allegorical biblical monster and the beast. This passage of the mirror episode also echoes the scenarios of Freud with regard to the sexuality of the female in the presence and absence of the male.

Manet resolves the dilemma of the representation of the sexuality of Nana in *Olympia*, a work in the classical, as opposed to the academic, style, and a series of paintings by Courbet, the master of realism, in the mid-nineteenth century witnessed the erotic *La Femme au perroquet* (1866) which Zola regarded as reminiscent of *Baigneuses* and *Enterrement à Ornans*. However, Zola was not influenced by other nudes painted during this period by Courbet, such as *Femme nue* (1868), corresponding to *La Perle et la vague* (1863) by Paul Baudry, an academic painter. Also, the famous *Sommeil* (1866) compares to the erotic games between Nana and Satin, *Jeune Baigneuse* (1866) evokes the ambiguity of Nana with regard to the veil of shadows, and *Femme aux bas blancs* (1866) captures a wayward perspective. The scandalous, hyperrealist canvas, *L'Origine du monde* (1866), also by Courbet, denounces the omnipresent births of Venus, although the subject appears to be isolated due to the clandestine surroundings. *L'Origine du monde* was compared to

the «*littérature putride*» of Zola which echoes Nana's condemnation of the obscene novel (Brooks 78). Moreover, the exclusion of Muffat in the mirror in which Nana contemplates herself corresponds to that of the male perspective in the famous mirror of the *Bal des Folies-Bergères* (1882) by Manet. In comparison, the portrait, *Nana* (1877), also by Manet, was banned from the *Salon de 1877* due to its representation of the renowned Parisian courtesan, Henriette Hauser, or the inclusion of the male glance. The censure of male sexuality corresponds to the ambiguous representation of Nana, who appears young, unviolated and inaccessible, in a narcissistic scene. In fact, her lovers are not able to touch her in a profound or meaningful way, nor do they succeed in possessing her. The inaccessibility of Nana, a leitmotiv of the novel, also manifests in *Jeune fille se défendant contre l'amour* (1880), which depicts a voluptuous, but forbidden body, and *Printemps* (1886), which portrays the resistance to sexual aggression, both by Bouguereau. Furthermore, in Chapter 13, the power of the feminine sexuality of Nana is expressed by Mignon, whose wife, Rose, was her nemesis in the world of the theater. Upon visiting her sumptuous, private residence, Mignon is impressed by the Gobelins tapestries, the silver, the gilt furniture, the silk and velvet, the opulence and especially, the power of Nana. In comparison, he reflects on great structures he has seen, such as an aqueduct near Marseille, the new port of Cherbourg, and a magnificent *château* which reflected her admirable achievement, accomplished through the power of her sexuality. The end of the penultimate chapter reveals her sexuality as an allegorical object:

Et tandis que, dans une gloire, son sexe montait et rayonnait ses victimes étendues, pareil à un soleil levant qui éclaire un champ de carnage, elle gardait son inconscience de bête superbe, ignorante de sa besogne, bonne fille toujours. (464)

[It was fair, justice had been done, she'd avenged her world...glowed triumphantly over its victims stretched out at her feet, like a rising sun in

triumph over a bloody battlefield, she herself remained, a superb, mindless animal, oblivious of what she'd done, never anything but a 'good sort of girl' ...] (409)

Although criticized, this allegorisation represents the veritable essence of Nana for Zola for whom patriarchal authority does not always reign over female sexuality, and the heroine, without revealing her interiority, does not become a victim of the ravages she wreaks on others.

Although the dynamism of a clandestine history, as well as its effects, may be known, its source would remain a mystery. Moreover, the nude appearances of Nana compose images of fear, bestiality and social subversion, the unveiling of a fascinating secret, and the source from which the narrative emerges.

Nana can be interpreted as a novel of desire with the implication of female sexuality in a patriarchal society and the heroine as a symbol.

Moreover, this symbol bears a projected meaning that emanates from her male *entourage* which establishes the rapport between desire and performance. Although the heroine functions as the object of desire, «une invention de Bordenave», she sometimes eludes this position due to her irrepresentability within the focus of male conception (Zola 23). In fact, the male perspective possesses access to Nana, and Bordenave, the theater manager, realizes her effect on the audience: «elle n'a qu'à paraître, toute la salle tirera la langue» [“All she's got to do is to come on stage and the whole audience will sit there with their tongues hanging out”] (Zola 4). A creation of male fantasy, her intention is the exploitation of male desire and of the theater.

Having been revealed to the audience, Nana becomes the symbol and *l'objet de désir*:

...tout son corps se devinait, se voyait sous le tissu léger, d'une blancheur d'écume. C'était Vénus naissant des flots, n'ayant pour voile que ses cheveux. Et, lorsque Nana levait les bras, on apercevait, aux feux de la rampe, les poils d'or de ses aisselles. Il n'y eut pas d'applaudissements. Personne ne riait plus, les faces des hommes, sérieuses, se tendaient, avec le nez aminci, la bouche irritée et sans

salive... Tout d'un coup, dans la bonne enfant, la femme se dressait, inquiétante, apportant le coup de folie de son sexe, ouvrant l'inconnu du désir. (47)

[Covered by a simple veil, her whole body could be seen, or imagined, by all through the diaphanous, white, frothy gauze. It was Venus being born out of the waves, hidden only by her hair. And when she lifted her arms, in the glare of the footlights you could glimpse the golden hair in her armpits. Now there was no clapping, and no one thought of laughing. The men had a strained, earnest look on their faces; their nostrils were taut, their mouths parched and burning... This good-natured girl had suddenly become a disturbing woman offering frenzied sexuality and the arcane delights of lust.] (25)

In essence, Nana has become a mirror reflecting *désir*. During her *début*, Nana appears veiled, an allusion to the biblical mythology of Salome, «*ouvrant l'inconnu du désir*» (“opening the unknown of desire”), evocative of the incarnation of eroticism (Zola 47). This fantasy propagates when her dressing room curtain that conceals her alludes to a veil before she exposes herself to the Prince and Muffat, and afterward when she undresses in front of Muffat in the mirror episode. Ironically, even in her nudity, Nana remains veiled, because Muffat compares her to women whom he is accustomed to, unable to perceive her individuality: «*...Il songeait à son ancienne horreur de la femme...*» (Zola 229) [“He was thinking of his earlier horror of women”] (Zola 192). As a result, the veil symbolizes *le désir* and is used for what is hidden and what is revealed, causing the spectator to conjure an image. This corresponds to the game of «*fort und da*», described by Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), in which a child hides an object and then brings it back into view. The veil functions as an object, representing desire:

Un frisson remua la salle. Nana était nue. Elle était nue avec une tranquille audace, certaine de la toute-puissance de sa chair. Une simple gaze l'enveloppait... (47)

[A thrill ran through the audience. Nana was naked, naked and unashamed, serenely confident in the irresistible power of her young flesh...] (25).

The «*gaze*» that envelops her represents the “gaze” of the male spectator, and separates desire from satisfaction, emphasizing the threshold that characterizes desire (Nelson 409). The portrayal of Nana as Venus renders an unattainable fantasy: Venus represents a contradiction as virgin/whore, the double eros. Nana appears as a dream of desire, the embodiment of golden beauty, whose innocence veils an awareness of the power of her sexuality, and who also represents a contradiction as «*la bonne enfant*»/«*la mangeuse d’hommes*» [“the good girl”/“the man-eater”] (Zola 47). The patriarchal perspective in the nineteenth century created this construction which propagated the social and sexual passive roles of women. These rigid and polarized gender roles related to the desire of the Second Empire for the subordination of women. When they rebelled against their destiny of reproduction, however, women were perceived as victims of hysteria, a nervous derangement, that was accompanied by excessive desire that could corrupt generations. A woman who claimed her sexual autonomy, as opposed to capitulating to patriarchal control, posed a threat to male authority. Thus, the nineteenth century popularized the image of the prostitute to illustrate the potential danger of female sexuality. On the other hand, prostitution served the desires of the bourgeois patriarch. Paradoxically, a woman could wield power as a result of this ideological view. Nana’s power transcends the dreams of the male spectator who renders a problematic perspective of her as wholesome and yielding, even as she poses a threat to the patriarchal structure. She becomes a projection of nightmares, as well as the fulfilment of desire, a vampire, extracting blood from young Georges Hugon, and a goddess, whose altar witnesses the sacrifice of the men of nobility and nineteenth-century society. The gaze of Count Muffat transforms her into a *femme fatale*,

inducing vertigo, hallucinations and premonitions of death, especially in scenes that portray her nudity and in the mirror scene in her apartment in the Rue de Villiers that renders another male construction, the article of Fauchery depicting the metaphor of «*la mouche d'or*». Moreover, following the Grand Prix and the suicide of Vandevres, the Count gazes upon the naked Nana, who again contemplates herself in the mirror in which she effects a death mask. The spectacle of her nudity evokes repressed memories and fantastic visions of death and destruction for Muffat.

Although Zola refers to Nana as «*la bonne fille*», usually in scenes when she pleads her defense, the narrator also reveals Nana as similar to the fantasies of Muffat. After Nana has attained the apogee of her destructive powers toward the end of the novel, the narrator projects the fantasies of the male characters onto her. The degradation and destruction of her lovers witness her transformation into an animal, and images of animals characterize her sexual encounters in which they imitate bears or dogs. The dark side of male desire also becomes marked by violence: Fontan severely beats Nana, Georges Hugon attempts suicide, and Vandevres burns himself and his horses to death. Whereas Nana's self exhibits the dreams and nightmares of men, her narcissism, evident in the mirror scene, represents a threat to male desire, being a rejection of men:

Nana invites dreams...which she is often disposed to fulfil, but her pliable body remains as unyielding as marble. The very intensity of Nana's narcissistic assertion of unbreachable wholeness grants her a kind of...power in male fantasy. The whore who gives herself to every man but "stays intact [eternally virgin] in the process...is an image of male exclusion and impotence, of male desire hopelessly frustrated and ultimately destroyed by what desires only itself." (Nelson 412)

In this sense, her sexuality and desire transcend the patriarchal structure and, instead of Zola allowing Nana to be sexually autonomous, the male characters interpret her behavior as depraved

and a betrayal of the social order. They perceive her as a symbol, reflecting a threat to society and nightmares in the form of moral disintegration, the loss of family life, masculine power, and the power of France, as well as her own sexual corruption. Her death becomes an allegory in which she symbolizes corrupt French society on the cusp of the Franco-Prussian war and the destruction of the Second Empire.

Essentially, the male characters view Nana and define her sexuality without threatening the structure of their fantasies, and they perceive her through absence, visualizing only what they wish. Although Muffat does not control Nana, he is able to control the confrontation of her sexuality through the euphemism of fantasy. If he subjugates her sexual power within the construct of his fantasies, then he can believe his savagery without direct confrontation. Muffat, for example, only views Nana through his psychological construction of her, while she, not being seen, is protected by her veil, exerting power over him and ultimately destroying him. Through images of Nana, Zola and his male characters approach her darkness, without ever shedding light. As a result of this mechanism of viewing and not seeing, Nana is able to survive, even after unveiling herself and submitting to multiple men. The unseen cannot be confronted; the unconfronted cannot be possessed. Nana, therefore, is portrayed as the object of desire according to fantasy, as opposed to active subject with her own desire.

Nana's body can be compared to a text and becomes a signifier in relation to other objects and capable of meaning within a chain of signification represented by these objects. The narrative of this patriarchal text defers revelation of the object, similar to the function of text with regard to truth. In the case of Nana, the text is construed by the perceptions of those who surround her and her body is the main signifier for the text. At *Les Variétés*, for example, the audience anxiously awaits Nana's appearance on stage; however, the realization of this event is deferred within the narrative: «une fièvre de curiosité poussait le

monde, cette curiosité de Paris qui a la violence d'un accès de folie chaude. On voulait voir Nana» (27). [“Paris society was being gripped by a typically feverish curiosity, a sudden, stupid craze. People couldn’t wait to see Nana”] (6). Having read much publicity prior to the actual performance, the audience desires to see her even more urgently: the problematic correlation of knowledge and vision. The male audience becomes obsessed with Nana/Venus as an *objet de désir*, and her body functions as a text composed of projected images that remain in the male consciousness after the performance. The signification of this text makes her all the more desirable. When Georges Hugon, for example, engages in an idyll with her while dressed in her *chemise*, he worships his goddess, as well as her presence. Also, Bordenave confides to Fauchery during «*La Blonde Vénus*» that Nana possesses «*autre chose*», the text that replaces her physical significance, an extension of the social and cultural influences constructed by male fantasies. As a result, Nana acquires sexual appeal in direct proportion to the development of this textuality.

Moreover, Nana’s surroundings reflect her textuality, as exemplified by her «*hôtel particulier*»:

C’était un élargissement brusque d’elle-même, de ses besoins de domination et de jouissance, de son envie de tout avoir pour tout détruire. Jamais elle n’avait senti si profondément la force de son sexe.
(351-52)

[It was like a sudden extension of her own personality, her need for power and pleasure, her urge to possess everything in order to destroy everything. Never before had she felt so deeply the immense force of her sexuality.] (304-5).

Her image among the *bourgeois* and aristocratic women of Paris also composes her text: «*Elle donnait le ton, de grandes dames l’imitaient*» (319). [“She set the fashion; great ladies copied

her”] (274). Her significance also increases as her text expands through the fabric of Parisian aristocracy. Her physicality functions as a signifier in that it is distinguished by a sign, as in the comparison of her marking to a mole on Countess Sabine’s face: «*Dans la lueur du foyer, les poils noirs du signe qu’elle avait au coin des lèvres blondissaient. Absolument le signe de Nana, jusqu’à la couleur*» (101) [“In the glow of the fire the black hairs sprouting from the mole in the corner of her mouth looked blonde. Exactly like Nana’s, even to the colour!”] (73). As a result of this comparison, Sabine demonstrates the depravity characteristic of Nana. This concept of signifier also appears during her dinner party after the *début* of «*La Blonde Vénus*», when several prostitutes solicit the male guests through signs, such as the promiscuous display of their shoulders. These signs, in turn, indicate their availability to prospective customers. With regard to Zola’s narrative, women represent the bearers of signs, while men are relegated to interpretation. Consequently, only death could bring this signification to an end, as revealed in the death scene in which Nana is indistinguishable and her death signifies the demise of her body as text: «*l’on ne retrouvait plus les traits*» (481) [“Her features were no longer distinguishable”] (425).

Similar to textuality in which narrative is delayed, the «*objet de désir*» is deferred to incite desire. The deferral of the narrative to reveal truth correlates with the deferral of the body through the use of veils, which preclude access to the «*objet de désir*». This concept of deferral is apparent when the audience anticipates seeing Nana during her *début*, an event that increases their desire. The extension of the narrative becomes possible, because her nudity remains unrevealed and the «*objet*» retains its veil, constituting a deferral, as well as an inspiration of «*désir*». Conversely, through unveiling the «*objet de désir*», the narrative attains the revelation of truth. Apparently, however, Nana never appears totally nude. At *Les Variétés*, a layer of gauze and her hair veil her from the audience, and during the episode of the mirror, a

shadow veils her from Muffat. Also, Zola employs a metaphor of the backstage of *Les Variétés* to represent the female gender, as in the scene in which Muffat is lost in the wings of the theater, representing veiled sexuality and foreshadowing his demise:

Un moment, craignant de défaillir dans cette odeur de femme qu'il retrouvait, chauffée, décuplée sous le plafond bas, il s'assit au bord du divan capitonné, entre les deux fenêtres. Mais il se releva tout de suite, retourna près de la toilette, ne regarda plus rien, les yeux vagues, songeant à un bouquet de tubéreuses, qui s'était fané dans sa chambre autrefois, et dont il avait failli mourir (155).

[For a second he was scared that this time these women's smells, aggravated by the heat and the low ceiling, would make him faint, and he sat down on the upholstered divan between the two windows. But he immediately got up again, went back to the dressing-table, and stood staring blankly, not looking at anything but thinking of a bunch of withered tuberoses he'd once had in his bedroom which had nearly made him die.] (123)

According to Freud, all desire is an endeavor to regress to unity with the mother's body, when the child does not distinguish its own body from that of the mother. Nevertheless, the desire to attain this alliance proves foreboding, analogous to the attempts of the male characters to reveal the female sexuality of the heroine.

Within the sequence of narration, the «*objet de désir*» represents a veil, and the text becomes the seventh veil, the last veil that defers the revelation of truth and the possession of the «*objet de désir*», the culmination of which never occurs. The language of the text substitutes the revelation of the «*objet de désir*», as when Bordenave mentions to Fauchery that Nana possesses «*autre chose*», in reference to her sexuality, signifying her personal text, resulting in textuality superseding physicality. Moreover, on her deathbed, Nana and the text decompose, an event that witnesses the destruction of the «*bonne fille*» aspect of her persona. The expression, «*Vénus se décomposait*», implies that both her own death and that of the text come to an end and, in death,

not only Nana, but Venus, the myth, the goddess, come to a fatal conclusion (481).

The theater, *Les Variétés*, where all classes of society encounter Nana in her role as Venus, becomes a figurative brothel and represents a symbiosis of capitalism and sexuality. In her *début* as Venus, although it is evident that she cannot act or sing, Nana inspires the fantasies of men, becoming the «*objet de désir*» of the male audience, the envy of the female audience, and her future portends the consumption of many fortunes. In fact, she is transformed into a beast, possessing powerful magnetic attraction:

Un murmure grandit comme un soupir qui se gonflait. Quelques mains battirent, toutes les jumelles étaient fixées sur Vénus. Peu à peu, Nana avait pris possession du public, et maintenant chaque homme la subissait. Le rut qui montait d'elle, ainsi que d'une bête en folie, s'était répandu toujours davantage, emplissant la salle. A cette heure, ses moindres mouvements soufflaient le désir, elle retournait la chair d'un geste de son petit doigt. (48-49)

[A murmur spread through the house like a rising wind. A few people clapped and every opera-glass was focused on Venus. Gradually Nana had asserted her domination over the audience and now she held every man at her mercy. She was like an animal on heat whose ruttishness had permeated the whole theatre. Her slightest movement aroused lust; a jerk of her little finger was sexy.] (26)

The male spectators are, in turn, transformed into animals, and Nana and Bordenave, her agent, convert the theater into a brothel, advertising her commodity and symbolizing the decadence of the capitalist society of the Second Empire. Nana exists in the world of the theater and her performance extends beyond the theater and into her world, a legendary performance that reigns over the hierarchy of society. Her mansion welcomes a host of unexpected visitors, who need to be hidden by Zoé, her maid, and her power reaches all ranks of society, including aristocrats, bankers, actors, journalists and government officials, whose lives will be devastated. As a result, the power of the sexuality of the heroine transcends social class, reversing the dominion of

influence and witnessing the oppressor become the oppressed.

Despite the level of society, Nana's persona focalizes on the surrounding social and moral corruption, exposing the depravity of male admirers, who are supposedly superior to her, and the universality of basic instincts. Ultimately, the consequences of her charms result in financial ruin, her lovers having expended significant amounts of money and gifts to be with her. Count Muffat, chamberlain to Louis-Napoléon and a religious aristocrat, attempts to resist her, but to no avail. As he wanders backstage, the scent of the theater, mingled with sweat and perfume, incites his desire, and he becomes obsessed upon arriving in her dressing room:

*Ce sentiment de vertige qu'il avait éprouvé à sa première visite chez
Nana, boulevard Haussmann, l'envahissait de nouveau. Sous les pieds, il sentait
mollir le tapis épais de la loge; les becs de gaz, qui brûlaient à la toilette et à la
psyché, mettaient des sifflements de flamme autour de ses tempes. (155).*

[Once again he was feeling overcome by the dizziness which had overtaken him the first time he'd called on Nana in the Boulevard Haussmann. He could feel the thick dressing-room carpet giving way under his feet, and the flames of the gas-jets on the dressing table and by the cheval-glass were making a hissing noise round his temples.]
(123)

Disturbed by her presence as his passions augment, Muffat journeys not only through the wings of the theater, but also through his unconscious, the labyrinthine corridors symbolic of Nana and his ruin. This journey removes the Count from the world of the aristocracy to Nana's proletariat sphere, threatening his boundaries and, metaphorically, those of the Second Empire. Her maleficent, insidious behavior reflects that of a society within a period of time, and Nana becomes an altar for Muffat and a throne for the Second Empire. Ensnared by her charms, Muffat is, however, revulsed by the power of her magnetism that attracts so many.

Nana also personifies capitalism, attempting to survive in a society where money and status reign with power, and destroying those who rule the higher realm of the social strata and exploit the proletarian class. However, as an «*objet de désir*», she subverts this socio-economic condition, reversing these *liaisons* of power. An example of her recourse to capitalism is evident when Francis, her hairdresser, explains to her that an article in *Le Figaro*, describing «*la mouche d'or*» that transforms Paris into a heap of dross, metaphorically refers to her. Despite the derogatory nature of the article, Nana is content that it is about her, for she understands the importance of merchandising herself, as she has already demonstrated through her theatrical appearance. She recognizes the value of marketing a viable commodity.

Religious hypocrisy is another leitmotiv in which false devotion signals the immorality and debauchery of the Second Empire. The Count, for example, vacillating between sin and salvation, is plagued with guilt, in a state of prayer preceding and following relations with Nana, who, aware of his hypocrisy, criticizes those superior to her social status. During one episode, Nana orders the Count to don his chamberlain's uniform and decorations, including a sword, medals and the symbolic key to the palace:

Cette clé surtout l'égayait, la lançait à une fantaisie folle d'explications ordurières. Riant toujours, emportée par l'irrespect des grandeurs, par la joie de l'avilir sous la pompe officielle de ce costume, elle le secoua, le pinça, en lui jetant des: «Eh! Va donc, chambellan!» qu'elle accompagna enfin de longs coups de pied dans le derrière; et, ces coups de pied, elle les allongeait de si bon coeur dans les Tuileries, dans la majesté de la cour impériale, trônant au sommet, sur la peur et l'aplatissement de tous. Voilà ce qu'elle pensait de la société! (453)

[She found the key particularly funny and launched into wildly obscene speculations as to its purpose. Still laughing uproariously and carried away by her lack of respect for the great of this world and her pleasure in

degrading them in the shape of this pompous official uniform, she shook and pinched him, shouting: 'Off you go, Chamberlain!' and accompanying her words with a series of kicks up his backside which were also directed enthusiastically at the Tuileries Palace and the high and mighty Imperial court lording it over the cowardly grovelling people of France. That's what she thought of high society!] (399)

Through degradation of the chamberlain and those of the upper echelon, symbolized by his uniform, Nana reigns superior to the realm of the higher social class. Succumbing to these disdainful abuses, which include being forced to speak like a proletariat, Muffat becomes a martyr, recalling the tribulations of the saints, and these sexual games reconfigure the social hierarchy of those who regard Nana as a mere object. In contrast to Muffat, whose relationship with her is obscured by his religiosity, Vandeuvres, the lover who comprehends Nana as the «*mangeuses de fortunes*», commits suicide and burns his stables, after having lost all his wealth. Also, Nana never denies that her primary intention is the acquisition of money, rather than pleasure. The two exceptions to this financial ambition are the relationships she had with Fontan, the actor, for whom she forsakes everything and who, after having squandered her fortune, severely abuses her, and Satin, her childhood friend, who epitomizes a contradiction of masculine power. Both Fontan and Satin share an affinity with Nana in that their childhoods were those of poverty and hunger, aspects which Nana's clientele neither comprehends or acknowledges. In fact, Nana relates to Muffat, Vandeuvres and the two Hugon brothers that the object of their desire came from a heap of garbage, and she affirms that she is not ashamed of her alcoholic parents or her laundress mother. Ironically, after having expressed her pride of the working class, she mistreats her servants, exhibiting the behavior of the *bourgeoisie* and making a mockery of the upper class, while treating the lower class contemptuously. With regard to

her social success, Nana serendipitously discovers victory at the Grand Prix, accompanied by her

son, Louis, who was named for the Emperor. As the Count escorts the Empress Eugénie, Nana holds court in her magnificent carriage. The other prostitutes and actresses envy her luxury and the fact that Vandevres, her lover, has named a filly after her. Nana does not acknowledge this, until the filly overtakes the stallions in an unexpected win. This scene is a reflection of Nana as the animal that had previously appeared on stage at *Les Variétés*:

Et, sur le siège, Nana, sans le savoir, avait pris un balancement des cuisses et des reins, comme si elle-même eût couru. Elle donnait des coups de ventre, il lui semblait que ça aidait la pouliche (385)

[Up on the box seat, Nana had started swaying her thighs and back, as if she herself was in the race, thrusting her hips forward under the impression that she was helping the filly.] (335)

As the crowd cheers her name in adulation, discussing the glory of France and the triumph over the British horses, Nana rises to the occasion:

Nana écoutait toujours son nom, dont la plaine entière lui renvoyait l'écho. C'était son peuple qui l'applaudissait, tandis que, droite dans le soleil, elle dominait, avec ses cheveux d'astre et sa robe blanche et bleue, couleur du ciel. (386)

[Nana was still listening to her name reverberating over the plain. It was her subjects applauding her while she dominated them all, standing bolt upright in the sunlight, in her blue-and-white dress, the colour of the sky, with her hair glowing like a sun-queen.] (337)

This passage confirms the association between Nana, the courtesan, and the Second Empire in which her social status has been secured. Furthermore, having won forty thousand francs pales in comparison to the unexpected victory for Nana, a conquest that rendered her queen Venus and the queen of Paris, having risen from “theatre starlet” to a «*reine soleil*» and a metaphor of the Empire (Nelson 424). In fact, her life spans the corresponding years of the Second Empire, 1852-1870, a period reflecting meteoric ascension to power, opulent capitalism and resplendent

extravagance that foreshadows ruin as Nana dies and the reign of Napoleon III collapses.

With respect to the representation of women in literature and the identity of women in a patriarchal society, Nana contradicts the Freudian concept of the basic nature of woman: her tendency toward destruction opposes the fundamental characteristic of passive “otherness” (Nelson 424). Freud regarded female sexuality as nothing, similar to the way Zola refers to Nana’s sexuality as «*ce rien honteux*» (“this shameful nothing”), although he adds that it is «*si puissant*» (“so powerful”) (Nelson 424). This concept of female sexuality is perpetuated through the myth, fantasy and metaphor that characterize Nana within a predominantly male narrative. Although her demonstrations of narcissism acknowledge her sexuality outside of the realm of men, her «*autre chose*» dominates, existing as perceived by male sexuality. The paradox of absence, regarding her sexuality, threatens this narcissistic aspect, as well as the patriarchal order.

The portrait of Nana as *femme fatale* also depicts expressions of duality with reference to her sexuality, including presence and absence, and «*autre chose*» and «*ce rien honteux*». In addition, Freud indeed views woman as «*rien*», claiming that the fear she incites is a result of the castration complex or sense of lack. In contrast, the obsession with veils, clothing and hair preserves the illusion of “presence.” Paradoxically, the presence of the «*autre chose*» provokes fear and permeates the text. However, Freud’s analyses do not acknowledge the concept of female presence, favoring the counterpart of patriarchy and employing the myth of Medusa, symbol of female sexuality which transforms men into stone. Yet, Freud represents Medusa as castrated, endowing them with power, and dismisses the threat of castration as an acknowledgment of patriarchal authority. On the contrary, the dual signification of Nana, as «*bonne fille*» and «*mangeuse d’hommes*»,

threatens the patriarchal structure, the figure of paradox wielded by her sexuality.

Correlative to the concept of the duality of presence and absence, Lacan posits a linguistic perspective. Similar to Freud, Lacan conceives a pre-Oedipal stage, the Imaginary Order, which precludes subject and object, and therefore, the ego. A distinct sense of self, separate from the world, develops only in the Mirror Stage, which signals the advent of conceptualization and the transition between the metaphorical signifier and signified. The Symbolic Order, emanating after the appearance of the father figure, witnesses identity as relative and the distinction of gender. The metaphorical Mirror Stage is threatened by metonymy in which meaning changes *ad infinitum* through a chain of signifiers, resulting in the child becoming a victim of desire to pursue the mother through substitution, the illusion of the Mirror Stage, of the “transcendental signifier” in order to perceive presence, as opposed to absence (Nelson 426). Consequently, the narcissistic self is restored. Also, Lacan’s perspective negates woman, like that of Freud, and since she does not exist, she cannot be possessed.

Reflecting these perspectives, Zola’s narrative represents a deferral of desire in which Nana acts as a metonymical signifier, especially when her appearance is consistently delayed, a strategy she employs throughout the novel in order to create desire. Most evident, however, is the metonymy of desire that transpires between layers of clothing to the naked body and, ultimately, to the seventh veil of the text, although possession is only suggested, not attained. In the episode of the mirror, as Nana contemplates herself, she is elusive and inaccessible. Although desire can traverse the metonymical chain of signifiers, possession will never be achieved, since Nana is, essentially, «*une invention*», the symbol of absence. The textual paradox is that Nana becomes the “transcendental signifier,” corresponding to the Symbolic

Order, acquiring meaning through her mythification.

According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, subjective experience emanates from language and culture, the Symbolic Order. The acquisition of language separates the subject from the world of objects, others and the self, marking the transition from the dyadic register of the Imaginary Order to triadic register of the Symbolic Order. After a journey of six to eight months, a child discovers the Mirror Stage, characterized by incomplete motor-sensory development, a fragmented awareness of physicality, and a mirror image yielding an illusory sense of completion. This «*Gestalt*», or psychological configuration, renders the ego, a structure that alienates the self (Baran 31). The Mirror Stage of dual relationships witnesses the fusion of the child's identity with the mother, as well as a desire to be desired by the mother and omnipotent in order to transcend a lack, a deficiency in being. This stage leads into the Oedipal Stage which demands recognition of the son's authority by the mother. A successful transition to this stage permits the child access to the "paternal metaphor" that allows entrance to the Symbolic Order and identification within the triangular familial configuration. Nevertheless, the child's eternal desire for fusion with the mother persists, striving to enter consciousness. Also, the register of the Symbolic remains subjugated by that of the Imaginary. Captured in a linguistic chain of signifiers, the subject endeavors to pursue the object of desire through an endless signifying chain that leads to a greater degree of alienation. Furthermore, the bar of the signifier, symbolic of castration emanating from language and paternal law, restrains the realm of the Imaginary Order, representing complete maternal fusion and identification. In the case of *Nana*, the forces of the Symbolic Order render the Imaginary Order obsolete and desire as indestructible, immune to restraints that would otherwise restrict its domain.

The maternal image of Nana reflects a dichotomy of

the mystery of woman: maternity and sexuality. Although Nana appears to be transparent, in the sense that her *raison d'être* is decipherable, her persona is characterized by duality, because she remains elusive and unattainable. As the incarnation of woman, she represents the duality of mother and lover, maternal and sexual, dominated and dominating, passive and active, popular and aristocratic, veiled and unveiled, Venus and Messaline, and Eros (Love) and Thanatos (Death), aspects which define femininity and, by contrast, masculinity. In Aspects of the Feminine, Carl Jung states: "There is no consciousness without discrimination of opposites. This is the paternal principle, the logos, which eternally struggles to extricate itself from the primal warmth and primal darkness of the maternal consciousness" (Krumm 218).

The very existence of Nana is questionable, however, when Fauchery claims that she is «*une invention*», as when the last chapter opens, expressing her absence, «*Nana, brusquement, disparut*» (465). Similarly, the last page of the novel evokes this sense of nothingness, «*Et, sur ce masque horrible et grotesque du néant...Vénus se décomposait...La chambre était vide*» (481-82). Another image of emptiness is evoked by Nana's social behavior when she devours everything in her wake, disseminating disaster and a void around her.

With regard to the oxymoron of Nana's maternal instincts, she rejects the sense of maternal duty and scorns sexual desire. Although the presence of sex is concealed and annoying for mother figures in other novels, Nana shamelessly exposes sex, as opposed to hiding or relegating it. Possibly, the sexual aspect does not play a signifying role, but rather functions as a diversion or lure, which applies to the case of Nana, whose relationships are based on power and money, in contrast to pleasure or enjoyment. The scandalous element of her sexuality represents transparency, and the role of maternity constitutes an obstacle. Specifically, Nana does not

accept her forced motherhood of Louiset and reaches a point of denial. Although she consciously rejects her maternity, there are times when she cannot do without Louiset:

Sa grosse distraction était d'aller à Batignolles voir son petit Louis, chez sa tante. Pendant quinze jours, elle l'oubliait; puis c'était des rages, elle accourait à pied, pleine d'une modestie et d'une tendresse de bonne mère, apportant des cadeaux d'hôpital, du tabac pour la tante, des oranges et des biscuits pour l'enfant...
(333)

[Her great distraction was to go over to Batignolles to see her little son Louis at her aunt's. For a couple of weeks she'd forget about him; then she'd go into a frenzy, dashing up there on foot, like a simple, kind, loving mother, taking him presents like someone visiting a patient in hospital, with snuff for her aunt and oranges and biscuits for her son...] (287)

Nana placed her son in the care of a nurse from a young age, like her mother, Gervaise, had previously done:

Mais le gros chagrin de Nana était son petit Louis, un enfant qu'elle avait eu à seize ans et qu'elle laissait chez sa nourrice, dans un village aux environs de Rambouillet. Cette femme réclamait trois cents francs pour rendre Louiset. (55)

[But Nana's chief worry was her little boy Louis, whom she'd had when she was 16 and left with his wet-nurse in a village not far from Rambouillet. This woman was claiming three hundred francs in order to return little Louis to his mother.] (32)

Upon his return, Nana places her son under the auspices of her aunt, who brings him to meet her every morning. Although Nana expresses that her baby is her greatest joy, Louiset becomes a toy, a trinket who wearies her. This erethism on the part of Nana proves only a fleeting, ephemeral phase, an expression of maternal love. The arrival of Louiset causes her heart to melt, as she endures a crisis of maternity. Inevitably, however, Nana is unworthy as a mother, due to her immorality and unsuitability. A novel of promiscuity, *Nana* promulgates that

sexual license, especially as it concerns motherhood, is intolerable and reprehensible. In the case of Nana, her unacceptability culminates in a fate punishable by a heinous death. The bourgeois ethos of the nineteenth century regarded maternity as sacred, yet Nana perpetrates three sins against maternity: she neglects her son, Louiset; she allows an act of “incest” when the young Georges (Zizi) Hugon seduces her, while he poses not as her lover, but as her son, a circumstance having oedipal overtones, and Georges later discovers that his brother, Philippe, is also having an affair with her; and she drives Georges to suicide. Her culpability extends to the crime of rejecting the maternal concept, despite her temporal maternal behavior toward Louiset and Georges:

Et Louiset ne faisait pas le moindre tort à Zizi, au contraire. Elle disait qu'elle avait deux enfants, elle les confondait dans le même caprice de tendresse. La nuit, à plus de dix reprises, elle lâchait Zizi pour voir si Louiset avait une bonne respiration; mais, quand elle revenait, elle reprenait son Zizi avec un restant de ses caresses maternelles, elle faisait la maman. (198-99)

[But Zizi didn't suffer as a result, quite the opposite, for she said she now had two children to look after and her spontaneous affection included both of them, indiscriminately. A dozen times a night she'd leave Zizi to go and see if Louiset was breathing properly, and when she came back she'd smother her Zizi with all the motherly hugs and kisses she had to spare...] (163)

In a sense, Nana becomes a murderess of maternity, committing a matricide, also revealed by her Sapphism, which marks a refusal of normal femininity, according to Freud. In “Female Sexuality,” Freud delineates the three choices of the “castrated” woman: a cessation of sexual life; a defiant over-emphasis of her masculinity; steps toward definitive femininity (Krumm 222). Evidently, Nana follows the second path, rejecting, according to Freud, the normal essence of woman, the third path of maternity. Moreover, when Nana discovers that she is with child a

second time, she refers to her maternal state as «*un accident ridicule*» and that «*cette maternité grave*» rendered her powerless against nature. Her subjugation to nature signified to her that she was no longer mistress of her own body.

Le Deuxième Sexe de Simone de Beauvoir claims that woman is «*de toutes les femelles mammifères, celle qui est le plus profondément aliénée et celle qui refuse le plus violemment cette aliénation*» (Krumm 222) [“of all the mammalian females, the one who is the most profoundly alienated and the one who refuses this alienation the most violently”].

Illustrating this alienation and resistance, Nana needs to find recourse from this subordination through self-affirmation and liberation by committing an infanticide or matricide, since, according to Jung, the “first creative act of liberation is matricide.” This conscious refusal of natural destiny differentiates Nana, «*la mère indigne*», from Clotilde, «*la mère idéale*», from *Docteur Pascal*. Whereas Nana rejects her alienation, and views it as an apostasy, Clotilde regards her condition as a blessing. Pursuing this religious imagery, Nana corresponds to Eve, who ushers in sin and death, and Clotilde incarnates Mary, who leads life. Apparently, Nana represents an affront to maternity, depreciating her body as a «*ça*» (Krumm 223).

Nana exists at the opposite pole of maternity, as revealed by the parallel rapport between the mother and son. Whereas Nana reflects the picture of health, Louiset is always portrayed as weak and ailing with a waxen, pale visage:

Avec ça, ce pauvre petit homme de Louiset était toujours malade...Mais il avait eu un eczéma sur la nuque, et maintenant des dépôts se formaient dans ses oreilles, ce qui faisait craindre une carie des os du crâne. Quand elle le voyait si pâle, le sang gâté, avec sa chair molle, tachée de jaune, elle devenait sérieuse...Elle, sa mère, se portait si bien! (333-34)

[What was more, the poor little brat was always ill...but he'd had eczema on the back of his neck and pus was starting to collect in his ears. There were fears of some sort of bone decay in the skull. When Nana saw him

looking so pale, with his tainted blood and flabby flesh with its yellow spots, she was worried...she, his mother, was so healthy...] (288)

As Nana overflows with health, Louiset suffers martyrdom. Although it appears he is dying at the hands of his mother, Nana will ultimately receive a *coup de grâce* from Louiset.

Nana's egregious refusal of maternity also appears in her name change from Anna, given that Saint Anne is the patroness of maternity. Also, her patronymic, Coupeau, associated with *couteau* ("knife") or *couper* ("to cut"), reveals a rupture with maternity. Moreover, Nana first appears as Venus, goddess of love and maternity, which she condemns, ridiculing the maternal essence of the character. Her last role, as Mélusine, connotes maternity, according to the legend, reflecting her *première* and capturing the courtesan in a framework of maternity. Her role as Mélusine is remembered by the women who gather around her deathbed, when the courtesan is finally unveiled and transparent, signifying a proclivity against procreation.

In contrast to the Marquise de Merteuil from *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782) by Laclos (1741-1803), Nana succumbs to smallpox contracted from her son, Louiset. Whereas tante Dide and Hélène Grandjean from the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle suffer psychologically as sinners against maternity, Nana bears the traces and wounds of her punishment physically. Having sinned through her flagrant refusal of maternity and her immoral sexuality, Nana has no recourse to redemption and is punished by death, because this is the only chastisement that will redeem the flouted honor of maternity and allow the restoration of the patriarchal order. Only the unworthy mother is punished, while potential fathers are exonerated (Krumm 225). The paternity of both of her children never revealed, Nana rejects maternity, but is condemned to death by it.

Contrasting Nana's aversion to maternity, her role as incarnate goddess proved crucial in the trajectory of her life. Although the men in the audience of «*La Blonde Vénus*» delight in the *début* of classical

mythology, Zola regards the ancients seriously. According to Flaubert, Zola had full knowledge of classical mythology and intended to use it in creating *Nana*. The last role that the courtesan portrays is that of the fairy Mélusine, the role by which Paris will remember her:

Nana is a deformation of Nanaï, an ancient word for water, and Tanais, the common etymological root of Astarte and Ishtar, the great Semitic goddesses. The onomatopoeic combination “nana-mama” further reinforces the association between Nana and the aquatic mother-goddesses...who in the Occident are assimilated to Mère Louisiane, the water spirit of the alchemists, or the fairy Mélusine. (Waddell 75-76)

However, for Zola, Venus remains the goddess who destroys the subordinate male. In addition, Venus was the goddess of prostitutes, sewers, the mother of the deformed Priapus, the mother of Hermaphroditus, and the pitiless Venus the Beholder who watched her lover hang himself. Alternatively, Venus was the goddess of blight and Venus Victrix, the Bringer of Success. Ironically, Nana portrays all of these aspects of the goddess of love and fertility. Nana (Venus Victrix) also poses as *La Blonde Vénus* at the *Grand Prix de Paris* as she cheers her namesake filly to victory, Nana (Venus Cloacina) originated from the gutters of Paris, her young lover, Georges/Zizi, resembles a girl (Hermaphroditus, the son of Venus), and she dies watched by the attendants of Venus, *les trois Grâces*, apotheosized by Rose Mignon and the other actresses surrounding her deathbed. The figures of *les trois Grâces*, the Hours or the Seasons, contrast mythic time, or eternity, and modern time, or progressivity. Essentially, Zola satirizes the superficial exploitation of mythology in his operetta, «*La Blonde Vénus*», although his knowledge of classical mythology extended beyond the stage of the *Théâtre des Variétés*. Venus, however, becomes a leitmotif in *Nana*, and constitutes more than just another satirical figure.

In contrast, the leitmotiv of death emanates when the Count Muffat de Beuville is haunted by divine retribution and the fear of death, whether he is not accompanied by Nana or not in church. After having surrendered to sexual aberration, he finds that the God of his spiritual youth is no longer accessible to him, and he is fearful of a God empowered with portentous death and damnation. Also, Théophile Venot, the confessor of the Count, advises him regarding the battle for his soul in which Venus, the pagan goddess, and God, the chastising Father, form a symbiotic relationship. Entranced by the charms of his *femme fatale*, Muffat cannot function in the elite society of the Second Empire. The masochistic relationship between the Count and the courtesan witnesses God as foreboding death. Furthermore, Muffat envisions death at Nana's *hôtel de l'avenue de Villiers*. After having suffered a miscarriage, Nana resembles a corpse when Zoé, her faithful maid, tells Muffat that she discovered her lying in a pool of blood. Then, disheartened at finding his father-in-law, the lecherous Marquis de Chouard, with Nana, the Count abandons Nana amidst her casualties with the intention of returning to the Church. Although Monsieur Venot shelters him, the Count cannot transcend the memory of his fantasies and remains consumed, until the conclusion of the novel, by Nana/Venus. In fact, Muffat does not overcome the death instinct, because he is not free of the image of God. Although he idolizes Nana, he fears the righteousness of God, as he waits outside the hotel where Nana dies. Also, Nana's vision of her reflection in the mirror becomes morbid, foreshadowing her death in which she metamorphoses into «*une pelletée de chair corrompue*» [“a shovelful of corrupted flesh”] (Waddell 91). Thus, in the absence of Venus, Zola makes it so that she cannot intervene between the “son” and the Father. Although Muffat hopelessly waits on the bench outside the hotel, he will not renew his role as “son,” vanquished by the Father. Ultimately, at the end of the novel, Mars, the god of war, will make the deaths at Nana's altar

pale in comparison to the carnage of the impending Franco-Prussian war. Inevitably, this war will be more destructive than the ruthless ravages of Venus.

The following passage from Chapter 6 is a revelation of «*le stade du miroir*» in which Nana perceives herself, despite her proclivity for debauched liaisons as courtesan and her religiosity, in relation to a young, innocent lover:

Alors, les jours suivants, la vie fut adorable. Nana, entre les bras du petit, retrouvait ses quinze ans... Il lui venait des rougeurs subites, un émoi qui la laissait resonant, un besoin de rire et de pleurer, toute une virginité inquiète, traversée de désirs, dont elle restait honteuse. Jamais elle n'avait éprouvé cela... Elle était ramenée aux sensations neuves d'une gamine... ça lui semblait une escapade de pensionnaire en vacances, un amour avec un petit cousin qu'elle devait épouser... (197-198)

[For the next few days her life was idyllic. In the boy's arms Nana felt like a 15-year old girl again... She would suddenly blush, shivers would run down her back; she felt a need to laugh and cry, an uneasy, new-born innocence and bursts of sensuality which left her ashamed. Never had she had such feelings before... She was like a little girl discovering emotions she had never felt before... she felt like a schoolgirl on holiday having a madcap adventure with a young cousin whom she loved and was going to marry...] (162-163)

The paradigm of «*le stade du miroir*» exposes a decisive turning point and a libidinal relationship with the image of the self. Apparently, this stage expresses the critical aspect that identification functions as a catalyst in the formation of the Ego. Once this developmental stage has been achieved, the realization of desire is only illusory and the fulfillment of desire (*jouissance*) becomes impossible, similar to the continuity of signifier and signified. As a result, Lacan refers to the “Real,” a mythic ego that reflects a *manque-à-être*, preventing a unity of self.

Moreover, Nana's thoughts of a new idyll are compounded by an emotional awareness which expedites the manifestation of her desire. In this case, Nana is focusing on her past which also causes the creation of her reality.

Furthermore, Lacan distinguishes between the Other (*Autre*), conceived as the unconscious, and the other (*autre*), which is a reflection of the Ego. Freud had previously designated «*der Andere*» as “the other person” and «*das Andere*» as “otherness.” The *autre* represents the «*objet petit*», the perceived image derived from others, as well as the mirror stage, which composes the Symbolic Order. The *Autre*, as an extreme alterity, transcends the illusion of the Imaginary and comprises the Symbolic Order which resolves the rapport with the *autre*. The Ego may also be affected by *méconnaissance*, a depressive reaction due to a precarious perception of the image or alienation of the self, as revealed in Chapter 7 in which Nana becomes «*la mouche d'or*» (“the golden fly”):

Avec elle, la pourriture qu'on laissait fermenter dans le peuple, remontait et pourrissait l'aristocratie. Elle devenait une force de la nature, un ferment de

destruction, sans le vouloir elle-même, ...la mouche, une mouche couleur de soleil, envolée de l'ordure, une mouche qui prenait la mort et les charognes tolérées le long des chemins, et qui, bourdonnante, dansante, jetant un éclat de pierreries, empoisonnait les hommes rien qu'à se poser sur eux, dans les palais où elle entrait par les fenêtres. (227)

[While the people were left to rot in degrading circumstances, she would carry this pollution upwards to contaminate the aristocracy. She was turning into a force of nature and, without any intention on her part, a ferment of destruction...a golden fly, the colour of sunshine, escaping from its dung-heap and bringing with it the deadly germs of the carrion allowed to fester by the roadside; dancing and buzzing, as dazzling as a precious stone, it would slip through the windows of palaces and poison the men inside merely by settling on them.] (190)

In contrast to her previous image as an enamored, young girl, her metaphorical transformation depicts objects of duality: a precious gem and a pernicious fly. This image signals a manifestation of *désir* and a result of alienation of the self.

The transition from naïve girl to young woman who has transformed into «*la bête d'or*» exemplifies the presence of *Autre* (“Other”), an extreme alterity that transcends the illusion of the Imaginary Order due to a lack of identification. Conceived as the unconscious, *Autre* was described by Freud as “the other scene:”

Ça la surprenait toujours de se voir; elle avait l'air étonné et séduit d'une jeune fille qui découvre sa puberté...

Il eut un instant conscience des accidents du mal, il vit la désorganisation apporté par ce ferment, lui empoisonné, sa famille détruite, un coin de société qui craquait et s'effondrait...

C'était la bête d'or, inconsciente comme une force, et dont l'odeur seule gâtait le monde...Maintenant, il serait là, devant ses yeux, dans sa chair, à jamais.

Sa bouche goulue soufflé sur elle le désir. Elle allongea ses lèvres, elle se baisa longuement près de l'aisselle, en riant à l'autre Nana, qui, elle aussi, se baisait dans la glace. (228-229)

[She was always curious to find something new whenever she looked at herself; she had the intrigued and fascinated expression of a girl who discovers she's turning into a woman...

For a brief second he realized the disastrous effects of evil, he saw the disorder caused by this festering wound, he himself would be poisoned, his family destroyed, a whole section of society would break up and collapse...

She was the Golden Beast, a mindless force whose very scent could poison the world... And now he would see this beast in his mind and feel it in his flesh for ever.

Her greedy lips were breathing desire over herself; she pursed them and placed a long kiss beside her armpit, laughing at the other Nana who was also kissing herself in the mirror.] (191-192)

This passage also expresses the effects of *désir* with respect to Muffat: his corruption

and unexpected sordid behavior; the chaos emanating from evil; the destruction of

himself and his family; the disintegration and collapse of society; his attempted aversion

at the sight of Nana; and her threatening omnipresence. This episode of the mirror also

witnesses the *désir* of Nana, as well as her greed and, once again, the existence of *Autre* as her reflection. Although Muffat gives thought to what he does not want, his life experience reflects these thoughts: filth, degradation, evil, disorder, destruction, collapse, each thought compounded and amplified based on his perception of the "Golden Beast."

Moreover, the culmination of *désir* and the effects of *Autre* become apparent when Nana reigns as *la reine de Paris*:

Alors, Nana devint une femme chic, rentière de la bêtise et de l'ordure des mâles, marquise des hauts trottoirs. Ce fut un lancage brusque et définitif, une montée dans la célébrité de la galanterie, dans le plein jour des folies de l'argent et des audaces gâcheuses de la beauté. Elle regna tout de suite parmi les plus chères. Ses photographies s'étaient étalées aux vitrines, on la citait dans les journaux. Quand elle passait en voiture sur les Boulevards, la foule se retournait et la nommait, avec l'émotion d'un peuple saluant sa souveraine...une aristocratie du vice, superbe, révoltée, mettant le pied sur Paris, en maîtresse toute-puissante. (319)

[So Nana became the toast of Paris, the queen of first-class tarts, battenning on the stupidity and beastliness of males. In the smart world of amorous intrigue, a world of reckless extravagance and brazen exploitation of beauty, her rise to fame was meteoric; and she immediately joined the ranks of the most expensive. Her photo was on display in every shop-window; her name featured in the newspapers. When she drove along the boulevards in her carriage, everyone turned to look and breathed her name like subjects greeting their monarch...She represented the aristocracy of vice, magnificent and untamed, holding Paris to ransom under her all-powerful heel.] (274)

Her success as metaphorical monarch implies that a *manque* pervades *Autre*. As a result, a critical signifier which should otherwise be inscribed with *Autre* is always missing from the trove that composes the incomplete *Autre*. Thus, Nana is never fulfilled with the “beastliness of males,” “amorous intrigue,” “reckless extravagance,” or “brazen exploitation.” Although she has conquered Paris, wields omnipotence and become an asset to the elite, the distinction of *Autre* does not dictate fulfillment. In fact, the *raison d'être* of desire does not effect fulfillment as its goal, but propagates the desire. Furthermore, desire functions as an inherent dimension of society, because of the relation to a missing signifier (*manque*), rather than a relation to an

object. Nana's meteoric rise to fame is testimony to her aligned thoughts which expedite the manifestation of her reality. The following passage epitomizes the Lacanian concept of *manque*:

Cependant, dans son luxe, au milieu de cette cour, Nana s'ennuyait à crever... elle sentait comme un vide quelque part, un trou qui la faisait bâiller. Sa vie se traînait inoccupée, ramenant les mêmes heures monotones... Elle retournait à des goûts de gamine, baisait Bijou du matin au soir, tuait le temps à des plaisirs bêtes, dans son unique attente de l'homme, qu'elle subissait d'un air de lassitude complaisante... (332)

[But in spite of being surrounded by her admirers and in spite of all her luxury, Nana was bored to death. She felt like a vacuum, a hole in her life which left her yawning. In her idle existence, time dragged on monotonously, hour after hour... She reverted to the ways of her childhood, kissing Bijou from morning to night, killing time in stupid pursuits, with only one thing to look forward to: some man whom she wearily submitted to, in order to oblige.] (286)

Despite her acquired accoutrements, Nana remains unfulfilled, because desire is illusory and the fulfillment of desire (*jouissance*) is impossible. This condition, the Lacanian "Real," reflects a «*manque-à-être*» ("lack-of-being") which prevents a wholeness of being. This excerpt also reflects *Autre* in that the subject reverts from womanhood to doing activities related to her childhood. In addition, the creation of reality depends on the focus of thoughts. In this case, Nana once again reverts to her youthful past with which she creates. Nana also refocuses on the people, circumstances and events of her life, all of which have been invited by her through her thought.

Another passage that reflects the effects of *désir* also exposes the concept of Lacan that the truth of desire must be unveiled through articulation in order that the "other" (Ego) becomes apprised of this new existence in the world:

Les richesses entassées, les meubles anciens, les étoffes de soie et d'or, les ivoires, les bronzes, dormaient dans la lumière roses des lampes; tandis que, de tout l'hôtel muet, montait la sensation pleine d'un grand luxe, la solennité des salons de réception, l'ampleur confortable de la salle à manger, le recueillement du vaste escalier, avec la douceur des tapis et des sièges. C'était un élargissement brusque d'elle-même, de ses besoins de domination et de jouissance, de son envie de tout avoir pour tout détruire. Jamais elle n'avait senti si profondément la force de son sexe. (351-2)

[This accumulation of precious objects, antique furniture, silks, gold embroideries, ivories, and bronzes lay peacefully bathed in the light of the lamps while the whole of the magnificent house was permeated by a feeling of luxury, the majestic reception-rooms, the vast, comfortable dining-room, the reverent atmosphere of the staircase, the soft rugs and chairs. It was like a sudden extension of her own personality, her need for power and pleasure, her urge to possess everything in order to destroy everything. Never before had she felt so deeply the immense force of her sexuality.] (304-5)

The accumulation of luxury, magnificence and majesty parallels Nana's personality and fills her need for the acquisition of pleasure and power, as well as her desire to possess and, ultimately, consume through a vortex of destruction. The last line reveals that the truth of desire has been unveiled and the "other" has been informed of the existence of *désir* in her world. This passage also evokes the concept that objects that have been requested and are expected become manifestations. The power of Nana and her desire have become one; the relativity between her thoughts or beliefs and her desire is a match. As an allowee, Nana has invited these circumstances into her experience through thought. This accumulation of wealth is testimony that an avalanche of well-being is available depending on Nana's alignment of thoughts.

The episode of the *Grand Prix de Paris* depicts the metaphorical majesty of Nana in which her persona merges with her triumphant namesake filly. In contrast to the *objet petit*

(“a”), *autre*, the negatively perceived image derived from others and the specular reflection which compose the Imaginary Order, this passage evokes *Autre* which comprises the Symbolic Order that resolves the rapport with *autre* and functions as the locus for language which originates in *Autre*, not in the Ego:

...le mouvement qui avait fait de sa voiture le centre de la pelouse s’achevait en apothéose, la reine Vénus... de ses sujets... Quand le champagne fut arrivé, quand elle leva son verre plein, ce furent de tels applaudissements, on reprenait si fort: «Nana! Nana! Nana!» que la foule étonnée cherchait la pouliche; et l’on ne savait plus si c’était le bête ou la femme qui emplissait les coeurs... «A Nana! A Nana!» criait-elle... (383-87)

[...the movement which had made her landau the centre of attraction of the whole enclosure was ending in the apotheosis of Queen Venus surrounded by her subjects... When the champagne arrived and she lifted her full glass, people clapped and started chanting: Nana! Nana! Nana! so loudly that the other spectators looked round expecting to see the filly, not knowing whether it was the horse or the woman that had won people’s hearts. ‘Here’s to Nana!’ she shouted...] (334-38)

Similar to her *début* at *Les Variétés*, this scene evokes *Autre* which Lacan conceives as the unconscious, described by Freud as “the other scene.” In this case, Nana appears as “the apotheosis of Queen Venus,” an epithet characteristic throughout the novel, and articulates a cheer, emanating from the Symbolic Order which originates in *Autre*.

In addition to revealing Nana as *Autre*, the following passage evokes Girard’s views of human desire as imitative and mimesis as encompassing intentions of acquisition or a *mimésis d’appropriation*:

...elle domine la ville de l’insolence affichée de son luxe, de son mépris de l’argent... Dans son hôtel, il y avait comme un éclat de forge. Ses continuels désirs y flambaient, un petit souffle de ses lèvres changeait l’or en une cendre

fine...Jamais on n'avait vu une pareille rage de dépense. L'hôtel semblait bâti sur un gouffre, les hommes avec leurs biens, leurs corps, jusqu'à leurs noms, s'y engloutissaient, sans laisser la trace d'un peu de poussière. (421)

[Her shameless luxury, her majestic, total disregard for money...had the capital at her feet. Her grand residence was like some glowing furnace where desire was constantly at white heat and her slightest breath could turn gold into fine ash... Nobody had ever seen such raging extravagance. The house was like a bottomless pit in which men were engulfed with all their possessions; their body and even their name sank without leaving even a tiny speck of dust.] (367-68)

According to Girard, desire is acquired as an imitation of the desires of others. Contrary to originating from objects or ourselves, mimetic desire emanates from the model or mediator. Nana, depicted at the zenith of stardom, is determined to resemble the aristocratic society she strives to avenge. In his triangular desire, Girard depicts a subject who imitates the desire of the real or imaginary Other, who is a model for the desired object. This desire functions as *le désir selon l'Autre* ("desire according to the Other"), as opposed to *le désir selon soi* (desire according to one's own preferences). Thus, "her vicious life," "shameless luxury," and "her grand residence" constitute objects of desire, while Nana becomes the subject and aristocratic society functions as the model and *le désir selon l'Autre*. This excerpt evokes the conscious alignment with the unlimited Stream of Well-Being and an abundance of all manner of things, provided you are in alignment with receiving those things, as opposed to being in resistance of them. In this case, Nana was consciously aware of how she felt to be responsible for the floodgates of her Well-Being.

Furthermore, the passage that follows echoes Girard's theory of desire, as well as Lacan's concept of *désir*:

Elle ne pouvait voir quelque chose de très cher sans en avoir envie... d'autant plus heureuse que son caprice d'une heure coûtait davantage... Ensuite éclataient les gros règlements, au milieu de ce gâchis de l'argent de poche... elle atteignit cette année-là le million... Les hommes entassés les uns par-dessus les autres, l'or vidé à pleine brouette, ne parvenaient pas à combler le trou qui toujours se creusait sous le pavé de son hôtel, dans les craquements de son luxe. (422)

[She was incapable of seeing anything expensive without wanting to acquire it... and the more expensive these things were, the happier she was... And then, after spending money like water, she was hit by the big bills... in her very first year she got through a million francs. Not even the barrow-loads of cash from the men lining up to get her to bed could stem the flood undermining the foundations of her opulent mansion, which was tottering under the strain.] (368-69)

Apparently, having acquired the apogee of material existence, Nana remains unsatisfied. According to Lacan, the recognition of desire and the revelation of discourse prove to be insufficient, because in their attempt to expose desire, they always effect a surplus in which the truth is incomplete. A similar leitmotiv appears in the form of a dream of an extravagant bed, an object also having royal overtones. Once again, the more Nana has acquired, the more she remains unfulfilled. Despite her flow of finances and the exorbitant cost of the “throne,” Nana relentlessly strives for acquisitions:

Nana rêvait un lit comme il n'en existait pas, un trône, un autel, où Paris viendrait adorer sa nudité souveraine. Il serait tout en or et en argent repoussés, pareil à un grand bijou, des roses d'or jetées sur un trellis d'argent; au chevet, une bande d'Amours... Le lit coûterait cinquante mille francs, et Muffat devait le lui donner pour ses étrennes... Il lui fallait emprunter à Zoé, ou bien elle battait monnaie elle-même, comme elle pouvait. (422-23)

[Nana had dreams of a bed that would be utterly unique, a throne or altar where all Paris would come to worship her in her naked, equally unique, beauty. It would be made entirely of embossed gold and silver, like some gigantic jewel, golden roses hanging silver trellis; along the bed-head a band of laughing Cupids would be leaning forward...The bed would cost fifty thousand francs, and Muffat was to be giving it to her as a New Year's gift... She had either to borrow from Zoé or look around to see if she could scrape something together through her own efforts.] (369-70)

Influenced by the theory of desire of Lacan, mimetic desire, conceived by Girard, represents a dream of fulfillment attributed to a mediator. Classified as metaphysical in the sense that desire represents an aspiration, mimetic desire can be composed of either internal or external mediation. In addition, the previous two passages reveal the unlimited stream of well-being and an abundance of material things. Nana's attention to thought functions as an invitation, and focused attention to any subject delivers circumstances, conditions, experiences, other people and all manner of things that match her dominant thought. As these manifestations match her thoughts, she has developed stronger material proclivities.

The leitmotiv of royalty reappears in this scene when Count Muffat serendipitously discovers his father-in-law, the Marquis de Chouard, in a regal bed with Nana:

Dans son luxe royal, la nouvelle chambre resplendissait. Des capitons d'argent semaient d'étoiles vives le velour rose thé de la tenture, de ce rose de chair...tandis que les cordelières d'or tombant des angles, les dentelles d'or encadrant les panneaux étaient comme des flammes légères...Puis, en face, c'était le lit d'or et d'argent qui rayonnait avec l'éclat neuf de ses ciselures, un trône assez large pour que Nana pût y étendre la royauté de ses membres nus, un autel d'une richesse Byzantine...Et, près d'elle, sous le reflet de neige de sa gorge, au milieu de son triomphe de déesse, se vaudrait une honte, une décrépitude, une ruine comique et lamentable, le marquis de Chouard en chemise. (454-455)

[The new bedroom was glittering with an opulence that was truly royal. The velvet drapes, flesh-colored...were dotted with the bright stars of silver buttons, while the barley-sugar gilt mouldings descending from each corner and the gold lace round the

central panels seemed like darting flames...Opposite stood the gold and silver bed with its glittering new carvings, a throne fit to display the royal beauty of her naked limbs, an altar Byzantine in its luxury...And lying beside her, against the snow-white breasts of this all-powerful goddess, there was a floundering, sordid, comical, miserable wreck, the Marquis de Chouard in his night-shirt.] (400)

The opulent bedroom, gilt mouldings, gold lace, voluptuous tints, gold and silver bed and glittering carvings constitute the effects of *désir*, as do Queen Venus's shamelessness, arrogance, inspiration and omnipotence. According to Lacan, the recognition of *désir* does not dictate fulfillment as its goal, but rather propagates the *désir*. Also, in the *vel* of alienation, the subject capitulates in the confrontation with *Autre* and acquiesces to subjectivity, which echoes the subject as *manque-à-être*. The paradox of alienation, however, is the potential of being, despite this conspicuous lack, which shares a reciprocal relationship with *désir*. Lacan expresses, «*Le désir de l'homme, c'est le désir d l'Autre*» ("The desire of man, it is the desire of the Other.") (Fink, Lacanian 54). Man not only desires what *Autre* desires, but the structure of his *désir* is the same: man desires as *Autre*, as if he were another identity. Furthermore, the "throne...an altar Byzantine in its luxury" composes the "fundamental fantasy," which depicts the rapport between the subject and the cause of desire and is predominantly unconscious. Nana has dreamed of this "throne," *jouissance*, symbolized by object *a*, which became her obsession until the truth of the palimpsest of *désir* became unveiled. Also, these opulent accoutrements represent physical evidence that manifested in Nana's experience that matched the essence of the way she felt about her "throne." The creation of reality depends on the focus of thought, which is revealed by the law of attraction. It is law that life experience will correlate to ideas, because whatever is focused on long enough becomes truth.

The following excerpt epitomizes mimetic desire with internal mediation, signifying equal social status of both the mediator and the subject, as opposed to external mediation in which the social status of the mediator is superior to that of the subject:

Dans le vide de son cerveau...seul, Philippe demeurait, aux bras nus de la jeune femme, continuellement...étouffé par un poids qui l'écrasait. Des souvenirs lui revenaient un à un... Philippe le remplaçait, parce qu'il avait de la barbe. Alors, c'était la fin, il ne pouvait plus vivre. Son vice s'était trempé d'une tendresse infinie, d'une adoration sensuelle, où tout son être se donnait... C'était la fin, il voulait mourir. (432-433)

[In his state of shock...he could only see Philippe, Philippe perpetually clasped in Nana's naked arms...there was a crushing weight on his chest. Memories were flooding back to him one by one...Philippe had ousted him because he was able to grow a beard. No, this was the end, he couldn't go on living. His lust had become refined into something infinitely tender, a sensual adoration which had taken complete possession of him...No, this was the end, he didn't want to go on living...] (379-380)

Reflecting the contemplation of suicide by the young Georges Hugon (subject) because his older brother, Philippe (mediator/model), competes for the same desire, Nana (object), this passage evokes acquisitive mimesis, characterized by the appropriation of the same object. This triangular desire also witnesses Georges sabotaging his own independence in his pursuit of imitating Philippe: "His lust had become refined into something infinitely tender, a sensual adoration which had taken complete possession of him." Furthermore, the transformation of the mediator into a rival and obstacle precludes the acquisition of the desired object. This also attests to Girard's discovery that works of fiction witness characters who evolve within a system of relationships.

Moreover, Georges's thoughts manifest a downward spiral: first, he is in a state of shock at the vision of Philippe; then, an emotional misalignment within himself; then, memories that were once beautiful become ashes; and finally, the competition with his older brother, Philippe, forces him to contemplate the end of his life. This passage also testifies to the fact that every subject is actually two subjects. When thinking of a desire, such as love, you think about the the opposite of what you desire, which contradicts its fulfillment.

After the attempted suicide by Georges as a result of acquisitive mimesis, which escalates conflict due to an object of desire, Nana affirms her innocence in an effort to avoid *skandalon*:

...le comte Muffat la trouva à la même place. Mais alors elle se soulagea par un flux débordant de paroles, lui contant le Malheur, revenant vingt fois sur les mêmes détails, ramassant les ciseaux tachés de sang pour refaire le geste de Zizi, quand il s'était frappé. Et elle avait surtout à coeur de prouver son innocence.

Voyons, chéri, est-ce ma faute? Si tu étais la justice est-ce que tu me condamnerais? ...Je n'ai pas dit à Philippe de manger la grenouille, bien sûr; pas plus que je n'ai poussé ce petit malheureux à se massacrer... Dans tout ça, je suis la plus Malheureuse. On vient faire des bêtises chez moi, on me cause de la peine, on me traite comme une coquine... (436)

[Count Muffat found her when he arrived a quarter of an hour later. She released her feelings in a flood of words, telling him the dreadful story, going into all the details over and over again, picking up the blood-stained scissors and demonstrating each time how Zizi had stabbed himself. Above all, she was anxious to establish her innocence.

'Look, darling, is it any fault of mine? If you had to judge me, would you condemn me?...Of course I didn't tell Philippe to put his hand in the till, any more than I encouraged that poor little wretch to slaughter himself. It's me who's suffered most in all this. People come to my house and act stupidly, they hurt my feelings and treat me as if I was a tramp...'] (382)

Translated as *pierre d'achoppement* ("stumbling block"), *skandalon* signifies a psychopathological designation rendered as obstacle or scandal, a temptation that represents a desire. In this case, Nana desires to authenticate her innocence to the Count in order to elude the 'scapegoat mechanism,' propounded by Girard. This mechanism is unconscious and psychological, comprising false accusation and victimization, two aspects Nana desires to circumvent.

The «*objet de désir*» also vanquishes Count Muffat who sabotages his independence as he is consumed by his passion, similar to Georges Hugon, who believed the difference in age between him and his brother caused him to forfeit Nana. The Count perceives that the travesty of the Hugon brothers presages the advent of his own misfortune, an undesired *mimésis d'appropriation*. This episode also witnesses the convergence of more than one subject upon the same object or desire, which does result in rivalry or conflict. The subject or imitator and the desired object reside along the base of the triangle, and the model, indicating the desirability of the object, dwells at the apex. Another aspect which distinguishes this passage is the leitmotiv of religiosity which pervades the novel with respect to both Count Muffat and Nana and resides on the opposite spectrum of the «*objet de désir*»:

Le ciel lui donnait un avertissement, il regardait le Malheur de Philippe et de Georges comme l'annonce de sa propre perte...rêvant parfois de rédemption, de pardon reçu, tous deux agenouillés devant Dieu le Père...doublant de ses remords les joies du péché et de la pénitence...il s'était fait une habitude de cette damnation quotidienne, qu'il rachetait par des élans de foi, pleins d'une humilité dévote. Très naïvement, il offrait au ciel, comme une souffrance expiatrice, l'abominable tourment dont il souffrait. Ce tourment grandissait encore, il montait son calvaire de croyant, de coeur grave et profond, tombé dans la sensualité enragée d'une fille. (437-438)

[It was a warning from Heaven, and he could see Philippe's and George's misfortunes as heralding his own downfall...he would sometimes dream of being redeemed and pardoned, and see them both on their knees before God the Father...combining the delights of sin and contrition with feelings of deep remorse...he'd grown accustomed to this daily exercise in damnation, redeeming himself by bursts of religious fervour and humble piety. He was so naïve that in expiation of his sin he was trying to offer his own atrocious suffering, which was becoming harder and harder to bear. He was set on his path to martyrdom, an earnest and sincere believer who had fallen into the clutches of an insatiably sensual whore.] (384)

Despite his attempts to expiate the *skandalon*, the temptation that represents *désir* and the

antithesis of Christianity, the Count succumbs to his “obsessive passion.” This passage witnesses the law of attraction, like is drawn to or attracts like; specifically, the Count Muffat's thoughts of redemption conjures visions of contrition and remorse before God. These daily thoughts of damnation have become beliefs with regard to redemption, pious fervour and humility, until finally his suffering serves as expiation for his sin and the Count has become a martyr, victimized by Nana.

This leitmotiv of religiosity also contrasts that of the «*objet de désir*». Specifically, Nana is compared to a “God of wrath,” carnal desire corresponds to the soul, and sexual capitulation correlates to the mysterious heavens. Although the Count expresses a desire to rectify his religiosity with his obsession, he fails to overcome his passion, overwhelmed by the power of her subjugation:

Lui, dévot, habitué aux extases des chapelles riches, retrouvait exactement ses sensations de croyant, lorsque, agenouillé sous un vitrail, il succombait à l'ivresse des orgues et des encensoirs. La femme le possédait avec le despotisme jaloux d'un Dieu de colère... Et toujours, malgré les luttes de sa raison, cette chambre de Nana le frappait de

folie, il disparaissait en grelottant dans la toute-puissance du sexe, comme il s'évanouissait devant l'inconnu du vaste ciel.

[This pious man whose experiences of heavenly bliss normally occurred in splendid chapels was gripped here by the same religious ecstasy as when he surrendered to the exaltation of solemn organ music or the scent of incense, kneeling in front of a stained-glass window. This woman possessed him, body and soul, with the despotic power of a jealous God of wrath... but the madness which overcame him in Nana's bedroom always conquered the struggles and scruples of his reason; he would plunge trembling into the all-powerful maw of her sex in the same way as he collapsed overwhelmed by the mystery of the almighty heavens.] (397-398)

The harbingers of desire presage enslavement and victimization, characteristic of

skandalon. According to Judeo-Christian scriptures, only the Cross conquers the avatar of the *skandalon*, Satan ("the accuser"). On the contrary, Nana vanquishes the Count, whom she transforms into a scapegoat, a victim chosen based on vulnerability or marginality. This passage also attests to the manifestation of thought and that which is believed or expected. Although he is torn between love and religion, the Count ultimately capitulates to carnal desire in contrast to his religiosity or reason. The manifestation of desire is attracted more quickly through the evocation of strong emotion, as suggested by "madness," "trembling," and "overwhelmed."

After having unexpectedly discovered the Marquis de Chouard with Nana, Count Muffat apostrophizes God in a scene that further reflects the leitmotiv of religiosity:

*Muffat...dans le foudroiement de ce qu'il venait de voir...
D'un élan extraordinaire, les mains toujours plus hautes, il
cherchait le ciel, il appelait Dieu.
«Oh! non, je ne veux pas!...Oh! venez à moi, mon Dieu!*

*Secourez-moi, faites-moi mourir plutôt!...Oh! non, pas cet home, mon Dieu!
C'est fini, prenez-moi, emportez-moi, que je ne voie plus, que je ne sente
plus...Oh! je vous appartiens, mon Dieu! Notre Père qui êtes au ciel...»*

*...c'était M. Venot, surprise de le trouver en prière devant cette porte
close.*

*Alors, comme si Dieu lui-même eût répondu à son appel, le comte se jeta
au cou du petit vieillard. Il pouvait pleurer enfin, il sanglotait, il répétait:*

«Mon frère...Mon frère...»

Toute son humanité souffrante se soulageait dans ce cri. (456)

[Muffat...paralysed by what he'd just seen...

Lifting up his hands, in a wild burst of fervor, he searched the
heavens for God:

‘No, I refuse!...O God, come down to me, come to my aid, let me die
rather than go on living in the way I now do! This is the end, O God, give me a
haven, take me away to a place where I shan't hear or see anything anymore. I
belong only to Thee, O Lord..Our Father which art in heaven...’

It was Monsieur Venot, surprised to seeing him praying in front of a
closed door. Then, as if God had indeed answered his prayer, the count flung
himself into the arms of the little old man and at last found release in tears,
sobbing and exclaiming over and over again:

‘O brother...My brother...’

All his human suffering found comfort in this cry...] (401-402)

This passage exudes Girard's concept of *skandalon* or *pierre d'achoppement*, which

signifies temptation that represents a desire, the antithesis of Christianity. Also eminent

is the experience of conversion or an experience of death and resurrection, a collapse and

recovery, revealed in his Deceit, Desire and the Novel, which expounds the theme of

mimetic desire. Having beseeched God for enlightenment and redemption, Count

Muffat yearns for a return to his former “self.” He then apostrophizes Monsieur Venot,

who becomes a source of solace for the *skandalon*, resulting from acquisitive mimesis,

characterized by the appropriation of the same object.

Contrary to acquisitive mimesis, accusatory mimesis witnesses a sacrificial crisis characterized by a unanimous scapegoat that ultimately results in a violent catharsis:

Nana était peu à peu tombée dans un gros chagrin... Labordette... lâcha entre deux phrases, à propos de rien, que Georges était mort. Elle resta glacée.

Puis, la gorge serrée depuis le matin, elle éclata en sanglots, elle se soulagea. C'était une tristesse infinie, quelque chose de profound et d'immense dont elle se sentait accablée...

Les malheurs qu'elle sentait autour d'elle, ces misères qu'elle avait faites, la noyaient d'un flot tiède et continu d'attendrissement; et sa voix se perdait en une plainte sourde de petite fille.

«Oh! J'ai mal, oh! j'ai mal...Je ne peux pas, ça m'étouffe...C'est trop dur de ne pas être comprise, de voir les gens se mettre contre vous, parce qu'ils sont les plus forts...Cependant, quand on n'a rien à se reprocher, quand on a sa conscience pour soi...Eh bien! non, eh bien! non...» (460-461)

[Nana had gradually sunk into a state of deep depression... Labordette... let fall the information that Georges had died. Her blood ran cold...

Then the pent-up emotions of the morning found release in a burst of tears. She felt immeasurably sad, overwhelmed by a shattering sense of loss...

All the unhappiness surrounding her, the harm she'd caused, were drowning her in emotional self-pity; she was uttering faint moans, like a little girl.

'Oh, I feel dreadful, so dreadful!'...Oh, it's unbearable, I can't breathe! It's so hard to be misunderstood, to see everybody against you because they're stronger than you...And yet you've done nothing wrong, you've got a clear conscience...No! No! It's not right!] (405-407)

Asymmetrical victims, or figures perceived to be different, become the focus of hostility of the *esprit de corps*, since they threaten the established cultural and psychological tenets of a society. Girard identifies this convergence of violence as surrogate victimage, in that the aggression is transferred toward a victim who is vulnerable and available. In addition, "a" (*autre*), which is a reflection of Ego, becomes apparent upon Nana's discovery of the death of Georges. The "a" (*objet petit*) is the perceived image derived from others and the specular reflection which compose the Imaginary Order. Paradoxically, despite the accusations against herself, Nana believes her innocence and her conscience. Also, the simile that she was "like a little girl" is analogous to the episode when she was transformed into a young girl (*Autre*), an extreme alterity that transcends the illusion of the Imaginary Order, during the idyll with Georges. Nana's emotions reflect a downward spiral: first, she is in a state of depression; then, she is numb at the news of George's death; then, she is tearful and overwhelmed; and finally, she is drowning in distress and self-pity. This spiral of desperation indicates an emotional misalignment within herself. Her desire cannot emanate under such conditions in which a pervasive difference exists between the desire and an acquired emotion. Her feelings allow the recognition of the rapport

between her desire and her current experience. Furthermore, Nana rationalizes her accusations, reflecting a mind set of religiosity and the fact that accusatory mimesis is unwarranted:

Tiens! je puis te dire ça main tenant: lorsque j'allais avec eux, n'est-ce pas? Eh bien! ça ne me faisait pas plaisir, mais pas plaisir du tout. Ça m'embêtait, parole d'honneur!...Alors, je te demande un peu si je suis pour quelque chose là-dedans!...Ah! oui, ils m'ont assommée! Sans eux, mon cher, sans ce qu'ils ont fait de moi, je serais dans un couvent à prier le bon Dieu, car j'ai toujours eu de la religion...Et zut! après tout, s'ils y ont laissé leur monnaie et leur peau. C'est leur faute! Moi, je n'y suis pour rien! ---Sans doute», dit Labordette convaincu. (462-463)

[Look I can tell you one thing now: Whenever I went with them, you know, well, I never enjoyed it, I got absolutely no pleasure out of it at all, it was just a chore, I tell you honestly...Well, I ask you, am I in any way to blame for all that?...Yes, they bored me stiff! But for them, my dear man, but for what they made me do, I'd be a nun praying to God, because I've always been religious...And if they lose their money or their lives, it's their own fault, they can go to hell...It's nothing to do with me!'

'Of course not', said Labordette solemnly.] (408)

Finally, according to Le Bon, the collective exhibits impulsivity, transience and petulance, almost exclusive governance by the unconscious and the mind set of primitive people and children. Due to the passionate desires of the group, perseverance remains elusive and the fulfillment of desire does not admit delay. Moreover, the group possesses a sense of omnipotence, since the concept of impossibility disappears for the individual, and is usually credulous, due to a deficiency in critical thought. The life of illusion and fantasy, originating from an unfulfilled desire, governs the psychology of neuroses in which psychological reality takes precedence over objective reality. The mental life of the group, like that in dreams and hypnosis, focuses on impulses of desire and cathexes or the concentration of emotional energy on an object or idea. Moreover, the liaisons of love epitomize the collective mind, for behind the

veil of suggestibility dwells a cohesive power that unites the group. With regard to libido theory, the herd instinct is a manifestation of the affinity emanating from the libido. The wake of *la mouche d'or* included asymmetrical victims who epitomized acquisitive mimesis: Vandeuvres, Foucarmont, Steiner, La Faloise, Georges, and Philippe. Victims of *skandalon*, they all succumbed to temptation that represented *désir*, the harbingers of which presaged enslavement. The insignificance of her mansion, the obstacle of her furniture and her prospective dreams attest to the *raison d'être* of the *désir* of Nana which does not dictate fulfillment as its goal, but propagates *désir*. The following passage also witnesses that circumstances, conditions, experiences, other people and all manner of things match the dominant thoughts she held, and powerful beliefs are revealed in her experience. The *objet de désir* had achieved success:

Labordette et Mignon eurent un sourire...Et tous deux l'admiraient, dans un silence recueilli, tandis qu'elle achevait de boutonner ses gants... et des catastrophes l'entouraient, la flambée furieuses de Vandeuvres, la mélancolie de Foucarmont perdu dans les mers de la Chine, le désastre de Steiner réduit à vivre en honnête homme, l'imbécillité de satisfaite de la Faloise, et le critique effondrement des Muffat, et le blanc cadavre de Georges, veillé par Philippe, sorti la veille de prison... Aussi rêvait-elle quelque chose de mieux... (463-464)

[Labordette and Mignon smiled...And the two men stood watching her, in solemn, speechless admiration, while she buttoned up her gloves: ...surrounded by cataclysms: Vandeuvres' mad holocaust, the melancholy Foucarmont languishing in oblivion in the China seas, the downfall of Steiner, condemned to having to make an honest living, la Faloise's idiotic conceit, and Georges's bloodless corpse now being watched over by his brother Philippe, just released from jail...All this now meant nothing to her...She had dreams of bigger and better things.] (408-409)

An unfulfilled Nana, surreptitiously admired by two of her illicit *paramours*, has reaped

the “cataclysms” she has sown, leaving a wake of destruction and irascible victims at her feet. «*La mouche d’or*», having wielded death upon society, Nana merely buttons her gloves as she contemplates her abyss of meaninglessness in which her acquisitions have become obstacles, a prelude to future endeavors to poison her *milieu*. In fact, she anticipates an *avenir* of even more extravagant dreams, indifferent, “virgin” and unscathed by tragedy.

«*Le poème des désirs du mâle*» reflects the pernicious aspects of heredity and the social *milieu* through the invention of a heroine who portrays realistic behavior and the *demi-monde*, Zola’s naturalism. A victim of an era that exploits her sexuality, Nana symbolizes opulent, debauched Paris and the decadent Second Empire, the span of her life synonymous with that of the epoch. The heroine, as «*objet de désir*», is

characterized by duality: «*la mouche d'or*» and «*la bête d'or*» as «*mise en abyme*» in the specular passage, or the narcissistic «*souriant à l'autre Nana*» («*Autre*») and avenger of her people from the misery of the slums vs. innocence as *ingénue*, «*la reine de Vénus*» and «*la Blonde Vénus*» and «*Mélusine*» vs. destruction. According to Bordenave, the theater manager, the *quelque chose* that distinguishes her becomes «*autre chose*», evoking «*l'Autre*» in the realm of reality. The myth of Nana becomes reality as daughter of the slums and courtesan in the mirror. Moreover, the mirror images reflect a state of entrapment and victimization of Zola's determinism. The apex of her majesty, “respect” and royalty contradicts the fallen *châtelaine*, Irma d'Anglars, and the dissolute, jaded Queen Pomaré of the gutter. Nana's alterity exists in an «*entre-deux*» with the self, and this duality transcends an authentic self. She also inhabits an «*entre-temps*» in which the present emanates from past deception and becomes an illusion of the future, the reality of which she fears, yet does not expect. «*Le désir de l'Autre*» reveals the duality of lack

and excess, death vs. life and truth vs. falsity. Her chimerical future yields *le spleen* and unfulfillment, such as her excursion to the *château de Chamont*. The condemnation of the self and «*l'Autre*» witnesses an unending helix of moral corruption and her tragic fate.

Nana's death represents an allegory symbolizing the turpitude of French society on the cusp of the Franco-Prussian war, resulting in the collapse of the reign of Napoleon III. Specifically, Nana inhabits the register of the Symbolic Order, and the Mirror Stage wields a "transcendental signifier" to perceive presence, opposed to absence, resulting in the restoration of narcissism. In fact, Nana becomes the "transcendental signifier" of the Symbolic Order, acquiring meaning through her mythification. In addition, Lacanian psychoanalysis dictates that subjective (Nana's) experience emanates from language and culture, the Symbolic Order, which renders the Imaginary Order obsolete, since the

domain of desire is indestructible. «*Le stade du miroir*» witnessed identification, effecting the formation of the Ego, and «*jouissance*» became a paradigm for the continuity of signifier / signified, an impossible fulfillment. Nana's mythic ego, the "Real," reflected a «*manque-à-être*», preventing a unity of an authentic self. Her extreme alterity («*Autre*») transcends the illusion of the Imaginary Order and resolves a rapport with «*autre*» (Ego). «*Le sacré coup d'aile*» also witnesses *mimésis d'appropriation* (acquisitive mimesis) and accusatory mimesis in which «*la reine soleil*» emerges as «*l'objet de désir*». The duality of Nana's psyche as «*la bonne fille*» / «*la bête d'or*» permeates this novel in which the leitmotifs of universal sexuality, religiosity and royalty reign, and the *pierre d'achoppement* (*skandalon*) effects the "success" of «*l'objet de désir*» in a cathartic conclusion.

CHAPTER V

DIVINAS PALABRAS: PORTRAIT OF A SPANISH MASTERPIECE

Emile Zola (1840-1902) wrote Les Rougon Macquart, a series of twenty novels set during the Second Empire of France. He brought to light dark forces within culture, including the environmental influences of violence, alcohol and prostitution. Zola represented the culmination of Realism and Naturalism in literature, and the series examines two branches of a family: the respectable, legitimate Rougons and the disreputable, illegitimate Macquarts for five generations. Despite the innovative, formal achievement of his fiction, Zola shocked many readers through his graphic depictions of violence, death, poverty and sexuality. Several late 19th-century reviewers, for example, described his work as “crude” and “pornographic,” but these reviews only contributed to his notoriety (Twentieth 169). Ironically, during the first half of the 20th century, Zola lost favor with the critical establishment due to the shift in Modernism modes of

representation. His scientific, deterministic method appeared irrelevant in a world struggling with epistemological doubts. Recent critics have tended to focus on his stylistic achievements and his treatment of social issues, especially those of gender and class.

In the Spanish context, the 19th century also witnessed the revolt and independence of most of Spain's colonies in the Western Hemisphere: three wars were the issue of succession; the brief ousting of the monarchy and establishment of the First Republic (1873-74), replaced by the popular, moderate rule of Alfonso XII which brought Spain into a period of stability and reform; and, finally, the Spanish-American War (1898), in which Spain lost Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines to the United States. Between 1885, when the cholera epidemic determined an exceptional mortality, and 1914, the center of gravity of the Spanish transition manifests in 1898: the «*Desastre*», the naval defeat and tragic separation of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the

Philippines. This intersecular transition represents the complex crisis of the «*fin de siglo*» (“end of the century”) which commences in 1898.

The Spanish «*fin de siglo*» marches to the compass of all Europe with its decadentism, Parnassians or Symbolists. *Azul* (1888) and *Prosas Profanas* (1896), imported by Rubén Darío to Spain, reveal a new sensibility and esthetic of sensuality: colors and rhythms, musicality of verse and lexicon, new sounds and sensations from feeling the poetic word, understood in its wider sense and not limited to the standard form of the «*poema*». The crisis of the «*fin de siglo*» must also be identified with the crisis of Positivism; it is an epoch of the definition of a new culture that supposes the modernist rupture and existential appearance that will find their realization in the philosophical-literary production of 1898.

Amid the instability and economic crisis that afflicted Spain in the 19th century, there arose nationalist movements in the Philippines and Cuba, colonies which endured

wars of independence and witnessed U.S. involvement. The Spanish-American War, fought in the Spring of 1898, did not last long due to mismanagement by the highest levels of command and became known as *El Desastre* (“The Disaster”), which gave impetus to the Generation of 98, who were already conducting much critical analysis concerning the country. The War also weakened the stability established during the reign of Alfonso XII.

At the end of the 19th century, after long and complicated meanderings, the Spanish right had completed the process of acceptance of nationalism, founded on Catholicism. «*El españolismo*» had encountered an objective that substituted the Imperial revolution and the impossible reconstruction of the Empire. After 1898, the «*regeneración*» of the country, under which were hidden very diverse political programs, and the fight against the «*separatismos*» and peripheral nationalisms ensued by colonial defeat, themes that escaped the chronology of the «*Restauración*»

(“Restoration”), arrived. The Catholic congresses began to organize when the division of the Catholics became extreme in order to develop the response from the Church before the advance of a liberal, secularized society to remediate the division of Catholic forces. The reunited congress of Madrid (1889), Zaragoza (1890), Sevilla (1892), Tarragona (1894), Burgos (1899) and Santiago (1902) represent historic testimony of the aspirations and realizations of Spanish Catholicism at the end of the century. In 1900, when attacks against the Church became more intense, a «*Junta Central*» was formed with the intention of coordinating Catholic forces. Fortunately, the history of Spanish Catholicism, although plagued with internal dissidence, offers admirable responses that demonstrate the creativity and energy of Catholic beliefs during the «*Restauración*».

European literature experienced fundamental transformations during the «*fin de siglo*» and the *Belle Epoque*, and major Spanish literary figures associated with Realist and Naturalist modes of representation emerged. Antonio Machado (1875-1939), for

example, was a Spanish poet and leading figure of the Spanish literary movement known as the Generation of 98. He shunned the hermetic, esthetic principles of post-symbolism and cultivated the dynamic openness of social realism that encompassed a *fin-de-siècle* contemplation of his sensory world, portrayed through memory and the impressions of his private consciousness, evoking the historical landscape of Spain.

*¡La noche de octubre! dicen que de luna
con un viento recio y saltos de mar.
Bajo sus estrellas se alzó mi fortuna,*

Mar y vientos recios me vieron llegar.

Valle-Inclán

en torno a su nacimiento

[The night of October! They say that by the moon
With a strong wind and leaps of the sea.
Beneath her stars my fate rose,
Sea and strong winds saw me arrive.]

Valle-Inclán

about his birth

In the Spanish literary realm, Pío Baroja (1872-1956), another prominent member of the Generation of 98, comprised three trilogies: La Tierra Vasca (The Basque Country, 1900-1909; the internationally known La lucha por la vida (The Struggle for Life, 1922-1924) that offers a vivid depiction of life in the slums of Madrid; and La Mar (The Sea). His masterpiece, El árbol de la ciencia (The Tree of Knowledge, 1911), represents a pessimistic, autobiographical *Bildungsroman* that depicts the futility of the pursuit of knowledge and of life. The title is ironically symbolic: the more the chief protagonist, Andrés Hurtado, learns about and experiences life, the more pessimistic he feels and the more futile his life seems.

Don Ramón María del Valle-Inclán y Montenegro (1866-1936), an innovative and antinaturalistic playwright, novelist, poet, short story writer and essayist of the 20th century, was a literary figure of the *modernismo* movement from the Galician village of Villanueva de Arosa in the northwestern province of Pontevedra. Valle-Inclán was also an expressionist and absurdist before the advent of these genres. Modernism was a cultural and literary movement which emerged in the decades before 1914 and rebelled against late 19th-century academic and historicist traditions, and embraced the new economic, social, religious and political aspects of the emergent modern world. The characteristics of Modernism include: the belief that the world is created in the act of perceiving it; absolute truth is non-existent, because all things are relative; the experience of history and institutions is that of alienation, loss and despair; championship of the individual and celebration of inner strength; the belief that life is unordered; and the

concern with the subconscious. The *esperpento*, a dramatic genre invented by Valle-Inclán, translated as “grotesque,” “ugly,” or “absurd,” and inspired by the paintings of Goya (1746-1828) and the literary works of Quevedo (1580-1645), portrays society of early 20th-century Spain (Almeida 2). As an *avant-garde* author, Valle-Inclán invented a revolutionary *tableau* that ruptured with and then influenced the development of European dramaturgy.

The dramatic trajectory of the *esperpentos* of Valle-Inclán, culminating in *Luces de Bohemia* (1920) and *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea* (1920), signals the distinction between *modernismo* and *esperpento*, the mystical past and demythification, aspects of tragedy and the impossibility of tragedy, universal themes and the verisimilitude of *tragicomedia de aldea*. These genres are also distinct in dramatic technique and dialogic variation, aberrant psychology and deficiency in psychological

development, the leitmotif of affiliation and *enajenamiento* (“alienation”) as *tragedia esperpéntica*. Moreover, *modernismo* and *esperpento* signal the focus on visualization and the use of stylistics and lexicon, *esperpentismo* and narrative, the concepts of autobiographical portraiture and demiurge, and classification of the *esperpento* within an historical genre.

In addition, Valle-Inclán attacks the hypocrisy, moralizing and sentimentality of the *bourgeois* playwrights, satirizes the views of the ruling classes, and targets specific concepts, such as masculine honor, militarism, patriotism and attitudes to the Crown and Roman Catholic Church. His *esperpento*, a satirical representation that combines elements of drama to reflect visions of horror and comedy, is analogous to those of Goya.

Valle-Inclán’s *esperpentos* depict contemporary life, satirizing the army, the preoccupation with jaded shibboleths, the concept of patriotism, and customs and institutions (Twentieth 470). His projected nine-volume series of novels, *El ruedo*

ibérico, remained incomplete and began as a caustic indictment of the corrupt government of Isabella II. Although many critics dislike his work for its eroticism, cruelty and bizarre themes and manner, Valle-Inclán was admired by the Spanish writers of his era, and today he is recognized as one of the most influential Spanish writers of his time.

The dramatic trajectory of Valle-Inclán, resulting in the discovery of the *esperpento*, parallels the modernism and posterior expressionism that characterized the European theatrical vanguard that proceeded post-Romanticism. The creation of this esthetic effected a new dramaturgy that influenced the naturalist theater that reigned in Russia, as well as the experimental nonrealistic theater of Meyerhold (1874-1940) and Brecht (1898-1956), who developed epic drama (Pérez 17). Although he was not as renowned as other great innovators in western culture, Valle-Inclán surpassed literary

discourse with image and visualization, as if preceding discursive drama were transformed into a painting of theatrical scenes and effects, especially the impressive final scene of *Divinas palabras* that corresponds to the dialogic rupture of Artaud (1896-1948), who founded the *théâtre de la cruauté* (“cruelty”), and reveals stylistics of *lo grotesco* which advance the subsequent proposals of the theater of the absurd (Pérez 18). The symbolism of Valle-Inclán, related to that of Maeterlinck (1862-1949), and his expressionism, parallel with that of Ghelderode (1898-1962), who influenced puppet theater and *commedia dell’arte*, resulted in theater that composes a mainstream of contemporary European dramaturgy: the estheticism of the grotesque to define the revolutionary writing and scenic movement of a new, authentic theatricality (Pérez 18).

The concept of *esperpentismo* emerges in Scene 12 of *Luces de Bohemia*, regarded by most critics as Valle-Inclán’s masterpiece, through the dialogue of the poet, Max Estrella:

Esperpentismo was invented by Goya... Classical heroes reflected in concave mirrors... The tragic sense of Spanish life can be known only through a systematically deformed aesthetic... In a concave mirror, even

the most beautiful images are absurd...My current aesthetic is to transform classical norms through the mathematics of a concave mirror.

(Parker 466)

The *esperpento* reveals a distortion of reality, violence and parody, magnifies the grotesqueness of life, and superimposes the humorous with the horrible, as apparent in *Divinas palabras*, the provincial drama, signaled by some critics as the masterpiece of the *esperpento*, which personifies amorality, total abandonment of inhibition, blatant cruelty and a gamut of human vices. This *tragicomedia* also reveals the psychoanalytic view of the disparity between the individual and society, instinct and conformity and repression, and the counter position of aggression and eros, adversaries which characterize the *Belle Epoque* and its subsequent years. Valle-Inclán, a distinguished member of the *Generación del 98*, which formed a cultural rebirth of Spanish literature, was the most radical dramatist who subverted traditional Spanish theater.

In addition to *Luces de Bohemia* and *Divinas palabras*, critics also regard the trilogy, *Comedias bárbaras*, as Valle-Inclán's major contribution to dramatic literature: *Aguila de blasón* (1907), *Romance de lobos* (1908) and *Cara de plata* (1923) (Parker 466). Although *Luces de Bohemia* appeared in a hebdomadal serial in *España* (July 31 to October 23, 1920), revised in *Opera Ominia 19* (Madrid 1924), its production was not realized until 1963, when the *Théâtre National Populaire* staged the drama in French. The Spanish *première*, directed by José Tamayo, did not occur until 1972 at the *Teatro Bellas Artes* in Madrid. According to Anthony N. Zahareas, *Luces de Bohemia* represents "an accurate documentary" of bohemian life in post-World War I Madrid:

Valle-Inclán strove to include the smallest details of happenings, meetings, newspaper headlines, popular topics, political debates, common

phrases, clichés, current slang, and above all, of the physical aspects of the city. (Parker 466-67)

As his first *esperpento*, this play is also the first to depict a contemporaneous setting, contrasted to his previous works which evoke a mythic nostalgia. John Lyon perceives

this play as “a descent into hell,” atypical of the aristocratic playwright, and criticizes the

“anti-heroic, life-reducing aspects of modern existence which trivialize even what is

noble and generous” (Parker 467). Similarly, Alonso Zamora Vicente proposes that

Luces de Bohemia constitutes the first work of Spanish literature that reveals the

prospective classical hero, Max Estrella, on a pilgrimage to death, a journey that results

in a collective, *la realidad esperpéntica*, as protagonist (Parker 467). Moreover, some

critics have claimed that the hero, the most renowned poet of Spain, yet ignored by the

Academy, represents the *première* autobiographical figure to portray Valle-Inclán.

Despite the fact that most critics regard this compelling figure as deficient in

psychological development, John P. Gabriele discovers a foundation for analysis that

surpasses the quintessential psychology of the character: the blind, ragged, starving, but dignified poet delineated in a portrait of the grotesque that reveals Spain and the world as an *esperpento* (Parker 467-68).

The *esperpento* signifies the culmination of efforts of Valle-Inclán to create a new dramatic genre in the expressionistic period of his theater, an esthetic that uses

deformation to show how the most conservative groups impose a form of life, a political

ideology and a system of values determining good and evil. The objective of the

esperpento is to reject this hypocrisy. The political and social crisis, forged over

centuries, exploded at the end of the 19th century with the disorder of the war of Cuba, a

disaster which had strong repercussions among the masses and produced a series of

national and international incidents, which in turn caused chaos and reprisal, as well as

socialist and communist perspectives. As Ortega y Gasset observed: «*Venimos, pues a*

la conclusión de que la historia de España entera, y salvo fugaces jornadas, ha sido la

historia de una decadencia.» [We come, well, to the conclusion that the history of Spain

informs, and saved, fleeting journeys have been the history of a decadence.] (Velarde

146) This condition of chaos in Spain had represented a motive of criticism throughout

her literature, from the times of Quevedo to those of Pío Baroja, including Mariano José

de Larra, precursor of the vision that inspired the writers of the Generation of 98. This

chaotic situation also impelled Valle-Inclán to have his art take a new course with respect

to the *esperpentos*:

V.I., al crear el esperpento, no sólo empleó una técnica deformadora, que tenía ya una larga historia en su arte y aún más largos antecedentes en la literatura española, sino que la utilize para ofrecernos su vision expresionista de España, de la España de su tiempo y de la de todos los tiempos, buceando en las entrañas de su ser para atrapar los temas fundamentales de su vida. (Velarde 147)

V.I. [Valle-Inclán], upon creating the esperpento, not only employed a deformative technique, that already had a long history in his art and still longer antecedents in Spanish literature, but utilized it to offer us his expressionistic vision of Spain, of the Spain of his time and of all times, diving in the entrails of his being to catch the fundamental themes of his life

The critics have also observed that the *esperpentos* of Valle-Inclán are composed of the estheticism of the grotesque and traditional myths, as well as historical realism transformed into

the absurd, which are the result of an *enajenamiento*, an imaginary vision of Spanish society (Cardona and Zahareas 43). This “alienation” of a rationalistic view effects a genre characterized by duality: the anguish of death combined with perverse comedy; horrifying, frightful circumstances followed by peculiar, strange situations, unparalleled to absurdist drama; disconcerting events and a disturbing, deformed perspective to which the audience is not accustomed. In fact, Valle-Inclán is attributed with having superseded Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-1990), a Swiss novelist, playwright and proponent of epic theatre reflecting post-World War II experiences and macabre satire, as well as absurdist *avant-garde* drama, in distinguishing that tragedy is attained through the phenomenon of the grotesque (Cardona and Zahareas 46). According to Dürrenmatt regarding problems related to the theatre:

La tragedia presupone la culpa, la desesperación, una visión de terror y un sentido de responsabilidad. En los retablos de «Polichinela» de nuestro siglo, sin embargo, ya no hay más personajes verdaderamente culpables. Y por eso faltan hombres que sean responsables de sus acciones... Todos se sienten empañados por los hechos y se ven atrapados en la corriente de los sucesos. Somos colectivamente culpables, estamos colectivamente encadenados... No merecemos para nuestra vida más que comedia. Nuestro mundo nos ha llevado tanto a lo grotesco como a la bomba atómica... (Zahareas 71)

[Tragedy presupposes guilt, hopelessness, a vision of terror and a sense of responsibility. In the *tableaux* of “Punch” of our century, however, there already are no more truly guilty characters. And, as a result, men are lacking who may be responsible for their actions... All feel tarnished by their deeds and see themselves trapped in the current of events. We are collectively guilty, we are collectively enchained... We do not merit for our life more than comedy. Our world has brought us as much to the grotesque as to the atomic bomb...]

Similarly, the *esperpentos* consist of farce united with tragedy from which the world of Valle-Inclán emanates; thus, *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea*. Correlative to *Meditaciones del Quijote* by Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), a Spanish philosopher and essayist, who was also a critic of esthetics and metaphysics, Valle-Inclán observed that life was a tragicomedy in which the grotesque style represented the genuine. Valle-Inclán, like Dürrenmatt, recognized that the phenomenon of the grotesque expresses the paradoxical, the amorphous, the ephemeral world, in a tangible way, and exposes the illusion of a rational, universal order. Also, Professor Wolfgang Kayser propounds in *Lo grotesco en arte y en literatura* the collapse of an accepted perspective of the world:

...la fusión de provincias que nosotros sabemos son imposibles a unir,
la eliminación de las leyes de la estética, la pérdida de la identidad individual, la distorsión de tamaños y formas «naturales», la suspensión de la categoría de los objetos, la destrucción de la personalidad, y la fragmentación del orden histórico... (Zahareas 48)

[...the fusion of provinces that we know are impossible to unite, the elimination of the laws of the esthetic, the loss of individual identity, the distortion of sizes and “natural” forms, the suspension of the category of objects, the destruction of personality, and the fragmentation of historical order...]

Moreover, the *esperpento* tradition reveals an analytical perspective of the world, as well as effects an impact that does not ameliorate morality, conquer fear or exonerate burden. Specifically, the *esperpento* transforms the accustomed reality into a different vision of the world, and in the case of Valle-Inclán, this concept encompasses the absurdist view of the human condition. Thus, Valle-Inclán declared that his first two *esperpentos*, *Luces de Bohemia* and

Divinas palabras, respectively, represented not only a means of expression, but a “new genre” which he had baptized as *esperpento* (Zahareas 68). Valle-Inclán also reveals the devaluation that characterizes the *esperpento*:

...Hoy, ese destino [de ser humano] es el mismo, la misma su grandeza, el mismo su dolor...Pero los hombres que lo sostienen han cambiado. Las acciones, las inquietudes, las coronas, son las de ayer y las de siempre. Los hombres son distintos, minúsculos para sostener ese gran peso. De ahí nace el contraste, la desproporción, lo ridículo. (Zahareas 104)

[...Today, that destiny (of being human) is the same, its greatness the same, its sorrow the same...But the men who sustain it have changed. The actions, worries, crowns are those of yesterday and those of always. Men are distinct, minuscule to sustain that great weight. From here, contrast, disproportion, the ridiculous are born.]

The catharsis that emanates from the *dénouement* of Luces de Bohemia, the first *esperpento* of Valle-Inclán, reveals a tragic hero who is redeemed from his disgrace and agony. Max Estrella, the blind poet of bohemian Madrid and protagonist of Luces de Bohemia, poetizes his tragedy («Yo soy el dolor de un mal sueño») [I am the sorrow of a bad dream], and dramatizes the agony of his blindness (Valle-Inclán 99).

Aparte los elogios que a m[í] me tocan, es una visión muy justa de esta Galicia medrosa y atontada. Desaparecido el mundo de los hidalgos...Tiene, como usted ha visto, t[í]pica picaresca. Acaso restos de una remota invasión de gitanos, en alg[ú]n oscuro siglo de la Edad Media...

Y no fu[e] el que parecía lleno de fuerza, con el fuero de la ley y la espada, el que m[á]s logró perdurarse. Este hecho, tan colmado de sugerencias, basta para dar a «Divinas Palabras»...España es un pozo negro...

*Carta de Valle-Inclán a
Eduardo Gómez de Baquero,
crítico literario muy reconocido,
18 marzo 1924,
Sanatorio Villar Iglesias,
Santiago de Galicia*

[The eulogies that touch me aside, it is a very just vision of this frightful and stunned Galicia. Disappeared, the world of Spanish noblemen...It has, as you have seen, typical picaresque. Perhaps remains of a remote invasion of gypsies, in some obscure century of the Middle Ages...

And it wasn't that it seemed full of strength, with the jurisdiction of the law and the sword, which more attained to endure. This fact, so full of suggestions, suffices to give to "Divine Words"...Spain is a cesspool...]

Letter from Valle-Inclán to
Eduardo Gómez Baquero,
very renowned literary critic
March 18, 1924,
Sanatorium Villar Iglesias,

Furthermore, he becomes bitter and pathetic with the passing of time («*Eterna la Nada!*») [Eternal, Nothingness!] and satirizes his feelings («*Para mí no hay más que la última mueca. Si hay algo, vendré a decírtelo.*») [For me, there is not more than the last grimace. If there is something, I shall come to tell it to you.] (Valle-Inclán 137, 139). The transition of the tragic hero, from sympathy to sarcasm, effects an anachronistic absurd tragedy, as opposed to a classic tragedy of compassion. According to Max Estrella, «*las imágenes más bellas en un espejo cóncavo son absurdas*» [the most beautiful images in a concave mirror are absurd] (Valle-Inclán 163). Moreover, the insensitivity of others, despite the genuine empathy of the tragic hero («*Loco de verme desconocido y negado*») [Crazy to see me unknown and denied] (Valle-Inclán 121) and the fact that he is resigned to his destiny, accepting the grotesque image and absurdity of his condition, and consequently that of Spain, reveals *la tragedia esperpéntica*, in which not only dignity and illusions are missing, but also self-compassion which could render freedom from suffering and depersonalization, as opposed to being a puppeteer. Valle-Inclán called his new genre «*tercer manera*», in reference to the duality of the tragic hero, *dramatis persona*, as both sorrowful puppet and brilliant creator, and the author who is distinct from his characters and reveals the disillusionment of the tragic hero (Zahareas 79). Inevitably, however, Max Estrella realizes that his painful condition is inferior to himself.

Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea, the only drama which Valle-Inclán distinguishes with a subtitle, represents a crucial theatrical work in his creative trajectory until that time, as well as a transition in dramatic experimentation and expressionist theatre: tragicomedy and *esperpento*. Although this innovative genre revealed footprints of his anterior modernist and symbolist theatre until 1914, the advent of this theatre of expressionism and tradition of the *esperpento* witnessed the abandonment of mythic worlds, as opposed to the depiction of an imaginary universe that portrays the reality of contemporary society composed of simple, marginal and vilified characters whose inherent traits result in corresponding degraded and debased actions (Soler 57). Divinas palabras reveals the rural Galician atmosphere of the epoch of Valle-Inclán; however, this drama also exposes the tragic exploitation of an innocent victim through cruel deeds characteristic of tragedy and amidst an ambience populated with villagers, peddlers, beggars and bohemians. This theme of evil, compounded with the themes of honor, lust, greed and death that characterize the previous works of Valle-Inclán, could have composed a traditional tragedy; however, Valle-Inclán distinguished this work of transition as a «*tragicomedia de aldea*». This drama also evokes pagan Celtic customs of Galicia and portrays a *tableau* of a grotesque, dehumanized and superstitious turn-of-the-century Spanish society, repressed by Catholicism. Resonant of the *esperpento* tradition, Divinas palabras represents a distorted portrait of provincial rustic life, as opposed to the former idealism of pastoral society and the heroic feudalism of antiquity, characterized by an inhuman, intolerant village where cruelty, incest, lechery, avarice, adultery and amorality reign.

Divinas palabras depicts not only the Galicia traversed by Valle-Inclán, but also a mythical province that reflects a “transcendental reality,” a surrealism of a primitive, picaresque society portrayed in scenes of lasciviousness and death that evoke opposing forces of a diabolical

watershed and spiritual virtue (Lavaud and Lavaud 84). The eponymous divine words that allude to the miraculous Latin phrase of the *dénouement* are reminiscent of the chapter, *El milagro musical*, from *La lámpara maravillosa* (1916), an anthology of esthetic essays (Lavaud and Lavaud 86). Paradoxically, the village, characterized by pagan instincts and seeking chastisement of the adulteress, obeys the magical semantics of the Latin command without comprehension, resulting in a solemn catharsis that witnesses the refuge of the adulteress in the sanctuary of a church. This play has been considered “the best work of the Spanish theatre since the Golden Age,” as well as one of the first performed in French existentialist theatre (Lavaud and Lavaud 86). In other respects, this work represents a precursor to the *tremendismo* genre, characteristic of the post-Civil War period and personified by Camilo José Cela (Nobel Prize, 1989).

According to Valle-Inclán, the esthetic of the *esperpento* comprises a dynamic language emanating from an ancient world of three centuries, a Castilian that would function as a *liaison* with his epoch. Moreover, he expresses that the rest of Europe had surpassed Spain, a political judgment which he translates in *Luces de Bohemia*: “Spain is a grotesque deformation of European civilization” (Lavaud and Lavaud 102). Having witnessed the progress of the Russian Revolution and the decomposition of Spain, harbinger of a subsequent revolution, Valle-Inclán anticipated the regeneration of Spain through a new linguistic ideology, forged by lexical familiarity, slang, vulgarity and neologisms, an evolutionary language that would correlate the dynamism of intellectuals and countrymen.

Concerning the use of a new linguistic ideology, the dialogue of *Divinas palabras* reveals an aberrant psychology that yields instinctive actions based on greed, lust, egoism and jealousy, and reflects a collective consciousness, a verisimilitude of the immorality and spiritual alienation

of a primitive society (Soler 62). The world of misery, poverty and cruelty that characterizes *Divinas palabras* also reveals depraved actions, counterpoised by religious beliefs and social conventions, that singularize the individual psychology of the elemental characters expressed through distinct characteristics and function in their disparaging environment: Mari-Gaila, Séptimo Miao and Pedro Gailo, personages whom the author portrays *en relieve*. In addition, critics have distinguished that the sacristan, Pedro Gailo, epitomizes the deformation characteristic of the *esperpento* tradition: «*un viejo fúnebre, amarillo de cara y manos, barbas mal rapadas*» (Soler 62) [a funereal old man, jaundiced face and hands, badly shaven beard]. These distinctive characters signal the advent of the *esperpento*, as well as the work of transition that *Divinas palabras* represents and from which a spiritual and universal ambience emanates, an atmosphere where base passions and instinctive impulses reign in pursuit of survival. In addition to the goblins and witches that characterize Galician mythology, the apparition of superstitions and magic permeates the world of *Divinas palabras* and juxtaposes religious traditions and customs, such as fairs, pilgrimages, vigils and funerals which function as conformity, opposed to disgrace and fear of justice (Soler 63).

Moreover, Valle-Inclán affirmed that the dialogue of the stage, analogous to the Gricean concept that advocates a lack of redundancy and adherence to relevancy, represents «*diálogo y vida*», as opposed to «*este mundillo de bastidores*» [this small world of behind the scenes], characterized by artificiality (Warner 40). In addition, Grice's theory of discourse as an approach to theatre dialogue links context with themes to the critical interpretation of drama in which the plausibility of the dialogical exchange results in theatrical and realistic *repartée*. The following examples illustrate the heroine of *Divinas palabras*, employing a feint that precedes a rejection of her interlocutor's proposals:

El ciego de Gondar. Y verás tu provecho si te pones en un acuerdo conmigo.

Mari-Gaila. De acuerdo ya estamos, salvo que tú llames acuerdo al dormir juntos, y eso de mí no lo esperes. (Valle-Inclán 55)

[The blind man of Gondar. And you will see your advantage if you place yourself in an agreement with me.

Mari-Gaila. We are already in agreement, unless you call an agreement upon sleeping together, and that do not expect from me.]

Séptimo Miau. Usted no querrá mi muerte.

Mari-Gaila. Ni la de usted ni la de nadie. ¡Demonio fuera! ¡No me pase usted el brazo!

Séptimo Miau. ¿Tiene usted cosquillas?

Mari-Gaila. Sí, las tengo. ¡Estése quieto el amigo, que llega gente!

(Valle-Inclán 73-74)

Séptimo Miau. You will not want my death.

Mari-Gaila. Neither yours, nor anyone's. Demon, out! Don't put your arm around me!

Séptimo Miau. Are you ticklish?

Mari-Gaila. Yes, I am. Be quiet, friend, people are coming!

In both passages, the heroine ambiguously hints at accepting her interloper's arguments, and then forcefully repudiates them. Although the profligate Mari-Gaila contrasts with the young, virtuous Melibea of the dialogical *La Celestina*, as revealed in the second passage in which the

heroine's behavior borders on sexual intimacy, Mari-Gaila's rejection of Séptimo Míau compares to Melibea's rejection of Calisto's overtures.

Although the «*esperpentillo*», «¿*Para cuándo son las reclamaciones*

*It is totally impossible today to discover
an absolutely original situation. Only the
manner in which one considers it can be new
as well as the art of representing it.*

Goethe

(1749-1832)

diplomáticas?» [For when are the diplomatic reclamations?], composed of one scene that evokes the esthetic of the grotesque, contrasts the complex structure of discourse characteristic of *Luces de Bohemia* and *Divinas palabras*, this «*esperpentillo olvidado*» [forgotten] (Warner 48) reveals dialogical variation: an exchange of information that includes persuasion; meta-commentary, in which the protagonists criticize utterances; absent addressee, in which an interlocutor is not present; and meta-theatrical language, in which the author provides information about the

protagonists and their world through «*acotaciones*» [annotations] (Warner 49). In addition, this play is reminiscent of Valle-Inclán's later dramatic techniques; specifically, those apparent in the seventh scene of *Luces de Bohemia* which satirizes the politicians and journalists of Spain, who compromise their power with regard to the release of the protagonist, Max Estrella, who has been imprisoned. Valle-Inclán also expresses the polarization of Spain («*germanófilos*» during World War I) (Warner 49), a conservative nation, toward Germany, a technologically and culturally advanced nation, as revealed by the proprietor, Don Herculano, of the provincial newspaper, *El abanderado de las Hurdes*:

Reconozco que han desplegado una técnica muy perfeccionada l[a]s canallas que asesinaron al pobre Don Eduardo. Alemania noblemente acaba de reconocerlo en el asesinato de Rathenau. La actitud alemana adoptando para el asesinato de sus grandes hombres la técnica hurdana nos fuerza a un acto de agradecimiento. (Warner 50)

[I recognize that the mobs who assassinated poor Don Eduardo have deployed a very perfected technique. Germany nobly just recognized it in the assassination of Rathenau. The German attitude, adopting the Hurdan technique for the assassination of her great men, forces us to an act of gratitude.]

This passage evokes a form of homage, in which Germany compliments Spain for having imitated her technique, similar to the Spanish military practice of duelling, a custom retained by Germany, regarded by Spain to be a superior culture.

Furthermore, *Divinas palabras*, a vision of mythic and transcendental reality in a picaresque world, evokes occultism resulting in a syncretism of superstitious beliefs and religion as hope for redemption, and an innovative language that expresses the epoch of don Ramón in order to regenerate Spain, a decomposed nation in need of a lexical ideology (Lazzarini-Dossin

86). The theory of the *esperpento* which rejects the dehumanization of ultraism and advocates the grotesque, ugly, monstrous and piercing, reveals that tragedy is impossible and the dramatic hero is deformed, revalorized and absurd (Lazzarini-Dossin 87). In fact, Valle-Inclán declared to a journalist on November 28, 1921, with regard to the influence of his art on modern theatre:

I am about to do something new, different from my preceding works. I am now writing a theater for puppets. It is something that I have created and that I entitle “*esperpentos*.” This theater cannot be played by actors, but by puppets, in the manner of the theater “*di Piccoli*” in Italy. From this genre, I have published *Luces de Bohemia* which appeared in the magazine *España* and *Los Cuernos de don Friolera* which was published in *La Pluma*. This modality consists of seeing the comic side within the tragic of life itself. Imagine a husband who would play a scene to his wife by addressing her in tirades of the style of those one finds in the theater of Echegaray? [...] Do you see this scene? Well, it would be a painful scene for them, brutal perhaps...For the spectator, it would be a simple grotesque farce. (Lazzarini-Dossin 117-18)

This reflection of Valle-Inclán, with regard to the conception of his work, reveals a connection between the *esperpento* and the theatre for marionettes, and a divergence attained between the performance and the public. Such attributes apply precisely to *Los Cuernos de don Friolera* in which behavior, attitude and scenic commentary converge to dehumanize the manipulated protagonist, a disembodied caricature reduced to a marionette. Thus, the existence of a hero in the classic sense, as well as in the theatrical sense, is rendered obsolete.

The characters of the *esperpento*, portrayed as puppets in fictional time, emerge as playthings, victims that evoke the comic fused with the tragic, resulting in parody, manifested in the Spanish tradition of blending both genres in *La Celestina*, subtitled *tragicomedia* (Lazzarini-Dossin 122). The *esperpento* also signifies a rupture in Spanish dramaturgy in the sense that Valle-Inclán ignores traditional representation; specifically, the rapport between the comedian and the audience, characteristic of the omnipresent Italian theatre, as well as the *dénouement*,

leaving the audience to draw its own conclusion (Lazzarini-Dossin 153). In addition, the *esperpento* represents destined perspectives, including the impression of Valle-Inclán with regard to his use of genres, his inclination toward subversion and the emergence of an innovative esthetic, aspects which sustain him as a Spanish *avant-garde*, who reveals a masquerade of characters in his search for truth and justice (Lazzarini-Dossin 156).

Another aspect of this new estheticism was that Valle-Inclán emphasized the use of visualization in which the characters become the focus, as opposed to authors who dominate the characters they create. In reference to the indomitable control of Proust (1871-1922), who was not a dramatist, with regard to the development of his characters, Valle-Inclán makes the analogy that, although a general observes his soldiers, he does not follow their footsteps (Bolufer 300). On the contrary, a general, as a surrogate author, knows where his soldiers have been and where they may go; he has knowledge of what has transpired and what might happen in the future. The metaphor of the general also reveals that the omniscient author constructs the characters with knowledge of their anterior life, even though this past may not appear in the narrative. This visualization of Valle-Inclán includes his writing technique, his omniscience in the creation of fictional characters, and his scenic theatricality:

Necesito ver su rostro, su figura, su atavío, su paso. Veo su vida completa anterior al momento en que parecen...De esa vida completa que yo veo primero en el pensamiento, muchas veces es muy poco lo que utilizo luego, al llevar al personaje a las cuartillas, donde a lo mejor sólo aparece una escena[.] (Bolufer 300)

I need to see their face, their figure, their attire, their walk. I see their complete anterior life at the moment in which they appear...From that complete life that I see first in thought, many times it is very little what I then use, upon bringing the character to the paper, where at best only one scene appears.

This image of the author as demiurge also evokes a sense of esthetic detachment in which the creator is an objective observer who constructs an alternate, hidden reality. This new truth reveals his knowledge and denouncement of the political and ideological essence of his literature. The criticism regarding the mythification of the idea of demiurge encompasses the development of the author as creator, equivalent to the image of God and, on the other hand, the unlimited powers of authors who seem possessed by the characters they create or dominated by the story beyond their will (Bolufer 307).

Furthermore, critical debate tends to avoid the problematic relationship between the *esperpento* and the narrative, as well as the isolation of the author from contemporary literature. Although this concept was originally exclusive to the theatre, the *esperpento* expanded to include narrative literature. Another problematic issue was the way how to classify *lo esperpento*: genre, manner, style, modality (Bolufer 311). A serious consideration becomes apparent when ulterior dramas that reflect *el esperpentismo* do not establish the model of the creator. Such dramatic works emerge as retrospective epigones, and the *esperpento* as an historical genre becomes obsolete. The most recent criticism projects the similarities of dramatic works characterized by *el esperpentismo* with European creations that evoke the tragicomic, the grotesque, the epic and the absurd; a 20th-century innovative theatre in which the *esperpento* not only reveals farce, satire and the theatre of puppets, but also an international hybrid of European tradition (Bolufer 311). This concept indicates a classification of the *esperpento* as an esthetic genre which could be realized in drama or narrative. In fact, according to Valle-Inclán, the characters encountered in narrative are as inferior to their author as those in the theatre. Zahareas reveals an oxymoron of reality acknowledged by Valle-Inclán criticism:

...teatro dentro del teatro, Theatrum mundi; deformación sistemática a lo grotesco por medio de pura estilización; una desvaloración del sentido trágico y una nueva versión fársica de las tragedias nacionales; el distanciamiento artístico, o la enajenación; momentos paradigmáticos de la moderna y «miserable» historia de España; y burlas violentas de las ideologías por medio de las cuales los españoles perciben la sociedad española.
(Bolufer 312)

[...theatre within theatre, Theatre of the world; systematic deformation in the grotesque way by means of pure stylization; a devaluation of the tragic sense and a new farcical version of national tragedies; artistic distancing, or alienation; paradigmatic moments of the modern and “miserable” history of Spain; and violent mockeries of ideologies by means of which Spaniards perceive Spanish society.]

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century also witnessed a rapport between literary criticism and the socio-cultural world in which affiliation reigned as a problematic theme, in contrast to the relationships of filiation established by such writers as Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), Thomas Mann (1875-1955) and Marcel Proust (1871-1922), vanguard authors of Modernism (Pereiro-Otero 371). Valle-Inclán, on the other hand, generated dramatic conflict revealing the leitmotif of affiliation in such works as *Vía Crucis!* (1888), *Flor de Santidad* (1904) and *Luces de Bohemia* (1920), culminating in *Divinas palabras* (1920), the tragicomedy that exposes a significant development in the crisis reflected by the modernistic social fabric, depicting an obsolete divine tapestry. The danger of illegitimacy, incest and adultery, are also portrayed by the semantic framework that paints a fragmented lattice of relationships between the brood of characters. Despite the degeneration of society as a result of affiliation, *Divinas palabras* cannot be interpreted as a moral judgment of the characters, if the thesis proposes a comprehension of their circumstances. According to Pilar Cabañas, «*Valle no construye un universo ni moral ni antimoral, sino simplemente amoral*» (Pereiro-Otero n.p.). In the realm of semiotics, the significant development of the social tapestry contradicts the

difficulties of interpretation, analysis and insignificant passages, as well as morality, propagated by other literary critics. Another criticism further suggests that the play is ambiguous and deficient in intellectual view, and renders a problematic analytical perspective due to lack of action.

Contrary to this criticism, *Divinas palabras* reveals the principal tenets of Christianity: all human beings are sinners and that they all should examine themselves before passing judgment, accusation or condemnation on anyone else, in order to acquire understanding and pardon. The sin of avarice emerges as a leitmotiv through semantic filiation and metonymy in the character of Laureano, who is reduced to a mere object by everyone with the exception of his uncle, Pedro Gailo, who regards him as his nephew and wishes him a crown of lilies and the prayer of an angel, evoking an attitude of religiosity, upon the orphan's death, a portrait more human than grotesque. The vision of the fallen woman, Mari-Gaila, also becomes a metaphoric epiphany in which the veil of reality exposes «*la enorme cabeza de EL IDIOTA, coronada de camellias, se le aparece como una cabeza de ángel*» (Valle 136-37) [the enormous head of the idiot, crowned with camellias, appears to her like a head of an angel]. Moreover, the death of Laureano witnesses a *dénouement* in the leitmotiv of filiative avarice borne by the economic *ménage à trois*: the hero, Pedro Gailo; his sister, Marica del Reino; and his wife, Mari-Gaila, who becomes "victorious" as a result of abusing her rights of inheritance. The irony of *Divinas palabras* reveals that the themes of filiation and affiliation depict sustenance of the social fabric (filiation), as well as the tendency to unravel it (affiliation), resulting in the decomposition of familial and social ties. According to the criticism that expounds a Christian perspective, this deficiency in filiation originates from the lack of God's presence, and redemption through

Communion would renew Christian relationships. In this sense, Valle-Inclán advocates Christianity, but not the repressive, reactionary Catholicism that dominated Spanish history.

The threatened society portrayed in *Divinas palabras* also extends to an apocalyptic collapse in which the world of affiliated characters becomes an ungoverned universe without patriarchal authority (Pereiro-Otero 11). This eschatology would result from the symptoms of destruction of the social tapestry woven in this *tragicomedia de aldea*. According to Edward Said, the cultural world of Modernism substitutes filiative bonds with affiliative relationships:

What I am describing is the transition from a failed idea or possibility of filiation to a kind of compensatory order, that, whether it is a parte institution, a culture, a set of beliefs, or even a world-vision, provides men and women with a new form of relationship, which I have been calling affiliation but which is also a new system. (Pereiro-Otero 11)

Similarly, the images evoked in *Divinas palabras* do not allude to the confinement of social order, but represent a derogatory and unsuccessful model of society.

Beyond this portrait of an affiliative society, Valle-Inclán forged a distinctive *tableau*: a grotesque dramaturgy rooted in Spanish realism and tradition, an esthetic related to the European vanguard of his era. His conception of the *esperpento*, a revolutionary theatrical discovery, witnessed a complete rupture with the European stages that reigned at that time, the dramatic heritage of the 19th century, including Romanticism and Realism. Nevertheless, Valle-Inclán died without having seen his major plays represented on the stage as a result of commercial failure, the rejection of his theater, and the subsequent political scenario of Spain which banished his works. The silence imposed by the political establishment reflected the esthetic and dramatic conservatism that characterized the theater and society of that epoch, and after the political

censure had been lifted, that painful silence endured due to incomprehension of the new esthetic and the lack of intelligence to stage unique dramas. Furthermore, European theatre, including that of Spain, developed as a result of the innovation of Valle-Inclán, which signified a revolutionary discovery in Western drama: the grotesque as stylistic key and as a vision of reality.

The dramatic trajectory of Valle-Inclán, revealed during the modernist period with *El embrujado: tragicomedia de tierras de Salnes* (1913), *Martes de Carnaval: esperpentos* (1930) (*Los cuernos de don Friolera* [1921], *Las galas del difunto* [1926], *La hija del capitán* [1927]), *Retablo de la avaricia, la lujuria y la muerte* (1927), *La rosa de papel* (1924), *La cabeza del Bautista* (1924), *Ligazón: auto para silhuetas* (1926), *Sacrilegio* (1926), and *Luces de Bohemia* (1920), represents the germinal esthetic of the grotesque culminating with his masterpiece, *Divinas palabras* (1920), a landmark *habeas corpus* of his preceding *esperpentos* without signifying a rupture or continuity of his anterior works, but rather a crystallization of a key innovation: the grotesque. The most recent literary criticism proposes that the incisive distinction between modernism and *el esperpento* does not exist; nor does the separation between two opposing periods adhere to a methodological or even enlightening criteria (Pérez 3). The *esperpento*, in fact, is included in the Modernist movement.

On the contrary, the dramatic writing of Valle-Inclán evolves as a result of the development from symbolism to expressionism, bridged by *el decadentismo*, to modernism culminating in *el esperpentismo*. Furthermore, the concept of modernism propagated by Rubén Darío (1867-1916) could be extended to include European symbolism and the French Parnassians, and constituted a revolutionary movement that witnessed a rupture with 19th century art and the development of an innovative estheticism in the 20th century, during which the

supposed extremes in the *oeuvre* of Valle-Inclán form an integral part of this movement. Moreover, these distinctions become unified, a phenomenon that renews the antiquated, traditional Spanish theatre: the post-romantic drama of Echegaray (1832-1916); the realist/naturalist theatre of Galdós (1843-1920); and the theatre of ideas of Unamuno (1864-1936) (Pérez 4). Accordingly, the dramatic theatre of Valle surpasses the restricted concept of modernism in order to find a mechanism for expressionism to reveal a vision of the world, and to manifest a stylistic innovation and theatrical language that parallel traditional modernistic writing.

Paradoxically, the theatre of Valle-Inclán reflects the esthetic of realism disguised by appearances and evoked through the concealment of reality. The drama of Valle reveals a persistent tendency to transcend the disguise and discover the truth in order to render a profound vision of reality, the hidden drama that unveils the dichotomy between the world of appearances and the plane of reality that constitute the *esperpento* and the grotesque, an esthetic vision characterized by symbolism and the sublimation of disguise to expose the veil of reality (Pérez 5). The dramaturgy of Valle-Inclán also effects a *tableau* of marionettes which substitutes parody for dramatic fiction and caricature for conventional theatricality. Ironically, the attainment of the *esperpento* results from the

*Drama is a mirror where nature is reflected. But if
this mirror is an ordinary mirror, a plane and smooth
surface, it will only reflect from objects a dull image
and without relief, faithful but faded...It is necessary
then that drama is a mirror of concentration, which far
from weakening them, collects and condenses the tinting
rays...the theater is a point of perspective.*

Victor Hugo (1802-1885)

La Préface de Cromwell

intensified approach to reality and the expressionism of an impartial narrative through which Valle achieves his distinctive drama, renovates theatrical tradition and exposes realistic truth within an ambit of personified *guiñol*.

Finally, the innovative drama of Valle-Inclán as *avant-garde* iconoclast, portrays a *tableau* of society of early 20th-century Spain through the distinction of the mythical past and realism, tragedy attained through *lo grotesco* and the rendition of the tragic hero as obsolete, universal themes and verisimilitude, linguistic ideology and dramatic technique, the leitmotiv of affiliation and *enajenamiento* (*der verfremdung* effect), and visualization and the use of stylized representation. This estheticism of the grotesque effected *la realidad esperpéntica* that parallels the collective enchainment of Zürrenmatt, as well as a genre of duality. Also, this «*tercer*

manera» of *la tragedia esperpéntica* evoked the duality of the tragic hero. *Luces de Bohemia* and *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia del aldea*, which critics regard as reminiscent of the Golden Age of Spain, represent masterpieces of a transcendental reality and surrealism, and reveal a theatre of puppets created by an omniscient author, a seminal figure of *lo esperpento*, who becomes a demiurge possessing esthetic detachment to expose a hidden reality and political and ideological denouncement. The polemics concerning the dramaturgy of Valle-Inclán ensue: the *esperpento* contrasting narrative; the isolation of the author from contemporary literature; the literary classification of *lo esperpento*; ulterior epigones that render the *esperpento* obsolete as an historical genre; and parallels of *el esperpentismo* with 20th century European theatre and narrative tradition. Other aspects of the dramaturgy of Valle-Inclán include the paradoxical leitmotifs of affiliation and filiation, the constitution of an amoral universe due to the circumstances of the characters, the semiotics of a social tapestry that contradict difficult interpretation and morality. There also exists within his dramaturgy problematic exegesis due to ambiguity, intellectual deficiency and elusiveness. Moreover, the criticism that expounds Christianity evokes a religiosity that counterposes a human portrait with the grotesque. Accordingly, a Christian perspective witnesses a deficiency due to a lack of God's presence, redemption for renewal and a *dénouement* in which a metaphoric epiphany unveils a profound reality. The revolutionary discovery of Valle-Inclán, the grotesque as an imaginary vision of life, also witnessed a crystallization of *lo grotesco* in *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia del aldea*, in which Modernism parallels *lo esperpento* and the esthetic of realism transcends disguise to discover truth. In the case of *Luces de Bohemia*, his premiere *esperpento* composed of a symbolic *tableau* of marionettes, the criticism acknowledged the concept of autobiographical portraiture, in contrast to that of demiurge. Although the masterpieces of the *esperpento*

represent a divergence from the paradigm of Western dramatic literature, this genre influenced contemporary European dramaturgy. In fact, according to recent criticism, the unification of the literary movements of the 19th and 20th centuries reflects the evolution of traditional Spanish theatre.

According to Amparo de Juan Bolufer, Valle-Inclán rejects, in general, the characterization of the 19th-century narrator, as well as the psychological novel. With regard to narrative technique in the 19th-century novel, the construction of a character via an omniscient narrator evolves through the presentation of passages and chapters that characterize directly and through previous form. This narrator also realizes the conscious of a character through soliloquy and indirect free style. The objective of the novelist is to depict a complete portrait of the psyche of a character. On the other hand, the psychological novel of the 20th century surrenders such a portrait, and witnesses the unconscious and what is submerged, relinquishing the intention to explain mental states, in contrast to the realist narrator, and offers an interior monologue, while avoiding extensive portraits. As a result, Valle proposes a discreet narrator who offers an image of the character in action. In addition to this solution, he speaks of a scenic and visual narrative, and with regard to the psychological novel, he defends the collective character, emphasizing psychology over the character, a contrary tendency, and seeks the synthesis of social classes in characters. Valle insists on visualization, wanting to see the characters directly. In a 1928 interview he reveals:

Mire usted, hay autores que siguen a sus personajes como mendigos; otros toman aire de perros olfateros; otros van a su espalda como comadres curiosonas, y otros---aquí Valle-Inclán endurece la voz y sus barbas se disponen en una mueca despreciativa---otros, como en el caso de Proust, se convierten en verdaderos parásitos. Sí, sí, Proust se pega a sus personajes como un parásito. Yo no. Yo tengo a los míos siempre de cara y no los sigo. Un general no sigue los pasos de sus soldados. Los tiene delante de los ojos, en los planos y

ve, al mismo tiempo, dónde han estado y dónde es posible que estén, lo que es y lo que puede ser. (Bolufer 300)

[Look, there are authors who follow their characters like beggars; others take the air of sniffing dogs; others go to their back like busybody gossips--- here Valle-Inclán hardens his voice and his beard aligns in a scornful grimace---others, as in the case of Proust, convert themselves into true parasites. Yes, yes, Proust sticks to his characters like a parasite. I do not. I have mine always face front and do not follow them. A general does not follow the steps of his soldiers. He has them in front of his eyes, on the plains and sees, at the same time, where they have been and where it is possible that they may be, what is and what can be.]

The image of the general on the plains had appeared in the prologue of *La Media Noche* eleven years previously in 1917. The author requires full knowledge of his characters and needs to construct them with their past, although this may not appear in the narrative. However, this visualization seems to be related more with the techniques of writing and creation of Valle-Inclán and with the complete knowledge of the author than with the theatrical character, resulting from a scenic conception. A preference for dialogue, visualization, absence of interference, or disinterest in the character constitutes interpretations for this impassiveness concerning the character. Regarding disinterest in the character, the impassiveness is derived from the author, who adopts a position of superiority and does not want to be confused with his figures. The thought of Valle-Inclán that ties literary techniques and national traditions offers that the “cruel” way, as opposed to sentimental, originates from the Spanish form of understanding pain (Bolufer 300). When characters and men do not render tragic expression as a result of fatality and pain, which are the same in all epochs, the *esperpento* represents a compromise of the author with society and knowledge that he is capable of having a profound vision, a concept reiterated by Valle-Inclán. Furthermore, distance between the author and his characters originates in

stoicism, such as knowledge that everything will pass away and the understanding of death, which is transmitted via sentimental “modesty”: the impassiveness of the demiurge:

El creador no fraterniza con los seres que crea: permanece ajeno a ellos, sobre ellos. La crueldad tan característica de la literatura nuestra, procede de eso: de que el autor que está por encima de sus personajes le son indiferentes los dolores de los personajes esos; sólo conmueve el infortunio de los iguales.

El pueblo español, individualista y aristocrático, encuentra bien esa tendencia artística. Por eso ríe de muy buena gana comedias que tienen por objeto hacer burla de personajes desventurados: cegatos, sordos, maestros hambrientos...
(Bolufer 306)

[The creator does not fraternize with the beings that he creates: he remains alien to them, over them. Cruelty so characteristic of our literature, proceeds from that: from that the author who above his characters are indifferent to him the pains of those characters; he only disturbs the misfortune of equals.

The Spanish town, individualistic and aristocratic, encounters well that artistic tendency. As a result, he laughs with much pleasure comedies that have as their object to make fun of unfortunate characters: shortsighted, deaf, hungry teachers...]

Distance does not only allow a comprehensive vision, but also implies superiority of the creator and deformation of the character.

The dramatic forms of European theatre of the 20th century, from Jarry to Brecht and Artaud to Ionesco and Becket, emerged in response to the necessity of rupture with theatre arts of appearance or illusion from realism. In contrast, the *esperpento* represented a reality in which desire could express simultaneously the condition of the grotesque and the tragic of the existence of the individual in society. In fact, in the scheme of western theatre, the *esperpento* should have been the link between

“pataphysical theatre,” “epic theatre,” “theatre of cruelty” and “theatre of the absurd” (Hormigón 115). The structural originality of the *esperpento* consists in expressing the dialectic between the theatrical figure of the classical hero and his daily functioning within a dehumanizing system, a crucible of the new theatrical character, having tragic and grotesque dimensions in a reality that included its own literary representation through the integration of diverse ways of devaluation from reality: parody, satire and caricature.

Concerning the art of Valle-Inclán, four elements can be distinguished in his literary production: the ambivalent relationships between fictitious situations and historical realities; the subtle relationships between each work and their literary sources; the indirect relationships between this literary production and the ways of cultural production in the moment, such as the plastic arts, the movies, the vanguard movements, architecture, fashion, popular theatre and music; and the internal relationships between fictitious contents and the perspective to transmit such contents to the public. The essential aspect of these relationships is the structuring of each genre in order to communicate the identified problems of Spain, having signification for the contemporary time as for the future. The difficulty for the public as receiver, as well as for the critic and the reader or spectator, is the deficiency in preparation to understand certain cultural and textual problems. Specifically, these problems arise from the use of synthetic language, artificial effects, the fusion of genres, historical allusions within fictitious discourse, notorious ideological discrepancies, modernist projection, and the pastiche-mosaic montage. Other cultural and textual misunderstandings emerge from the bohemian and anarchist background, symbols of the occult, vanguard experiments, and the mutual dependence of pure literary forms with historical references or allusions (Cardona y Zahareas 123). It is also essential to examine the multiple genres elaborated by Valle-Inclán via a historical analysis of the perspective of each

of his works, from his short narrations to his grotesque visions, distinguishing the ways of viewing the world which, according to Valle-Inclán, have changed parallel to historical evolution: «*la sonata, la comedia bárbara, la novela carlista, la farsa, el esperpento, el tablado de marionetas, el auto, la narración montaje*» (Cardona y Zahareas 123).

According to Humberto Arenal in *Seis dramaturgos ejemplares*, the esperpento is characterized by ugliness, grotesqueness and the ridiculous, by which Valle-Inclán defined a reality which he was forced to denounce, perhaps in an effort to change it. The following dialogue from *Luces de Bohemia* distinctly expresses the author's esthetic:

Max. Don Latino Hispalis, grotesco personaje, te inmortalizaré en una novela.

Don Latino. Una tragedia, Max.

Max. La tragedia nuestra no es tragedia.

Don Latino. Pues algo será.

Max. El esperpento.

Don Latino. No tuerzas la boca, Max.

Max. Don Latino Hispalis, grotesque character, I shall immortalize you in a novel.

Don Latino. A tragedy, Max.

Max. Our tragedy is not tragedy.

Don Latino. Well, something will be.

Max. The esperpento.

Don Latino. Don't twist your mouth, Max.

Valle-Inclán utilizes his characters to express his definition of the esthetic with clarity. In contrast to the *esperpento* being a determined genre, this esthetic represents a twisted vision of reality. His new esthetic remains expressed thus:

Don Latino. ¡Estás completamente c[ru]d[o]!

Max. Los héroes clásicos reflejados en los espejos cóncavos dan el Esperpento. El sentido trágico de la vida española sólo puede darse con una estética sistemáticamente deformada.

Don Latino. ¡Miau! ¡Te estás contagiando!

Max. España es una deformación grotesca de la civilización europea.

Don Latino. ¡Pudiera ser. Yo me inhibo!

Max. Las imágenes más bellas en un espejo cóncavo son absurdas

Don Latino. You are completely crude!

Max. The classical heroes reflected in concave mirrors give the Esperpento. The tragic sense of Spanish life is only able to give itself with a systematically deformed esthetic.

Don Latino. Meow! You are infecting yourself!

Max. Spain is a grotesque deformation of European civilization.

Don Latino. It might be! I abstain!

Max. The most beautiful images in a concave mirror are absurd.

Thus, the esperpentic esthetic is exposed through a violent tone characterized by hopelessness, which also appears in the trilogy of *Martes de Carnaval*: *Las galas del difunto*, *Los cuernos de don Friolera* y *La hija del capitán*. These esperpentos teach that humor serves to emphasize what is criticized and that the tragic sense of life is revealed through a concave mirror, while farce is characterized by the grotesque, sustained by horror and a sense of the ridiculous.

Valle-Inclán manifested extraordinary wealth in his dramatic production as an innovator, liberating the Spanish stage from traditional bonds and archaic forms and influencing the expressionistic esthetic and the new form he invented: *el esperpento*. The element of grotesque deformation influences the cruelty and horror, characteristics of *el esperpento*. *Divinas palabras* and *Luces de Bohemia* represent the most performed theatrical works of Valle-Inclán, as well as the dramas that have most attracted criticism due to the themes of collective sorrow, suffering that characterizes man's existence, and conflict of various painful existences resulting from the current of life (Velarde 131). *Divinas palabras* is characterized by some elements of superstition and witchcraft, such as the pact Séptimo Miau and his dog, Coimbra, possess and which is actually superstition disguised as illusion. A character who could be classified as evil is the Trasco Cabrío, who mystically transports Mari-Gaila to her doorstep with the cart of the hydrocephalic dwarf. Nevertheless, this vision that includes a group of witches witnesses a reduction in terror due to a sensation of familiarity that results in an impact that would have produced horror and cruelty in preceding works. Rita Posse observes:

Al lado de El embrujado cabe situar otra obra: Divinas palabras, donde nuevamente surge el misterioso mundo de la superstición: el aire de muerto portador de un poder maléfico, el valor sacral del agua bendita, el desgarrador planto funerario, descripciones de mortajas, de nuevo los trasgos, brujas y maldiciones. (Velarde 133)

At the side of *El embrujado* it is fitting to situate another work: *Divinas palabras*, where the mysterious world of superstition newly surges: the air of the dead, bearer of a maleficent power, the sacral worth of the holy water, the heartrending funeral, descriptions of shrouds, again dwarves, witches and curses.

Thus, the effects of superstition and magic in *Divinas palabras* do not disguise their spectacular intention, but inflame sexual passion while witnessing conflict. This *tragicomedia* also witnesses lust become promiscuity, and the abandonment of moral and religious concerns. From an esthetic perspective, horror and cruelty appear in *Divinas palabras* through distortion and deformation of the natural toward the horrible, yielding the most abject instincts of man, including adultery, obscenity, avarice, incest, ostentation, cowardice, vanity and deceit.

The plot of *Divinas palabras* represents an awakening of avarice and lust which dominates all of the characters of the drama and conditions their sordid reality. In contrast to a classic conflict, characterized by an exposition, a crucial point and a *dénouement*, the intrigue emerges as a reflection of the complexity of a disordered life (Velarde 135). The conflictive background revolves around a hydrocephalic dwarf, Laureano, and his mother, Juana la Reina, who is also a dwarf and promenades him at fairs and pilgrimages in their search for alms. The cruelty surges through the relationships of the characters with Laureano, a cruelty that verges on sadism, especially in the death scene. This grotesque art of Valle-Inclán, possessing an affinity for the abnormal, reflects expressionist writers from *Ubu, Roi* (1896) by Jarry, to *The Metamorphosis* (1915) by Kafka. Similarly, Valle-Inclán uses the repugnant deformation of the child to intensify the cruelty and the horror. The monstrous visage of the innocent victim augments the horror and repugnance through repeated descriptions, particularly considering the indifference of his family and the entire town. This double shock of horror and cruelty renders the baseness of the characters with regard to their relationship with the victimized dwarf. The first incidence in which horror and cruelty converge in the drama is the death of Juana la Reina when her relatives meet to determine the fate of her son, Laureano. The grotesque judgment accentuates the horror, because of the scheme to profit by marketing the cart, and realizes the

cruelty through the indifference of Mari-Gaila and Marica del Reino. The aspects of horror and cruelty reunite when no one is concerned about the child and everyone celebrates the agreement of the cart and prospective earnings. The cruelty and horror of the *tragicomedia* are characterized by formidable intensity through the childlike attitude of the characters, who seem to be unable to discern between good and evil. In addition to the avarice and lust that motivate this gallery of sordid characters, the murder of the deformed child represents one of the most horrific, cruel and repugnant scenes of the drama. This scene reveals inhuman cruelty: Mari-Gaila through her absence and disconcert, entrusting the child to Rosa la Tatula, an old beggar woman, while the former reconvenes with Séptimo Miau; and Ludovina, the tavern keeper, through her significant indifference. The abhorrent vision of the murdered child intensifies the horror of the crime:

El enano había tenido el último temblor. Sus manos infantiles, de cera oscura, se enclavijaban sobre la colcha de remiendos, y la enorme cabeza azulenca, con la lengua entre los labios y los ojos vidriados, parecía degollada. Las moscas del ganado acudían a picar en ella. (Valle-Inclán 87-88)

The idiot stops shaking. His tiny, dark, waxen hands are locked together above the patched blanket, and his bluish head, with glazed eyes and tongue hanging out, appears decapitated. The flies swarming around the cattle have already gathered around the corpse. (Valle-Inclán 56)

The monstrous aspect of the victimized child functions as a mirror that reflects the ugliness of his executioners. Moreover, *Divinas palabras* is the only work by Valle-Inclán in which faith, although superstitious and atavistic, saves a character, Mari-Gaila, from certain death, contrasting the sordidness that reigns in the *tragicomedia*.

The *esperpento* signifies the culmination of efforts of Valle-Inclán to create a new dramatic genre in the expressionistic period of his theatre, an esthetic that uses deformation to show how the most conservative groups impose a form of life, a political ideology and a system of values determining good and evil. The objective of the *esperpento* is to reject this hypocrisy. The political and social crisis, forged over centuries, exploded at the end of the 19th century with the disorder of the war of Cuba, a disaster which had strong repercussions among the masses and produced a series of national and international incidents, which in turn caused chaos and reprisal, as well as socialist and communist perspectives. As Ortega y Gasset observed: «*Venimos, pues a la conclusión de que la historia de España entera, y salvas fugaces jornadas, ha sido la historia de una decadencia.*» [We come, well, to the conclusion that the history of Spain informs, and saved, fleeting journeys have been the history of a decadence.] (Velarde 146) This condition of chaos in Spain had represented a motive of criticism throughout her literature, from the times of Quevedo to those of Pío Baroja, including Mariano José de Larra, precursor of the vision that inspired the writers of the Generation of 98. This chaotic situation also impelled Valle-Inclán to have his art take a new course with respect to the *esperpentos*:

V.I., al crear el esperpento, no sólo empleó una técnica deformadora, que tenía ya una larga historia en su arte y aún más largos antecedentes en la literatura española, sino que la utilizó para ofrecernos su visión expresionista de España, de la España de su tiempo y de la de todos los tiempos, buceando en las entrañas de su ser para atrapar los temas fundamentales de su vida. (Velarde 147)

V.I. [Valle-Inclán], upon creating the *esperpento*, not only employed a deformative technique, that already had a long history in his art and still longer antecedents in Spanish literature, but utilized it to offer us his expressionist vision of Spain, of the Spain of his time and of all times, diving in the entrails of his being to catch the fundamental themes of his life.

With regard to the criticisms of the dramaturgy of Valle-Inclán and his *esperpento*, several are noteworthy. Francisco Ruiz Ramón considers three periods in the work of Valle-Inclán: the mythic cycle, the cycle of farce, and the esperpentic cycle. Emilio González López offers terms of triple influence: decadentism, symbolism, and expressionism. In comparison, Guillermo Díaz Plaja adheres to a triple vision: mythic vision, ironic vision, and heartrending vision. Also, according to Emilio González López, the nature of the *esperpento* is fundamentally tragic, separated from farce and approaching tragedy. In contrast, José Ramón Sender cannot classify the *esperpento* as the genre of tragedy, nor as farce, but rather as both at the same time in a reciprocal relationship. Also, the *esperpento* represents a different literary technique which becomes perfected from *Luces de Bohemia*, but which constitutes in reality the result of a process in the production of Valle-Inclán, in which a genre becomes an esthetic (Thomas 50). For Antonio Risco, the *esperpento* recalls not only the four designated plays by

Valle-Inclán, but also *Farsa y licencia de la Reina Castiza*, *La rosa de papel*, *La cabeza del bautista*, *Ligazón*, *Sacrificio*, poetry, such as *La pipa de Kif*, and novels, such as *El ruedo Ibérico* and *Tirano Banderas*, all of which share esperpentic elements.

According to Monique Thomas, the *esperpento* also represents an avatar of the tragicomedy that echoes the Spanish tradition of the blend of genres, beginning with *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas. In his *Arte Nuevo de hacer comedias*, Lope de Vega addresses «lo trágico y lo cómico mezclado» (“the tragic and the comic mixed”) (Thomas 70). And in 1612, Ricardo de Turia declared: «ninguna comedia de cuantas se representan en España lo es sino tragicomedia, que es un mixto formado de lo cómico y lo trágico» [no comedy of how many are represented in Spain is it except tragicomedy, which is a mixture formed of the comic and the tragic] (Thomas 71). Similar to the *esperpento*, this tragicomedy is a specifically Spanish genre. Moreover, the characters of the *esperpento* are characterized by an atrophy of discourse, yielding to action that approaches the *guignol* and the Italian *commedia dell’arte*. To quote Valle-Inclán from an interview published in the *ABC* in 1927:

He dicho solamente que no quiero escribir para el teatro, para los cómicos españoles de ahora. El teatro es lo que está peor en España... Hay que hacer un teatro de muñecos... ¿Ha visto alguna vez, en un ferial gallego, el juego de títeres de un bubulú? Ese tabanque de muñecos, sobre la espalda de un viejo prosero, para mí, es más sugestivo que todo el retórico teatro español. (Thomas 73)

I have only said that I don't want to write for the theatre, for the Spanish comics now. The theatre is what is worse in Spain...It is necessary to do a theatre of puppets...Have you sometimes seen, in a Galician fair, the game of puppets? That stand of puppets, over the back of an old man of prose, for me, is more suggestive than all the Spanish theatre rhetoric.

Although the dramaturgy of Valle-Inclán evolved over the years, his theatrical works are characterized by the following elements: an emphasis on visual orientation; episodic construction; nostalgia for a chivalric ideal; mystical aspects; descriptive, poetic stage directions; and characters less psychologically developed than dictated by their social status. His plays that precede World War I include tragedies, farces and historical dramas, many of which reveal influences of *modernismo*, such as preciosity, fairytale images and pursuit of an ideal of beauty, and Symbolism, derived from Richard Wagner's synthesis of the arts and Maurice Maeterlinck's spiritualism. *Cenizas* (1899), his first play, revised as *El yermo de las almas: Episodios de la vida íntima*, represents a melodrama on adultery with a realistic perspective. *El Marqués de Bradomín* (1902), a novel having autobiographical overtones, also concerns adultery; however, Galician folklore provides the background for an innovative dramatic approach. With regard to the characteristic of descriptive stage directions, those of *Comedias bárbaras*, a trilogy, are so imaginative that they do not conform to theatrical convention during Valle-Inclán's era.

Although *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea* and *Luces des Bohemia* were written before he coined the term *esperpento*, they reveal elements of *esperpentismo*. According to the blind poet, Max Estrella, the protagonist of *Luces de Bohemia*, "My current aesthetic is to transform classical norms through the mathematics of a concave mirror" (Parker 466). These plays manifest *esperpentismo* as realism in which grotesque aspects of life are magnified, and the horrible and humorous are superimposed. The spectrum of characters in *Divinas palabras*, for

example, could be viewed as amoral, uninhibited, cruel, hypocritical and evoking a gallery of human vices.

Among the critical analyses of *Luces de Bohemia*, Valle-Inclán's first *esperpento* with a contemporary background, are traces of the literary influences of Cervantes, Shakespeare and Maeterlinck. The interpretation of John Lyon of the play as a study of "the relationship between society and the artist, specifically the metamorphosis of the heroic into the absurd under the influence of a trivialized and grotesque social context," offers a societal perspective of this *esperpento* (Parker 468). In comparison, Sumner M. Greenfield views the play as "a confrontation between the Bohemian poet and the institutionalized world," and Zahareas observes the ideal of tragic heroism as a fiasco, on personal and national levels, transforming noble values "into the grotesque gestures of puppets" (Parker 468). Also, Domingo Ynduráin heralds two hallucinatory moments that signal Max's rejection of heroism. The first occurs in Scene 1 in which he informs his wife that his eyesight has suddenly been recovered, and the other takes place at the end of Scene 9 which relates the vision of Paris. During both of these moments, the vision of beauty and plenitude is ephemeral. Finally, according to Juan Antonio Hormingón, this *esperpento* represents a deromanticization of Bohemian life, the narration evoking the realization that culminates in death, as opposed to social action.

Max Estrella's nomadic existence during the first eleven scenes of the play witnesses his observation of his surroundings and, ultimately, his identification with the senselessness of his world. As a result, he evolves from the supreme poet poised with dignity to an observant extra on the stage of life, whose death Lyon views as a triumph of farce over tragedy. Despite his classical, heroic stature, his behavior is, ironically, passive, allowing Don Latino to lead him and reacting to people and events as they transpire. Although his trajectory seems without purpose,

Max, the poet, commands attention, and the play becomes an expressionistic projection of his experience of reality. Although his blindness accounts for deformities in his reality, a symbolic interpretation would yield a “superior vision” (Parker 469). The gravedigger scene echoes Shakespeare, and Max’s evening excursions on broken glass with the approaching sounds of police sirens and rioting mobs parallel the apocalyptic *King Lear*. This portrait of society depicts an attitude of irreverence toward its artists and geniuses.

The metaphor of concave mirrors represents a reflection of the *esperpento*, a deformed vision of reality, as expressed by Max Estrella in *Luces de Bohemia*:

«Los héroes clásicos reflejados en los espejos cóncavos dan el *Esperpento*. El sentido trágico de la vida española sólo puede darse con una estética sistemáticamente deformada.» (Santoro 1)

[The classical heroes reflected in concave mirrors give the *esperpento*. The tragic sense of Spanish life can only be given with a systematically deformed aesthetic.]

The *esperpento* alienates the reader from characters bereft of compassion and who evoke an inhospitable social and economic environment, and represents nonconformity with an antiquated, established cultural system relative only to those in power. The *esperpento* as drama subverts the *bourgeois* world of comedy and melodrama, transporting human sentiment to the cruelty of vulnerability and victimization of man. Although farce, satire and parody diminish the dramatic intensity of the *esperpento*, avarice, lust, envy, ignorance and cruelty characterize the personages who appear in these plays. *Divinas palabras* represents a transitional play between the author’s modernist period and his developed *esperpentos*. Valle-Inclán regarded *Luces de Bohemia* as his

first *esperpento*, and *Divinas palabras* has elements that express this esthetic. According to Pérez Minik:

Es difícil encontrar en todo el teatro europeo de todos los tiempos una obra más desagradable, negra y atrevida. Tiene algo de romance de ciego, mucho también de juego espectacular de escarnio...La disputa del carretón, por todo un pueblo miserable y envilecido, en que dormita el hijo de Juana la Reina, el enano hidrocéfalo, con el que la familia mendiga por caminos y romerías, es un tema de tal envergadura social que asusta y entenebrece el ánimo mejor plantado. (Santoro 2)

[It is difficult to encounter in all the European theatre of all times a work more disagreeable, black and bold. It has something of blind romance, also much of spectacular game of contempt...The dispute of the cart, by a whole miserable and vilified town, in which the son of Juana la Reina naps, the hydrocephalic dwarf, with whom the family begs through roads and pilgrimages, is a theme of such social scope that it frightens the best planted spirit.]

The esperpentic vision of Valle-Inclán witnesses a society deformed by social deficiencies perceived by a concave mirror that reflects the message of the deformation of Spanish rural and urban society. The two film versions of *Divinas palabras*, the Spanish adaptation by José Luis García Sánchez in 1987 and the Mexican version by Juan Ibáñez in 1977, interpret the message of Valle-Inclán. Although both adaptations utilize the metaphor of the concave mirror, they employ contrary film styles: the Spanish version uses a classic realist style, whereas the Mexican adaptation chooses an expressionist film esthetic. The Spanish film version, a narration and realistic *mise-en-scène* that precludes a portrait of idealized village life in the countryside of rural Galicia, exposes the unrelenting and bitter message of the *esperpento*.

Valle-Inclán also reveals psychological aspects in *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea*, a provincial drama which some critics distinguished as the masterpiece of the *esperpento*,

personifying amorality, abandonment of inhibition, cruelty and a gallery of human vices.

Divinas palabras counterpoints Christian morality against human instinct and libido. In Act II, Mari-Gaila, the female protagonist who bears the hydrocephalic dwarf, has an encounter with the Trasgo Cabrío (“goatlike goblin”), the mythological image of Pan that reflects the devil in Christianity, during a «*noche de luceros*» (“night of bright stars”) which represents a metaphor and an oxymoron that alludes to the male protagonist, Lucero, an alternate figure of Lucifer, who does not evoke radiance or brilliance (Lima 168). Her carnal thoughts manifest the Trasgo Cabrío and, although Mari-Gaila endeavors to dispel the evil with folkloric incantations and scriptures, the devil entices her with the *Osculum infame*, the rite for her to kiss his hind quatrers, as a witch who pledges his service. Convinced of the power of the Trasgo Cabrío, Mari-Gaila succumbs to his temptations and his promise to fulfill her destination in which she inadvertently finds herself on a rapturous journey of illicit seduction and carnal ecstasy. Act III witnesses the climax and *dénouement* of this *esperpento*, the temporal fornication between Mari-Gaila and Lucero, who abandons her after having been discovered by male villagers. Pedro Gailo ultimately rescues his adulterous wife from condemnation and death in a climactic scene that alludes to the biblical story of Christ who saves an adultress from death by stoning. The mystical “divine words,” “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone,” recited in Latin, transform the flagrant populace into submission (Lima 66). The sacristan then leads her through the graveyard, symbolizing the death of her former self, and into the church, symbolic of her redemption and rebirth. The following passage from Act I, Scenes I and II, in San Clemente near Viana del Prior, is a revelation of Lacan’s *autre*, a reflection of the Ego which Freud had previously designated as «*der Andere*»:

Poca Pena. ¿Qué estás ideando? ¡No te pido correspondencias para mí, te pido que tengas entrañas de padre!

Lucero. ¡Porque las tengo!

Poca Pena. Si el hijo me desaparece, o se me muere por tus malas artes, te hundo esta navaja en el costado. ¡Lucero, ne me dejes sin hijo!

Lucero. Haremos otro.

Poca Pena. ¡Ten caridad, Lucero!

Lucero. Cambia la tocata.

Poca Pena. ¡Escapado de un presidio!

Miguelín. ¡Y mirando que tanto tiene corrido, no será mejor que renuncie a estos cuartos!

El Compadre Miau. Maricuela, cambia la tocata. Aún estoy por reclamarte un recuerdo en el escaló de la Colegiata de Viana.

Miguelín. Si por sospechas fui a la cárcel, por estar sin culpa, a la calle me echaron.

El Compadre Miau. ¿Recuerda usted una ocasión en que estábamos con chanzas en la taberna del Camino Nuevo?

Miguelín. ¡Coplas!

El Compadre Miau. Coimbra le ha designado como de aquel negocio.

Miguelín. ¡Coplas! (Valle-Inclán 14-15, 27-28)

Poca Pena. What's going through that disgusting mind of yours? I'm not asking for anything for myself, I'd just like you to show some paternal instinct every now and then!

Lucero. That's what I'm doing!

Poca Pena. If my son disappears or dies through any of your doing, I'll stick this knife between your ribs. Don't take my child, Lucero!

Lucero. We'll have another.

Poca Pena. Show some pity, Lucero!

Lucero. Drop it!

Poca Pena. Jailbird!

Miguelín. You wouldn't want the bother of this cash if you were on the run!

Comrade Miao. Drop the subject! Or would you rather I drew your attention to a recent hit and run job on the church in Viana.

Miguelín. I was held overnight on suspicion, then released the next morning for lack of evidence.

Comrade Miao. Do you remember just after that when we were having a few drinks at the bar in Camino Nuevo?

Miguelín. Well?

Comrade Miao. Well, Coimbra implied that you'd done the job.

Miguelín. Rumours!] (Valle-Inclán 6, 14-15)

The character of Lucero in Act I, Scene I, an alienating father and abusive lover, who had once killed for Poca Pena, transforms into Comrade Miao in Act I, Scene II, who threatens to implicate Miguelín in the recent robbery at the church in Viana. This transformation represents *autre* as «*objet petit*» in which the perceived image is derived from others, as well as identification of the self. The *autre* also represents the specular reflection which composes the Imaginary Order or the construction of identity.

The revelation of the fate of Juana la Reina, a dwarf who possessed the cart bearing her son, Laureano, the hydrocephalic dwarf, appears in Act I, Scene III, in which Mari-Gaila, the beautiful female protagonist, who will endure a similar fate, addresses her unappealing daughter, Simoniña, in a mourning elegy following the death of Juana la Reina:

Mari-Gaila. ¡Escacha el cántaro, Simoniña! ¡Simoniña, escacha el cántaro! ¡Qué triste sino! ¡Acabar como la hija de un déspota! ¡Nunca jamás querer acogerse al abrigo de su familia! ¡Ay cuñada, no te llamaba la sangre, y te llamó para siempre la tierra, que todos pisan, de una vereda! ¡Escacha el cántaro, Simoniña!...

Mari-Gaila. ¡Ay cuñada, soles y lluvia, andar caminos, pasar trabajos, fueron tus romerías en este mundo! Ay cuñada, por cismas te despartistes de tus familias! ¡Y qué mala virazón tuviste para mí, cuñada! ¡Ay cuñada, te movían lenguas anabolenas! (Valle-Inclán 31)

[Mari-Gaila. Cast down your pitcher, Simoniña! Cast it down and mourn, mourn the cruelty of fate! Juana la Reina suffered the fate of a despot's daughter! Snatched by the earth, the downtrodden earth of the roadside, far from the bosom of the family she rejected! Cast down your pitcher, Simoniña!...

Mari-Gaila. Beloved sister-in-law, condemned in this world to roaming the streets, day after day, come rain or shine! Sister-in-law, you were driven from your family by malicious gossip! You had it in for me sister-in-law! Poisoned against your own by vicious tongues!] (Valle-Inclán 17-18)

Mari-Gaila tells her daughter that Juana was a victim of fate, who had rejected her family due to “malicious gossip,” and was condemned to a nomadic existence in the streets. She exclaims that her sister-in-law was a fallen woman who had a tragic fate, dying alone without confession at the side of the road. The tragedy of Juana la Reina parallels that of Bisson's Madame X, a fallen woman who had abandoned her family to save her son and husband. This revelation of the fate of Juana la Reina witnesses the appearance of Lacan's *Autre* (“Other”), as an extreme alterity comprising the Symbolic Order. Conceived as the unconscious, *Autre* was described by Freud as “the other scene.” Also, a *manque* pervades *Autre*, because a critical signifier is always missing from the trove that composes the incomplete *Autre*, the status of which remains unfulfilled.

In Act II, Scene IV, at the churchyard in San Clemente, the first reference to Mari-Gaila as a “fallen woman” and a “harlot” is made when Marica del Reino, her sister-in-law, tells her brother, Pedro Gailo, that his wife abuses him and reminds him that they had an agreement with regard to sharing the cart. After Pedro claims that this is all gossip, Marica tells him that if he stood firm, he’d have his honor and self-respect; however, Pedro exclaims that he has a weak heart and he’d have to kill Mari-Gaila, but then he’d wind up in the gallows. He feels damned by “wicked tongues,” and asks how Marica can abandon him. The following passage reveals Lacan’s concept of *Autre*, conceived as the unconscious or the Freudian *das Andere*, “the other scene,” as well as an extreme alterity:

Marica del Reino. ¿Qué fue del carretón?

Pedro Gailo. Cuanto tú sabes, cuanto sé.

Marica del Reino. ¡Así dejas que la mujer se te vaya extraviada!...

*Marica del Reino. ¡Ay hermano mío, otro tiempo tan gallo, y ahora te
dejas así picar la cresta! ¿Qué te dio esa mala mujer que de tu honra no miras?...*

Pedro Gailo. ¡Te dejas mucho llevar de calumnias, Marica!

*Marica del Reino. ¡Calumnias! ¡Ojalá lo fueran, que esa mala mujer, con su
conducta, es oprobio de nuestras familias!*

*Pedro Gailo. ¡Tanto hablar, tanto hablar, pudiese acontecer que diese fin de mi
prudencia! Ya no le queda más que el rabo...*

Pedro Gailo. ¡Ay, qué negro calabozo el que me dispones!

*Marica del Reino. ...¡Ay hermano mío, sentenciado sin remedio! ¡Cuando
quieres mirar por tu honra, te echas encima una cadena!... que solamente de considerarlo toda
el alma se me enciende contra esa mala mujer! ¡La gran Anabolena se desvaneció con el
carretón!... ¿Por qué es tan tirana la honra que te ordena cachear, en busca de esa mujer, hasta
los profundos de la tierra?*

Pedro Gailo. ¡Me entregas al pecado! ¡Me entregas al pecado!

(Valle-Inclán 68, 70-71)

[Marica del Reino. What did we agree regarding the cart?

Pedro Gailo. You know what we agreed.

Marica del Reino. Is that why you let your wife roam the country!...

Marica del Reino. Brother, I remember you as proud and virile, now you let that woman walk all over you! What has she done to make you lose all self-respect?...

Pedro Gailo. You shouldn't believe every rumour you hear, Marica!

Marica del Reino. Rumours! I wish they were rumours! That fallen woman's behavior has brought shame on our family!

Pedro Gailo. All gossip; malicious, fabricated gossip! Well, I'm getting sick of all this gossip so you'd better watch your step!...

Pedro Gailo. How can you abandon me to such a dark prison?

Marica del Reino. ...Brother, don't sentence yourself without a hope! If you want to defend your honour and self-respect, beware of those who will bind you forever in chains!... Whenever I think of it my soul cries out against that evil bitch! That great harlot's disappeared with the cart... Pride and self-respect are cruel. How can they expect you to search for this woman in the depths of the earth?

Pedro Gailo. Why have you forsaken me? Why have you forsaken me?] (Valle-Inclán 42-45)

Similarly, Act II, Scene IX, and Act III, Scene I, witness the reappearance of the reference to Mari-Gaila as a "harlot" and a "shameless whore," identifications revealed as *Autre* ("Other"), which comprises the Symbolic Order:

Simoniña. ¡Es mi madre que está de retorno! ¡Como ella es de ley!

Pedro Gailo. ¡A saber qué achaque la trae!...

Pedro Gailo. ¿No tienes mejores palabras cuando te acoges a tu casa, descarriada?

Mari-Gaila. ¡No me quiebres la cabeza!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Más me cumplía, y era el rebanártela del pescuezo!

Mari-Gaila. ¡Loquéaste, latino!

Pedro Gailo. ¿Dónde está mi honra?

Mari-Gaila. ¡Vaya el cantar que te acuerda!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Te hiciste pública!

Mari-Gaila. ¡Hijos de la grandísima!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Prudencia!

Mari-Gaila. ¡Centellas!

Pedro Gailo. No los incitemos.

Mari-Gaila. ¡Más mereces!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Titulada de adúltera!

Mari Gaila. ¡Titulado de cabra!

Pedro Gailo. Mi alma no te pertenece.

Mari-Gaila. Bebe sin escrúpulo.

Pedro Gailo. ¡Pestilencia!

Mari-Gaila. ¡Ahí tienes sus textos, Tatula!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Mujer de escándalo!

Marica del Reino. ¡Cuñada! ¡Maldita palabra que mi lengua encadena!

Mari-Gaila. ¡Habla! ¡Tendrás tu respuesta!

Marica del Reino. ¡Malcasada!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Selle vuestra boca el respeto de la muerte! ¡Espante su presencia las malas palabras!

Marica del Reino. Y cumpleis dándosela. Pero ¡no murió en mis manos, y la sepultura no es del mi cargo!

Mari-Gaila. ¡Bruja cicatera!

Marica del Reino. ¡Malcasada!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Vete, Marica! ¡Vete de mi puerta! El sobrino tendrá su entierro de ángel. (Valle-Inclán 94-95; 107-111)

[Simoniña. It's mother! She's come back! I told you she would!

Pedro Gailo. I wonder what's brought her back!...

Pedro Gailo. You return to seek shelter in your own home and that's all you can come out with? Harlot!

Mari-Gaila. You're giving me a headache!

Pedro Gailo. Well, that easily remedied by cutting off your head!

Mari-Gaila. Go back to your Latin, this isn't you!

Pedro Gailo. What about my self respect?

Mari-Gaila. What self respect?

Pedro Gailo. You're nothing but a whore!

Mari-Gaila. Ignorant bastards!

Pedro Gailo. Watch it!

Mari-Gaila. Foul-mouthed rabble!

Pedro Gailo. Don't encourage them!

Mari-Gaila. You deserve it!

Pedro Gailo. Slut!

Mari-Gaila. Fool!

Pedro Gailo. My soul doesn't belong to you.

Mari-Gaila. Drink and forget about it.

Pedro Gailo. Plague-ridden harlot!

Mari-Gaila. Just listen to him, Tatula!

Pedro Gailo. Shameless whore!

Marica del Reino. Sister-in-law! How dare you call me sister-in-law! It chokes me to hear it!

Mari-Gaila. Go on, speak up! I've nothing to be afraid of!

Marica del Reino. Whore!

Pedro Gailo. Show some respect for the dead by keeping that mouth of yours firmly shut! I would have thought that the presence of death would have prevented such a foul outburst!

Marica del Reino. Well, go on and arrange it then. He didn't die in my care so the burial's not my problem!

Mari-Gaila. Witch!

Marica del Reino. Whore!

Pedro Gailo. Get out of here, Marica! Get away from my door! My nephew will have a funeral fit for an angel.] (Valle-Inclán 61-62; 68-71)

Act III, Scene IV, during a silent afternoon by an emerald green, sacred river of Roman history, witnesses the germination of the *skandalon*, a temptation that represents a desire, when

Miguelín el Padronés announces to the great patriarch, Serenín de Bretal, and the shepherd, Quintín Pintado, that a couple is fornicating. Also, this scene propagates Mari-Gaila, the adulteress, as an *objet de désir* through acquisitive mimesis, which escalates conflict:

Quintín Pintado. ¡Vas a bailar en camisa! ¡Vas a lucir el cuerpo!

Mari-Gaila. ¡No te me acerques tú, Caifás!

Quintín Pintado. ¡Quiero conocer esa gracia que tienes oculta!

Coro de Relinchos. ¡Jujurujú!

Mari-Gaila. ¡Sarracenos! ¡Negros del Infierno! ¡Si por vuestra culpa malparo, a la cárcel os llevo!

Una Voz. ¡No te vale esa trampa!

Otra Voz. ¡Has de bailar en camisa!

Quintín Pintado. ¡Vas a lucir el cuerpo!

Mari-Gaila. ¿Me corréis por eso, hijos de la más grande? ¡Bailaré en camisa y bailaré en cueros! (Valle-Inclán 130-31)

[Quintín Pintado. You're going to dance in your petticoats! Show off your body!

Mari-Gaila. Don't come near me, Caiaphas!

Quintín Pintado. We want to see a few of your hidden talents!

A Screaming Chorus. Jujurujú!

Mari-Gaila. Ignorant pigs! Perverts from Hell! If I miscarry because of you, I'll make sure you're all locked away!

A Voice. We're not stupid enough to fall for a trick like that!

Another Voice. Dance in your petticoats!

Quintín Pintado. Show us that body of yours!

Mari-Gaila. Is that what you really want, you bastards? I'll dance in my petticoats and I'll dance naked!] (Valle-Inclán 85)

Mari-Gaila reveals her naked whiteness to the golden river with gracious majesty and elegance, signifying that the collective perceives the victim as exalted and transcendent, dominating the persecutors.

Finally, Act III, Scene V, the last scene of the play in the churchyard of San Clemente, once again witnesses *skandalon*, a psychopathological designation rendered as obstacle or scandal and translated as *pierre d'achoppement* ("stumbling block"). Characteristic of *skandalon*, the harbingers of desire presage enslavement and victimization:

Una Voz en los Maizales. ¡Pedro Gailo, la mujer te traen desnuda sobre un carro, puesta a la vergüenza!

Marica del Reino. ¡Vas a dejar ahí las astas!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Trágame, tierra!

Rosa la Tatula. ¿A qué tercio este escándalo?

La Voz de los Maizales. ¡Que si llegaron a verla de cara al sol con uno encima!

Simoniña. ¡Revoluciones y falsos testimonios!

La Voz en los Maizales. ¡Yo no la vi!

Pedro Gailo. ¡Ni la vio ninguno que sepa de cumplimientos!

Rosa la Tatula. ¡Así es! Casos de conducta no llaman trompetas.

Una Voz. ¡Castrado! (Valle-Inclán 133-34)

[A Voice in the Cornfields. Pedro Gailo, they're bringing your wife naked, on a cart, for all to see!

Marica del Reino. That's the end of your reputation!.

Pedro Gailo. I wish the earth would swallow me up!

Rosa la Tatula. What happened?

The Voice in the Cornfields. They found her flat on her back, only she wasn't alone!

Simoniña. They're lying! It can't be true!

The Voice in the Cornfields. I didn't see it!

Pedro Gailo. Neither did anyone else who still boasts a shred of decency!

Rosa la Tatula. Too true! People shouldn't talk about such behaviour.

A Voice. Eunuch!] (Valle-Inclán 87)

Only when the sexton recites the miraculous divine words ("divinas palabras") in Latin

does the ambience of the crowd become peaceful. The Latin words have performed a miracle, since a profound religiosity alters the collective consciousness and calms the savagery:

Pedro Gailo. ¡Quien sea libre de culpa, tire la primera piedra!

Voces. ¡Consentido!

Otras Voces. ¡Castrado!

Una Vieja. ¡Mengua de hombres!

Rezo Latino del Sacristán. Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat.

Serenín de Bretal. ¡Apartémonos de esta danza!

Quintín Pintado. También me voy, que tengo sin guardas el ganado.
Milón de la Arnoya. ¿Y si esto nos trae andar en justicias?

Serenín de Bretal. No trae nada.

Milón de la Arnoya. ¿Y si trujese?

Serenín de Bretal. ¡Sellar la boca para los civiles, y aguantar mancuerna!
(Valle-Inclán 135-36)

[Pedro Gailo. He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone!

Voices. Stupid cuckold!

Other Voices. Eunuch!

An Old Woman. How can you call yourself a man!

Pedro Gailo. Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat.

Serenín de Bretal. Let's stop this and get out of here!

Quintín Pintado. I really should get back to my cattle.

Milón de la Arnoya. What if there's trouble with the law?

Serenín de Bretal. There won't be.

Milón de la Arnoya. But supposing there is?

Serenín de Bretal. Then keep your mouth shut and hope for the best!]

(Valle-Inclán 88-89)

After having appeared as a portrait of “triumphant sexuality” (Valle-Inclán 88), Mari-Gaila transforms into a serene goddess consumed by a vale of tears, while the peasants are exposed to eternal life and the liturgical spirit of the miraculous Latin words descended from the heavens. As a result, people either leave or become restrained from the angry, violent, pagan chant of the collective, and the grotesque head of Laureano appears transformed into that of an angel to Mari-Gaila, who finds refuge in the church, as her husband leads her into the sanctuary, conjured by the mysterious divine words.

In this case, violence against the subjects, Mari-Gaila and Pedro Gailo, will be imitated by others, and the collective will either repudiate, expel or kill the victims. This mimesis is characterized by unification as a result of the reconciliation of the collective, who now directs violence and hatred toward the victims. According to Le Bon, the characteristic bond that unifies this psychological group causes the acquisitions and distinctiveness of the individual to become obliterated. In this unity, the unconscious emerges, the heterogeneous submerges into the homogeneous, and the individual exhibits characteristics not formerly possessed. Moreover, the new characteristics that the individual exhibits represent manifestations of the unconscious which harbors and predisposes all evil endemic to the human mind. As a result of suggestibility, the individual loses the powers of will and discernment, commits acts that contradict his character, and surrenders feelings and thoughts to a hypnotic collective. Also, the collective blames the victim for this mimetic crisis as the personification of evil. Girard classifies the process of resolution of this crisis as the 'scapegoat mechanism,' in which the selection of the scapegoat is random and chosen based on vulnerability and marginality. The scapegoat mechanism witnesses all blame and negativity borne by the victim, who has reconciled the collective and become imbued with positive aspects. According to Girard, this paradoxical effect represents a double transference: a transference of aggression from persecutor to victim and a transference of reconciliation due to the victim implicated in a catharsis. Thus, the persecutors attribute both good and evil to the victim, who incarnates the horror of the crisis, and the collective perceives the victim, Mari-Gaila, as exalted in her figure enthroned on the cart and resplendent in her beauty, conquering her persecutors. Reconciled by violence and unified by a transcendent force, her persecutors are consumed in their religiosity, whose origin is sacrifice, or violence to eradicate the scapegoat.

Contrary to acquisitive mimesis, characterized by the appropriation of the same object, accusatory mimesis reflects a sacrificial crisis, characterized by a unanimous scapegoat that results in a violent catharsis, as in the climax of *Divinas palabras*. Asymmetrical victims, such as Mari-Gaila, become the focus of hostility of the *esprit de corps*, because they threaten the established cultural and psychological tenets of a society. Girard identifies this convergence of violence as surrogate victimage, since the aggression is transferred toward a victim who is vulnerable and available. For Girard, the concept of *skandalon* signifies a temptation that represents desire, an antithesis of Christianity. According to Judeo-Christian Scriptures, only the Cross conquers the avatar of the *skandalon*, resulting in redemption, rebirth and enlightenment, as witnessed by the divine words.

The *esperpento* reveals a distortion of reality, violence and parody, and superimposes the humorous with the horrible. *Lucas de Bohemia* constitutes the first work of Spanish literature that reveals the prospective classical hero, Max Estrella, on a pilgrimage to death, a journey that results in a collective, *la realidad esperpéntica*, as protagonist. Moreover, some critics have claimed that the hero, the most renowned poet of Spain, represents the *première* autobiographical figure to portray Valle-Inclán. The *esperpentos* of Valle-Inclán are also composed of historical realism transformed into the absurd, the result of an «*enajenamiento*», an “alienation” or an imaginary vision of Spanish society. The *esperpento* consists of farce united with tragedy from which the world of Valle-Inclán emanates, and transforms the accustomed reality into a different

vision of the human condition. Valle-Inclán referred to his new genre as «*tercer manera*», due to the duality of the tragic hero, *dramatis persona*, as both sorrowful puppet and brilliant creator.

The *esperpento* is also characterized as a theater of expressionism, depicting an imaginary universe that portrays contemporary society, the rural Galician atmosphere of the epoch of Valle-Inclán. This universe expresses themes of evil, honor, lust, greed and death that compose a work of transition: «*tragicomedia de aldea*», a *tableau* of a grotesque, dehumanized and superstitious turn-of-the-century Spanish society, repressed by Catholicism. *Divinas palabras* represents a distorted portrait of provincial, rustic life, characterized by an inhuman, intolerant village where cruelty, incest, lechery, avarice, adultery and amorality reign. This masterpiece also represents a vision of mythic and transcendental reality in a picaresque world, evoking occultism, resulting in a syncretism of superstitious beliefs and religion as hope for redemption, and an innovative language that reveals the epoch of don Ramón to regenerated Spain. The *esperpento* can be compared to a theater for marionettes, a rupture in Spanish dramaturgy, an inclination toward subversion and the emergence of an innovative esthetic: a Spanish *avant-garde*. The mythification of the demiurge encompasses the development of the author as creator, equivalent to the image of God, the oxymoron of the *esperpento* that reveals a theater within a theater, and the principal tenets of Christianity that emerge in *Divinas palabras*. The sin of avarice becomes a leitmotiv through filiation and metonymy in the character of Laureano, who is reduced to a mere object. Moreover, the vision of the fallen woman, Mari-Gaila, becomes a metaphoric epiphany: the veil of reality exposes “a head of an angel.” In fact, the death of Laureano witnesses a *dénouement* in the leitmotiv of filiative avarice borne by the *ménage-à-trois*. Thus, *Divinas* expresses themes of filiation and affiliation, depicting sustenance of the social fabric and the decomposition of familial and social ties. The discovery of the truth

is a revelation of a profound vision of reality, and unveils the dichotomy between the world of appearances and the plane of reality that constitutes *lo esperpento* and the grotesque, characterized by symbolism. The Christian perspective evokes a religiosity counterposing a human portrait with the grotesque, and witnesses a deficiency due to a lack of God's presence, as well as redemption for renewal. Also, the imaginary vision of life witnessed a crystallization of *lo grotesco* in *Divinas palabras* in which realism transcends disguise to unveil truth.

Valle-Incán rejects the characterization of the 19th-century novelist, who depicts a complete portrait of the psyche of a character, as well as the psychological novel which surrenders such a portrait, revealing the subconscious, relinquishing an explanation of mental states, and offering an interior monologue. Valle-Inclán proposes a discreet narrator, offering images of the character in action. He insists on visualization: scenic and visual narrative of the collective character, emphasizing psychology over the character and seeking the synthesis of social classes in characters, comparing the omniscient author to a general, who follows his soldiers in the past, present and future without being a parasite. The *esperpento* represents knowledge that the author is capable of having a profound vision, and the distance of the author from his characters allows a comprehensive vision, but also implies superiority of the creator and deformation of the characters. The *esperpento* also represents a reality in which desire expresses the condition of the grotesque and the tragic of the existence of the individual in society.

The esperpentic esthetic is revealed through a violent tone characterized by hopelessness, and humor emphasizes what is criticized, while the tragic sense of life is characterized by the grotesque, sustained by horror and a sense of the ridiculous. The horrific murder scene reveals the inhuman cruelty of the sordid characters, and the abhorrent vision of the murdered child intensifies the horror of the crime and functions as a mirror that reflects the ugliness of his

executioners. Moreover, *Divinas palabras* is the only work by Valle-Inclán in which faith redeems the heroine, Mari-Gaila, from imminent death. The characters of the *esperpento* approach the *guignol* and the *commedia dell'arte*, and according to Valle-Inclán, their discourse is composed of the prose of puppets which surpasses Spanish theater rhetoric.

The plays of Valle-Inclán that precede World War I include tragedies, farces and historical dramas influenced by *modernismo* and Symbolism derived from Maeterlinck's spiritualism. *Cenizas* (Ashes, 1899) represents his first melodramatic play on adultery with a realistic perspective. *El Marqués de Bradomín* (1902), an autobiographical novel, also concerns adultery, but with an innovative, dramatic approach. *Luces de Bohemia* offers a societal perspective in the relationship between the artist and society and signals Max Estrella's rejection of heroism in which the vision of beauty and plenitude is ephemeral. This *esperpento* also contrasts the romantic, Bohemian life that culminates in death, as opposed to social action. The nomadic Max Estrella continually observes his surroundings and identifies with the senselessness of his world, witnessing the evolution from supreme, dignified poet to an observant extra on the stage of life, whose death represents a triumph of farce over tragedy. Thus, the poet commands attention, and *Luces de Bohemia* becomes an expressionistic projection of his experience of reality.

The *esperpento* transports human sentiment to the cruelty of vulnerability and victimization of man, and the esperpentic vision of Valle-Inclán reflects a deformed Spanish rural and urban society. Valle-Inclán also reveals psychological aspects in *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea*, a masterpiece of the *esperpento* which counterpoints Christian morality against human instinct and libido. Act I, Scenes I and II, reveal Lacan's *autre*, a reflection of the Ego which Freud had previously designated as

«*der Andere*». The transformation of Lucero, alienating father and abusive lover into Comrade Miao, who personifies evil incarnate and threatens to implicate Miguelín in the recent robbery at the church in Viana, represents *autre* as «*objet petit*» in which the perceived image is derived from others, as well as identification of the self. The *autre* represents the specular reflection which composes the Imaginary Order or the construction of identity. The revelation of the fate of Juana la Reina, a fallen woman condemned to a nomadic existence in the streets, witnesses the appearance of *Autre* (“Other”) as an extreme alterity comprising the Symbolic Order. Conceived as the unconscious, *Autre* was described by Freud as “the other scene.” Also, a *manque* pervades the incomplete *Autre* which remains unfulfilled, because of a critical signifier that is always missing from the trove that composes the unconscious.

Act II, Scene IV, at the churchyard in San Clemente, also reveals the Lacanian concept of *Autre*, conceived as the Freudian *das Andere*, as well as an extreme alterity. Similarly, Act II, Scene IX, and Act III, Scene I, witness the reappearance of the reference to Mari-Gaila as a “harlot” and a “shameless whore,” identifications revealed as *Autre*, which comprises the Symbolic Order. Moreover, Act III, Scene IV, witnesses the germination of the *skandalon*, a temptation that represents a desire, when Miguelín el Padronés announces to the patriarch, Serenín de Bretal, and the shepherd, Quintín Pintado, that a couple is fornicating. Also, this scene propagates Mari-Gaila, the adulteress, as an *objet de désir* through acquisitive mimesis, which escalates conflict. When the sacristan leads her through the graveyard, symbolizing the death of her former self, and into the church, symbolic of her redemption and rebirth, aspects that echo acquisitive mimesis appear in which the collapse of the autonomous self becomes a revelation of death, resurrection, and enlightenment. Mari-Gaila had become the focus of

hostility of the *esprit du corps*, because she had threatened the established cultural and psychological *moeurs* of a society.

Finally, Act III, Scene V, the last scene of the play in the churchyard of San Clemente, once again witnesses *skandalon*, translated as *pierre d'achoppement*, a psychopathological designation rendered as “obstacle” or “scandal.” Characteristic of *skandalon*, the harbingers of desire presage enslavement and victimization. When the sexton recites the miraculous, divine words («*divinas palabras*») in Latin, «*Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat*», a profound religiosity alters the collective consciousness and transforms the enraged populace into submission. According to LeBon, the savage bond that unifies this psychological collective causes the unconscious to emerge which harbors all evil endemic to the human mind. Girard classifies the resolution of this crisis as the ‘scapegoat mechanism,’ in which a scapegoat is chosen based on vulnerability and marginality. The double transference represents a transference of aggression from persecutor to victim and a transference of reconciliation due to the victim implicated in a catharsis. Reconciled by collective violence and unified by a transcendent force, the persecutors are consumed in their religiosity. Thus, accusatory mimesis witnesses a sacrificial crisis, characterized by a unanimous scapegoat that results in a violent catharsis, as in the climax of *Divinas palabras*. For Girard, *skandalon* signifies the antithesis of Christianity. Moreover, according to Judeo-Christian Scriptures, only the Cross conquers the avatar of the *skandalon*, resulting in redemption, rebirth and enlightenment: the divine words.

*¡Oh, Tebaida, por donde va la senda escondida
que han seguido los pocos acuerdos que hubo en la vida!
¡Oh, soledad, en donde mi vida se hace fuerte!
bajo el áspero hocico del mastín de la muerte!
¡Oh, la luz de la estrella cayendo en el camino,
y el camino en la niebla de un oscuro destino!
¡Oh, mística fragancia de amor y de dolor!
¡Alma mía, alma mía! ¡Lirio y cardo Heridor!*

*...Y el ensueño lejano que floreció en un canto,
y a mi Psiquis dos alas le da para volar
---una ala de anarquista y otra ala de santo---,
y a mi diestra un puñado de trigo que sembrar.*

Ramón del Valle-Inclán

«Autorretrato» (1908)

[Oh, Tebaida, through where the hidden path goes
which few agreements have followed that there were in life!
Oh, loneliness, where my life becomes strong!
beneath the harsh pout of the mastiff of death!

Oh, the starlight falling on the road,
and the road in the mist of an obscure destiny!
Oh, mystical fragrance of love and sorrow!
My soul, my soul! Lily and Wounder thistle!

...And the distant fantasy that flourished in a song,
and to my Psyche gives two wings to fly
---one anarchist wing and the other saintly wing---,
---and to my right hand a handful of wheat to sow.]

Ramón del Valle-Inclán

“Self-portrait” (1908)

CONCLUSION

My research has explored two representative authors of the *Belle Epoque* from the French and Spanish traditions: Emile Zola (1840-1902) and Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936). In these authors' articulation of the tensions of the era, I locate concerns that anticipate developments in psychoanalytic theory by Freud, LeBon, Lacan and Girard. Specifically, Freud discovered the designation of the Ego and the unconscious. Also, Lacan advocated *le stade du miroir*, or a paradigm of conflictual duality between the Imaginary and Symbolic orders of meaning, *l'Autre*, or the problematic constitution of the Subject, and *désir*, an unrequited condition that is unveiled through the slippage of language. Moreover, Girard propagated accusatory mimesis, characterized by a sacrificial crisis, a unanimous scapegoat and a violent catharsis, and *skandalon*, or *pierre d'achoppement*, a psychopathological designation rendered as "obstacle" or "scandal." Lacan also adheres to Freud in the tenet that there is a *liaison* between real case studies and the literary domain.

Emile Zola brought to light dark forces within French culture, including the environmental influences of violence, alcohol and prostitution. Zola represented the culmination of Realism and Naturalism in literature and, despite the innovative, formal achievement of his fiction, he shocked many readers through his graphic depictions of violence, death, poverty and sexuality. Several late 19th-century reviewers, for example, described his work as "crude" and "pornographic," but these reviews only contributed to his notoriety (*Twentieth* 169). Ironically, during the first half of the 20th century, Zola lost favor with the critical establishment due to the shift in Modernist modes of representation. His scientific, deterministic method appeared irrelevant in a world struggling with epistemological doubts. Recent critics have tended to focus on his stylistic achievements and his treatment of social issues, especially those of gender and class.

Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Spanish dramatist, novelist, poet and essayist, in *Divinas*

palabras and *Luces de Bohemia* attacks the hypocrisy, moralizing and sentimentality of the bourgeois playwrights, satirizes the views of the ruling classes, and targets specific concepts, such as masculine honor, militarism, patriotism and attitudes to the Crown and Roman Catholic Church. He created his own genre, the *esperpento*, a satirical representation that combines elements of drama to reflect visions of horror and comedy, analogous to those of Goya. The *esperpentos* of Valle-Inclán depict contemporary life, satirizing the army, the preoccupation with jaded shibboleths, the concept of patriotism, and customs and institutions (Twentieth 470). Although many critics dislike his work for its eroticism, cruelty and bizarre themes and manner, Valle-Inclán was admired by the Spanish writers of his era and today he is recognized as one of the most influential Spanish writers of his time.

With regard to the literary works, *Nana* reflects the pernicious aspects of heredity through the invention of a heroine who portrays realistic behavior and the *demi-monde* and is a victim of an era that exploits her sexuality. Nana symbolizes opulent, debauched Paris and the decadent Second Empire and, as «*objet de désir*», is characterized by duality: «*la mouche d'or*» and «*la bête d'or*» as «*mise en abyme*» in the specular passage, or the narcissistic «*souriant à l'autre Nana*» («*Autre*»). The «*autre chose*» of Nana evokes «*l'Autre*» in the realm of reality, reflecting the myth of Nana as daughter of the slums and courtesan in the mirror. Nana's alterity exists in an «*entre-deux*» with the self, and this duality transcends an authentic self. She also inhabits an «*entre-temps*» that depicts the present emanating from past deception and becoming an illusion of the future, the reality of which she fears, yet does not expect. «*Le désir de l'Autre*» reveals the duality of lack and excess, death vs. life and truth vs. falsity. Her tragic fate is determined by the condemnation of the self and «*l'Autre*».

Nana's death represents an allegory symbolizing the turpitude of French society on the cusp of the Franco-Prussian war. Nana inhabits the register of the Symbolic Order, and the Mirror Stage wields a “transcendental signifier” to establish presence, resulting in the

restoration of narcissism. «*Le stade du miroir*» witnessed identification, effecting the formation of the Ego, and «*jouissance*» became a paradigm for the continuity of signifier / signified, an impossible fulfillment. Nana's mythic ego, the "Real," reflected a «*manque-à-être*», preventing a unity of an authentic self. Her extreme alterity («*Autre*») transcends the illusion of the Imaginary Order and resolves a rapport with «*autre*» (Ego). «*Le poème des désirs du mâle*» also reveals acquisitive mimesis and accusatory mimesis in which «*la reine soleil*» emerges as «*l'objet de désir*». The duality of Nana's psyche as «*la bonne fille*»/«*la bête d'or*» permeates «*le sacré coup d'aile*» in which the leitmotifs of universal sexuality, religiosity and royalty reign, and the *pierre d'achoppement* (*skandalon*) effects the "success" of the object of desire.

In a manner similar to the way it operates in *Nana*, the *esperpento* transports human sentiment to the cruelty of vulnerability and victimization of (wo)man, and the esperpentic vision of Valle-Inclán reflects a deformed Spanish society. Valle-Inclán also reveals psychological aspects in *Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea*, a masterpiece of the *esperpento* which counterpoints Christian morality against human instinct and libido. Act I, Scenes I and II, reveal Lacan's «*autre*», a reflection of the Ego which Freud had previously designated as «*der Andere*». The «*autre*» represents the specular reflection which composes the Imaginary Order or the construction of identity. Juana la Reina, a fallen woman condemned to a nomadic existence in the streets, reveals the appearance of «*Autre*» ("Other") as an extreme alterity comprising the Symbolic Order. Conceived as the unconscious, «*Autre*» was described by Freud as "the other scene" («*das Andere*»). Also, a *manque* pervades the incomplete «*Autre*» which remains unfulfilled, because of a critical signifier that is always missing from the trove that composes the unconscious.

Moreover, Act III, Scene IV, exposes the germination of the *skandalon*, a temptation that represents a desire, a scene that propagates the adultress/heroine, Mari-Gaila, as an «*objet de désir*» through acquisitive mimesis, which escalates conflict and in which the collapse of the

autonomous self becomes a revelation of death, resurrection and enlightenment. Finally, Act III, Scene V, revisits *skandalon*, translated as *pierre d'achoppement*, a psychopathological designation rendered as “obstacle” or “scandal.” When the sexton/hero recites the miraculous, divine words («*divinas palabras*») in Latin, «*Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat*», a profound religiosity alters the collective consciousness and transforms the enraged populace into submission. Girard classifies the resolution of this crisis as the ‘scapegoat mechanism,’ in which a scapegoat is chosen based on vulnerability and marginality. For Girard, *skandalon* signifies the antithesis of Christianity. Furthermore, according to Judeo-Christian Scriptures, only the Cross conquers the avatar of the *skandalon*, resulting in redemption, rebirth and enlightenment: the divine words.

In summary, the psychoanalytic perspectives of «*autre*» (“ego”) and «*Autre*» (“unconscious”), the concept of «*le stade du miroir*», the ideology of *désir*, mimetic theory and *skandalon* apply to the analyses of literary texts, especially those of the *Belle Epoque*. Specifically, the fundamental fantasy, the analytical crisis of satisfaction, the subjectification of drives to attain *jouissance*, the scapegoat mechanism and *skandalon* are applicable to «*La femme X...*», *Nana* and *Divinas palabras*, respectively. Moreover, with regard to mimetic theory, internal and external mimesis relate to *Nana*, and conflictual (internal) mimesis applies to *Divinas palabras*. My research has and will change the way we perceive Alexandre Bisson, Emile Zola and Valle-Inclán, as well as the *Belle Epoque*, that opulent, decadent, dynamic age that revealed the discovery of psychoanalysis. In much the same way, mimetic theory can also be applied to such literary texts as *Don Quixote*, *Madame Bovary*, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, *Le rouge et le noir* and *Notes from the Underground*, the latter which also manifests *ressentiment*. Whether Bisson, Zola or Valle-Inclán were cognizant of the works of Freud or LeBon will remain a mystery, as they were contemporaries. However, Freud, LeBon, Lacan and Girard have left a legacy with which to perceive and analyze literary texts, particularly those of

the *Belle Epoque*.

Regarding the differences during this period in France and in Spain, *Belle Epoque* Paris, where pleasure, entertainment and immorality reigned, and the music halls, *cabarets* and *cafés* of dissolute *Montmartre* flourished, manifested a coat of arms whose motto epitomized the spirit of the epoch: «*fluctuat, nec mergitur*» (“it is tossed by the waves but does not sink”), a metaphorical emblem of a sailing ship whose destination was unattainable (Willms 339). The period from 1870-1900, also identified as the Age of Materialism, synonymous to the *Belle Epoque*, witnessed the prevalence of national self-consciousness, an ethos that affected collective pathology, self-confidence and pride that characterized the consciousness of an age. The transformation in the spirit of Europe that was the *cachet* of the *Belle Epoque* also evoked a preoccupation with the conscious, as opposed to materialism, and the influence of the unconscious in man and society (Mosse 220), as well as the discoveries of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939).

At the end of the 19th century, after long and complicated meanderings, the Spanish right had completed the process of acceptance of nationalism, founded on Catholicism. «*El españolismo*» had encountered an objective that substituted the Imperial revolution and the impossible reconstruction of the Empire. After 1898, the «*regeneración*» of the country, under which were hidden very diverse political programs, and the fight against the «*separatismos*» and peripheral nationalisms ensued by colonial defeat, themes that escaped the chronology of the «*Restauración*» (“Restoration”), arrived. The Catholic congresses began to organize when the divisions of the Catholics became extreme in order to develop the response from the Church before the advance of a liberal, secularized society to remediate the division of Catholic forces. The reunited congress of Madrid (1889), Zaragoza (1890), Sevilla (1892), Tarragona (1894), Burgos (1899) and Santiago (1902) represent historic testimony of the aspirations and realizations of Spanish Catholicism at the end of the century. In 1900, when attacks against the

Church became more intense, a «*Junta Central*» was formed with the intention of coordinating Catholic forces. Fortunately, the history of Spanish Catholicism, although plagued with internal dissidence, offers admirable responses that demonstrate the creativity and energy of Catholic beliefs during the «*Restauración*» (“Restoration”). In comparison, however, both France and Spain endured overwhelming military defeats: the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 resulted in the fall of the Second Empire of Napoleon III, culminating in the declaration of the Third Republic; and the Spanish naval defeat, the «*Desastre*», that represented the complex crisis of the «*fin de siglo*» (“end of the century”) which manifests in ’98. The Spanish «*fin de siglo*» also marched to the compass of all Europe with its decadentism, Parnassians or Symbolists. The *Zeitgeist* of the *Belle Epoque* had developed as early as 1870 and enveloped Europe until 1914, harbinger of another era.

APPENDIX

CHAPTER I

1. *La Belle Époque*
2. *Maxim's*
3. *Le Moulin Rouge*
4. *Le Chat Noir* (1896)
5. *Le Lapin Agile*
6. *Marcel Proust* (1871-1922)
7. *Henri Rousseau* (1844-1910), *Un soir de carnaval* (1886)
8. «*Ubu Roi*» d'*Alfred Jarry* (1873-1907)
9. *Erik Satie* (1866-1925)
10. *Apollinaire* (1880-1918)
11. *Café de nuit à Arles* (*Arles*, September 1888), *Van Gogh* (1853-1890)
12. *Alexandre Bisson* (circa 1900) (1848-1912)
13. *Madame X* (April 27, 1966)
14. *Madame X* (1966)
15. *Madame X* (1966)

CHAPTER II

16. *Honoré de Balzac* (1842) (1799-1850)
17. *Le Lys dans la vallée* (1836), *Madame Henriette de Mortsauf avec ses enfants, Jacques et Madeleine, à la campagne*
18. *Le château de Saché, Indre-et-Loire, France: Clochegourde*
19. *Château de Saché: Salon*, 1803
20. *Château de Saché: Ly Lys dans la vallée* was written in this room
21. *Édouard Manet* (1832-1883), *The Absinthe Drinker* (1859)
22. *Absinthe*
23. *Absinthe*, a reservoir glass next to an absinthe spoon
24. RMS Titanic departing Southampton on April 10, 1912

CHAPTER III

25. *Sigmund Freud* (1856-1939), founder of psychoanalysis
26. Structural Model of the Mind
27. *Jacques Lacan* (1901-1981)
28. *René Girard* (1923-), colloquium in Paris, “End of war and terrorism”
29. *Gustave Le Bon* (1888) (1841-1931)

CHAPTER IV

30. *Édouard Manet, Emile Zola* (1868, *Musée d'Orsay*) (1840-1902)
31. *Édouard Manet, Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863, *Musée d'Orsay*), Luncheon on the grass
32. *Édouard Manet, Nana* (1877)

CHAPTER V

33. *Valle-Inclán* (1866-1936)
34. «*Divinas palabras*» (1933)
35. *Valle-Inclán* (1866-1936)

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