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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Patricia Ann McCoy entitled "The Beauties and Beasts of Nineteenth-Century French Fiction." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Modern Foreign Languages.

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**The Beauties and Beasts of
Nineteenth-century French Fiction**

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
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Patricia Ann McCoy
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Dissertation • ii

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Dr. Patrick Brady

Dr. Sarah F. Gaines

Dr. James C. Atkinson

Dr. Leslie Essif

who have given me a lifetime of challenges
and educational opportunities.

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Abstract • iv

For a number of years prior to commencing the research for this dissertation, the author of this study worked with ethnographic appropriations of popular motifs from fairy tales and myths. It was here that she first discovered the unique renderings of certain themes from one generation to the other and from one century into another. The investigation described in the pages that follow are but one facet of the author's interest in textual poachings, reader response, and horizons of expectation in literature, film, theater, and the fine arts applied to certain works of nineteenth-century French fiction.

In this study of "The Beauties and the Beasts of Nineteenth-Century French Fiction," she has applied ethnographic research methodology to ascertain how the patriarchy reappropriated the Beauty and the Beast motif after the French Revolution as a tool of subversion and introspection. The techniques used by ethnography have been applied to those works of Victor Hugo, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, Prosper Mérimée, Henri de Régnier, Edmond Rostand, and Gaston Leroux that used the theme to suggest alternative visions of the dominant ideology of the century and to portray plausible solutions to the problems inherent in a bourgeois society that embraced conformism and materialism over individualism and natural selection. Of particular interest to the researcher have been the artistic renderings of the authors' popular visions of the Beauties and the Beasts of the nineteenth century and their continued reappropriation during the twentieth century. These cultural artifacts represent the critical space between text and the enframing media of expression, permitting the researcher to explore the reception of greater and lesser works that used the Beauty and the Beast motif.

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Introduction • 1

The Beauties and Beasts of Nineteenth-century French Fiction

Chaque époque peut croire, en effet, qu'elle détient le sens canonique de l'oeuvre, mais il s'agit d'élargir un peu l'histoire pour transformer ce sens singulier en sens pluriel et l'oeuvre fermée en oeuvre ouverte — Roland Barthes, *Critique et vérité*

As intellectual history has shown, literature is an active partner in social evolution, for not only does it reflect the culture that surrounds it, but it also promotes philosophical, moral, and metaphysical changes in society. In France during the nineteenth century, there existed a constant struggle between natural and supernatural order. The century seemed predisposed to conflict and inconstancy as opposing ideologies proposed programs of change. Patterns of symbols emerged that embodied the tensions of the era. While the novel achieved the greatest growth in popularity, other genres witnessed substantial changes in format, theme, and tone. There was so little stability in the century's systems of meaning and values that no single mode of aesthetic expression successfully mastered the others. The one hundred twenty-five years between the French Revolution and World War I were replete with religious, social and political clashes that taxed all thought systems of the day. Wolfgang Iser has suggested that:

the ever-increasing complexity and number of such systems and the resultant conflicts between them effaced any one system's claims to validity. As a result literature moved to the foreground to serve as a counterbalance for the deficiencies arising from these clashes. It mediated, interpreted, and ultimately balanced the problems created by conflicting systems of meaning and values
(*The Act of Reading* 6).

Iser's comments explain why nineteenth-century authors relied upon all genres

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Iser's comments explain why nineteenth-century authors relied upon all genres and dabbled in many canons of knowledge in their quest to confront the past, to deal with the present, and to prepare themselves for the future.

One of the most popular themes to emerge in nineteenth-century French fiction was that of Beauty and the Beast — a motif appropriated from Antiquity to represent contemporary situations and react to contemporary problems in a non-threatening manner. Building upon a referential context that was familiar to the reader, the theme proved to be a rich source of material from which to examine societal changes. Given its origin and its multifarious use in oral and literary traditions, the Beauty and the Beast motif, like the fiction it served, straddled many boundaries of genre determination, closely allying itself with myth, novel, short story, fairy tale, romance, and play, presenting certain visual and arcane images of each genre. In response to these diverse applications, there has grown intense debate over the proper categorization of the theme.

For Northrop Frye, *Beauty and the Beast* is in part myth and in part romance, offering cyclical and apocalyptic traits of both genres. It is myth, because the motif is a way of making sense of "universal" matters such as sexual identity or family relations. By manipulating the familiar, it concretizes the inexplicable, thus offering a lens through which human identity in its social and cultural context may be viewed and defined. However it is also romance, because of its cyclical pattern that conjures up enemies and aliens in order to reveal who we are and what we want. (*Anatomy of Criticism* 37). For Gillian Beer and Irène Bessièrè, the theme is more appropriately associated with the world of romance because the romance is a subliterary category that invokes "the past or socially remote, using well-known stories whose familiarity reassures" (Beer, *The Romance* 2). These literary critics contend that, as romance, the *belle et la bête* motif

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Romance 2). These literary critics contend that, as romance, the *belle et la bête* motif is subjective, dependent on the biases of the narrator, and surrounded by a “cluster of properties” — including but not limited to the themes of love and adventure; social isolation or withdrawal; sensuous detail, simplified characters, who may have allegorical significance; a fusion of the unexpected and the routine carried forward in a long and complex succession of episodes (10). But for many others, *Beauty and the Beast* is and always will be a fairy tale replete with natural and supernatural elements and marginal heroes that provoke and promote strong emotional responses.

Since the early twentieth century, *Beauty and the Beast* has been classified as a model of the folk or fairy tale, type 425, as established by the Swedish school of folklore: the quest for the lost husband.¹ The most familiar version of the literary tale is perhaps the one written by Madame le Prince de Beaumont in 1756. It was drawn from a three hundred sixty-two page romance by Gabrielle Susanne Barbot de Gallon de Villeneuve written in 1740. However, folklorists claim that the tale is in actuality much older, harking back to the second century when Apuleius spun his tale of “Cupid and Psyche” in his novel *The Golden Ass*.

No matter where it began, the story of a beautiful young woman falling in love with a beast has proven to be timeless and enchanting, having captured millions of listeners and readers with its magic. The import of its messages (for there are many) has attracted and bemused writers and public alike. It has adapted readily to many different cultural, historical, and social contexts in order to challenge traditional beliefs about what it is to be human and what it is to be an animal.

¹ Tale type 425 is a category of Indo-European folklore that examines the disenchantment of an animal by a kiss. The Aarne-Thompson *Index of Tale Types* lists “Beauty and Beast” as tale type 425C, girl promises herself as bride to a monster.

an animal.

My motivation to write this critical study comes from the contradictory readings that emerge from books that attempt to label *Beauty and Beast* as belonging to a fixed genre tied to a set of oral and literary techniques. Clearly it is not, for the central motif, which sprang from a mythical source, has taken many forms across the ages. This makes it paramount that we explore the theories of knowledge, culture, and perception pertinent to the time of writing and the time of reading in order to comprehend the theme's significance to the corpus of work under study. One cannot ignore the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which the stories of Beauty and her Beast are told (and thereby adapted) if we wish to explain why the theme is more popular during certain periods than at others.

Such a study, by its nature, must be interdisciplinary because the theme it considers appears in many cultural arenas: literature, art, illustrations, film, etc. Therefore my method of approach will draw upon folklore, literature, art, history, psychology, sociology, linguistics, moral philosophy, cultural anthropology, and political science. Since this is a study of a theme, whose history is long and culturally appropriated, close attention must be paid to the various forms of its generation, subsequent regeneration, and multifarious interpretations. As Betsy Hearne has noted, a holistic approach is needed when confronting the fairy tale and its motifs or we risk "limitations of vision within a narrow specialty" (xiii).

The present study will also challenge Victor Hugo's contention in the "Preface" to *Cromwell* that "Antiquity would not have conceived *The Beauty and the Beast*" ("Preface" 39). In Chapter One we shall reaffirm that this motif was popular in ancient times, at least during those periods when cultural discourses

popular in ancient times, at least during those periods when cultural discourses juxtaposed the natural and the supernatural to create fantasy. As Irène Bessièrè has noted: "Le fantastique naît de la juxtaposition dans le texte de deux ordres, le Naturel et le Surnaturel, et donc de leur récusation mutuelle et explicite" (27). The use of a fantastic theme permits the writers and storytellers to portray elements or personalities of the real or natural world and the disruption of it by a supernatural phenomenon. This phenomenon is inexplicable in terms of everyday reality, but serves to whet the appetites of those authors and readers who are marked by an infatuation with the mysterious, but thirst for truth.

The proliferation of fiction using the Beauty and the Beast motif offers ample testimony to the creative power of a simple theme with complex expressions of experience and interpretation. Each teller or reader, each new interpreter adds a new dimension to the force of a simple image. Each new work employing the theme establishes new connections with previous works and its readership, creating what Jauss has termed the "horizon of expectations."² In other words, each new work employing this motif is read in light of preconceived notions, which are the product of the reader's familiarity with other works of a similar nature. Of course there are other factors that influence a reader's reception of a work, including social class, education, and moral value system.

This study does not pretend to offer a unique reading of the texts to be examined; rather, it seeks to explore the multiple dimensions embodied in the use of the theme in the works of Victor Hugo, Prosper Mérimée, Jules Barbey

² According to Jauss, every published work is a product of historical circumstances that are surrounded by literary and social horizons of received and depicted expectations. The expectations arise from the writer's construction of text that takes the world as its object. The readers then attribute sense to the words on the page, appropriating, transforming, attributing meaning to the verbal structures from their own repertoire (*Question and Answer* 148).

use of the theme in the works of Victor Hugo, Prosper Mérimée, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, Henri de Régnier, Gaston Leroux, and Edmond Rostand and to investigate the role of their literary creations as works of art and as rhetorical stance or narrative point of view.³ This is not an analysis of the individual pieces of fiction. It is more an examination of the art and artifice of the theme with occasional revisitations to past critical interpretations, be they psychoanalytical (Freud, Jung, and their disciples); anthropological (Zipes, et al); or historical (de Certeau, Soriano, etc.). Of necessity I shall periodically have to touch upon these aforementioned approaches when I discuss the point of view or rhetorical stance, style, plot, characterization, and historical nuance of a given text. However, the basic approach will be ethnographic. This means that my first task is to record how the theme was treated prior to its appearance in nineteenth-century French fiction. From there I shall explore how the motif was perceived in various sectors of society, since popular culture has much to do with how the subject takes up meaning as it becomes a mass cultural text. In addition, I hope to determine how and in the name of what other systems of meanings and values the readers have come to accept or reject the dominant or preferred readings of the texts in question. It is especially important to note which works have taken the critical step forward into the realm of cultural icon.⁴

One result of applying ethnography to the use of the Beauty and the Beast motif is the new light it will shed on issues of historically transmitted patterns of

³ When studying *Beauty and the Beast*, narrative voice is often the weakest of elements to be studied because it is less consistent than the story elements presented. Despite this, an examination of narrative voice, or at least its tonal fluctuations (from erotic or sensual to moralistic, oral to literal, etc.) may provide some interesting insights into the author's intent.

⁴ By definition an icon is an image whose importance grows in relation to its codification into social institutions, systems of values, and cultural practices. Henry Jenkins uses this term to describe those sign systems that have affected modes of reception, encouraged the readers' activism, or sought to change the *status quo*.

motif is the new light it will shed on issues of historically transmitted patterns of meaning embedded in mythical or archetypal images. Since this method is not solely concerned with events and motives, as many standard historical and psychological or psychoanalytical approaches are, we should discover new terrains of explanation for the way this theme is perceived by various groups, including the marginal or disempowered, as well as formulate new understandings of how mass culture appropriates or rejects the materials offered. The goal is to outline the functioning of a cultural collective by establishing its *modus operandi* and listening to its silences in order to structure a cultural landscape for the production of a specified literary work. Unfortunately this field of research is hotly contested. Proponents of reader-response theories are not unanimous in their perceptions of "reader." From Stuart Hall's point of view people are not "cultural dupes" who accept without question what they read or hear. Therefore popular texts must somehow "allow audiences to make meanings that connect with their social experience (*Channels of Discourse* 218). On the other hand, Tania Modleski, who strongly disagrees with Hall's assessment, suggests that "we are all victims, down to the very depths of our psyches, of political and cultural domination," for we all exist inside some dominant ideology. As she sees it, we share "communalities" (as textual critics or feminists, for example) that distort objectivity and make us, like the rest of the world, cultural dupes (45). These diverging visions of the reader are important to this study because nineteenth-century French literature also contested these points of view. While Hugo proclaimed man's continual progress, Flaubert railed against the popular reader's gullibility, the heroine of *Madame Bovary* being the prime example of a reader, who is a cultural dupe.

These divergent points of view represent the crux of the problem that I

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These divergent points of view represent the crux of the problem that I shall explore by examining the puntal and counterpuntal play of reader-response critics and feminist textual critics. Their views should prove insightful as we examine how the authors and the readers react to and interact with the texts. I believe that we shall discover that the "significance" of the Beauty and Beast motif will be determined within a much larger context — that of a historical interpretive community to which both the elite and the masses belong. Thus this study is meant to discover patterns of relations within the works examined and compare these structures to the period of construction and its subsequent history.

Because an ethnographic approach endeavors to gather information about the structure and organization of the society actually depicted or reflected in the tale, what the author creatively or critically chooses to expose about this revisited period should offer important data about the social tensions, diversification, and cultural values and norms of behavior of the era. Unlike psychoanalytic approaches, which focus on the characters' mental and emotional development as suggested by the action and symbolism of the plot, ethnography considers the social and cultural settings as major factors in the evolution of the theme and thus significant to its appropriation in popular texts and taste.

The nineteenth-century adaptation of folk or fairy tale material to make it become the stuff of novels, short stories, or plays was an act of symbolic appropriation, a recodification of material to make it more suitable for the "discursive" requirements of French society. For Hugo, Mérimée, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Régnier, Leroux and Rostand, the Beauty and the Beast motif offered a potentially dynamic tool to educate and to socialize the public domain. It could establish a discourse that would contribute to the historical civilizing

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It could establish a discourse that would contribute to the historical civilizing process by illuminating the darker side of the grotesque or the fantastic. The use of a popular theme like that of "la Belle et la Bête" would or could subtly portray the delicate interrelationship between what Norbert Elias has termed the psychogenetic make-up of human beings and the sociogenetic evolution of society (*The Civilizing Process* 118).

French literature in general has a highly pronounced social character that seems to depend on collective conditioning. As René Johannet has noted: "La littérature française a un caractère social nettement prononcé. Elle vit et croît en fonction de la société; elle en naît, en dépend, s'en nourrit, la reflète et l'influence supérieurement" (9). In other words French literature is above all a literature of correlations. It is a literature that thrives on comparisons and contrasts. These relations have a social basis, that is to say, that they are intricately connected to the social strata from which they emerge. In other words, the culture of *le menu peuple* differs from the culture of "the elite" because of each group's social conditioning. Furthermore there exists within these strata a repertory of "languages" or codes embedded in hundreds of different practices. These codes represent the group from which they emanate, revealing themselves to be fluid, mobile and invasive. They are not static, but ever-changing, always in motion, and as David Hall has shown, they "invade" the written and spoken word (*Mass Popular Culture* 3-4).

It is the aim of this study to show how the Beauty and Beast motif was inculcated in nineteenth-century culture. Integrating socio-historical, structuralist, and post-structuralist approaches, we shall argue that the Beauty and the Beast motif was a device to mediate between conflicting cultural desires, particularly between nostalgia and utopian longings. I shall begin with an

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particularly between nostalgia and utopian longings. I shall begin with an overview of the use of the Beauty and the Beast motif in French literature prior to its apparition in the nineteenth-century works to be examined. In Chapters Two and Three, we shall proceed to an analysis of the theme's selected uses in nineteenth-century fiction. Finally, in Chapter Four, we shall examine the explosive appropriation of the motif in twentieth century fiction and mass culture.

Since Beauty and the Beast appeals to several levels of interest — aesthetic, emotional, intellectual, and popular — this study seeks to speak to the general as well as the academic reader. It is my belief that an acknowledgment of all four levels of interest will contribute greatly to the scholarship. The power of a simple theme to create a complex statement has never been in more evidence than in the telling and retelling of the stories of a beauty who must come to terms with her strange relationship with a grotesque creature. While many versions of the story are told from Beauty's point of view, it is actually the Beast who incarnates the major mythical figure of masculine potency. From his early manifestations as Eros concealed, he has moved from the controller of the action (the invisible puppetmaster in "Cupid and Psyche") to the victim in nineteenth and twentieth-century fictions. It is a remarkable journey, for as his figure is socialized and internalized in popular fiction, he comes to represent the proper or improper way to channel erotic energy in society.

Until the twentieth century, the Beast of French fiction actually suffered from his disfigurement, fearing that no one would ever love him in his animal form. He felt himself doomed in his beastliness and contemplated self-destruction. The arrival of a young beauty to his sphere of operations gives him renewed hope; however, as we shall see, this newfound optimism is not always

renewed hope; however, as we shall see, this newfound optimism is not always rewarded because this odd couple must face their differences and recognize their similarities as they learn to relate their humanity to animal instincts, their intellect to sexual desire. They must also try to explain how they reconcile the natural to the supernatural, girl to woman, woman to man, marriage to family, individual to partnership, loyalty to freedom, honesty to social amenities, reality to appearance, appearance to the fantastic (Hearne, *Visions and Revisions* 129).

The most successful versions of the popular tales often suggest that we are all beasts who might be beauties if given the opportunity to grow; while their lesser known counterparts tend to portray couples or triangles who are unable to resolve their differences. Almost all versions that develop the Beauty and the Beast theme move to a carefully orchestrated suite of movements passing from alienation through isolation to a sort of reconciliation. While the last movement may not portend a happy ending as in the well known versions of the fairy tale, there still remains an overwhelming sense of coming to terms of acceptance. In most conclusions of the works of fiction that utilize the motif, we learn that physical beauty is worthless; that fidelity, love, sacrifice, and goodness are virtues worth suffering and death.

As will become apparent later, a central thesis of this study is that modern discourses are unstable and subject to frequent changes. Because of their instability, they coalesce rarely and tend to harmonize only momentarily before spinning outward or inward to form a new expression of accord or discord. Since the nineteenth century there have emerged a variety of discourses that perforce cluster around mechanically efficient poles of standardization while they attack the less stable fields of culture, society and history. Between these poles of normalization are created powerful lines of energy that embody what

poles of normalization are created powerful lines of energy that embody what Rabinow terms, a distinctive and dynamic equipollent field (58).

If this be true, as I contend, then the Beauty and the Beast theme will demonstrate how culture, society, and history polarized themselves against the mechanically efficient manifestations of normalization as the nineteenth century progressed. We shall examine how the motif was treated as it moved through the so-called literary schools of the period: romanticism, realism, naturalism, and symbolism, by examining Victor Hugo's "Bug-Jargal," "Han d'Islande," and *Notre-Dame de Paris*; Prosper Mérimée's "Lokis"; Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's *L'Enfermée*; Henri de Régnier's *Canne de Jaspe*, Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*; and Gaston Leroux's *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*. Careful analysis will reveal how these authors situated their characters at a point of intersection of primal ethical forces then moved them into Peter Brooks's theoretical "clash of forces" between pure and polar, light and dark, salvation and damnation (*The Melodramatic Imagination* 81). It will then become apparent how these writers developed a sort of fantastic interplay between making the familiar strange and the strange familiar.

By examining specific texts of the nineteenth century that use the Beauty and the Beast motif, we shall be able to establish the same sort of familiar connections between psychogenetic and sociogenetic civilizing factors as they become embodied in symbolic configurations within the development of discourse, much in the same way as Jack Zipes elaborated in his seminal study, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*. While Zipes concentrated his study upon the classical genre of the fairy tale, we shall turn our attention to pieces of French fiction that appropriated the theme but avoided the narrative structure of the fairy tale, because it had become a lamentable pawn in the quest to civilize

children according to a strict code of middle-class socialization.

Nineteenth-century customs, traditions, and manners will be clearly in the forefront of analysis, because these areas of society represent the battlefields of contention as the disparate value systems clashed for supremacy. As Zipes has shown for the fairy tale, and we shall see via the works examined here, defensive shields were raised as conflicting views of the civilizing process dealt with honesty and falsehood, genuine beauty and manufactured beauty, nobility of soul and soulless nobility (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 86). While most of the beasts to be studied find neither redemption nor acceptance in the world they occupy, they do offer exciting invitations to a journey of rediscovery, replete with new sensations of pleasure and pain. Their mysterious demeanors and domains will frighten and attract the beauties who meet them in the course of their mythical quests.

The desire to seek an arcadian or utopian existence was introduced into French literature via the groundbreaking works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Many writers longed to rediscover their lost wholeness, the missing "homme naturel." Some sought him in the uncharted wilderness of the new world; others returned to bygone eras. There was something alarming and disarming about the "noble savage." Nineteenth-century romantic writers conceived wild men to be, like animals, slaves to desire and unable to control their passions. They were portrayed as mobile, confused, shifting, chaotic creatures who were incapable of sedentary existence, of self-discipline and of sustained labor; therefore, they were passionate, bewildered and hostile to "normal humanity" (Hayden White, 20). As such, they were symbols of what had been lost or what had been repressed in becoming civilized. They were men free of ambitions, free of inhibitions, who lived lives without effete luxuries, who displayed manly virtues and simple

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loyalties (Thorslev, 286). The modern manifestations of such wild men represented a threat to the individual, both as nemesis and as possible destiny, because they embodied the unwanted condition into which a man might degenerate if he fell from grace or were driven out of the confines of civilization (White, 20). As Thorslev, White, and others have noted, during the nineteenth century these uncivilized men (actual and fictional) came to be regarded as examples of arrested humanity, prototypes for Romanticism's self-realized individuals, living separate from social reality in a near-perfect arcadia. Unlike their civilized brethren, they seemed to be able to find fulfillment in their simple existence far from the madding crowds. All they needed was to satisfy their physical needs. Their stories of self-reliance were at once critiques of civilization and culture and a challenge to seek "utopia" outside the constraints of social reality. Unfortunately the worlds created for them by writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century proved too idyllic. Readers quickly realized that the *milieux* described had little to do with nature and were more indicative of the overrefined tastes of idle society (Jauss, 177). Literary critics of this era noted with glee that the noble savages' psycho-sociogenetic programs were "incomplete." That is why they could not get their bearings in daily life nor would they until they acquired cultural gyroscopes. Their degeneration into grotesque, disoriented (and disorienting) creatures was a direct result of their lack or rejection of normalization. This phenomenologist view of social versus natural order was perhaps best summarized in the words of turn-of-the-century French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, who proposed that social violence was "natural" and prevailed in a "state of nature" devoid of social regulation.

Human passions only stop before a moral power they respect. If all authority of this kind is wanting, the law of the strongest prevails,

and latent or active, the state of war is necessarily chronic. That such anarchy is an unhealthy phenomenon is quite evident, since it runs counter to the aim of society, which is to suppress, or at least to moderate, war among men, subordinating the law of the strongest to a higher law (Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* 3).

Among the beasts that we shall examine here, we shall find many who respect no established authority because they have been victims of its blind hatred and prejudices.

After the French Revolution and Napoleon I's reign, the first third of the nineteenth century was marked by a massive outpouring of thought about continuity in society or the lack thereof. Right wing politicians and reactionaries agreed that the defining characteristic of legitimate order was hierarchy. True liberty could not be decreed; it was rooted in tradition, confirmed through history, and authorized by God. Thus, according to them, order and meaning had a transcendental source (Rabinow, 26). It is no wonder that Neoclassicism was in vogue in their social and political circles, for according to these tenets divine perfection must be sought in a universe beyond human existence. Of course their concept of "ideal" was met almost immediately with "dialectical" opposition from the political left, who felt that man could still find an ideal world of unimpaired existence on earth. Like their political allies on the left, the German, English and French romantics made it their life's calling to question the traditions of the posturing neo-classicists. For them, every creation of the human spirit, in order to attain perfection, had to pass through three stages. Tradition lay within the first realm, whose conceptions of liberty, order, and meaning were products of the unconscious. Truly creative work must reshape the existing order and bring new social experiences to consciousness. In other words, for

these concepts to move to a higher plane of experience, it was necessary for consciousness and art rationally to organize them into a work of genius. Such a dynamic would ultimately produce social progress, the final stage of the creative process. The goal could be reached either by adding to the existing order or "high culture" or by breaking with existing forms, thus disturbing the prevailing images of life and the social stereotypes engendered by them.⁵ As we shall discover, some of the works to be examined in this study did in fact add to "high culture" while others proved to be rather mediocre attempts to disturb the existing order and were read without offering anything concrete or worthwhile to the modes of expression.

Henry Jenkins has declared in his book *Textual Poachers* that there are five dimensions to a subculture that seeks to construct new boundaries for exclusive texts. As a rule the group that embraces these ideals cuts across traditional geographic boundaries and generational boundaries to be defined by its style of consumption and forms of cultural preference. (What better way to view *Le Cénacle* de Charles Nodier or the salon of Mme de Staël). It is easy for us to explore these groups via Jenkins's dimensions of culture: "a) their relationship to a particular mode of reception; b) their role in encouraging activism; c) their function as an interpretive community; d) their 'particular' traditions of cultural production; and f) their status as an 'alternative' social community" (1-2). Keeping these dimensions in mind, we must also recognize how problematic it can be to discuss this or any other subculture given their relationship to other forms of cultural production and other social identities.

⁵ In *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, Michel de Certeau presents his historical view of the nineteenth century. Citing Charles Nisard's *Histoire des livres populaires et de la littérature* and George Vicaire's *La Tradition populaire*, he attempts to validate the various phases of artistic creation by representing them as stages of production: the near-spontaneous conception of the ideal, the reasoned organization, and the incarnation of the ideal.

As a young man, Victor Hugo was the embodiment of the “popular” artist who sought to mobilize his public by drawing upon common experiences and by using stock feelings to depict the values, attitudes and sentiments of his readers. It is a tribute to his creative genius how many of his works moved from the provocative role of mass or popular art to the evocative role of canonical masterpieces. His work clearly bears witness to the degree to which culture, especially popular culture, is ephemeral and ever-changing. What is new and avant-garde will become in a few years “old hat” if it is rewarded with any success at all. New art forms emerge when social life and its prerequisite structures of feeling undergo change. Often this change is first recorded in popular works that treat new themes and devise new conventions to express the societal shifts. Subcultures originate in response to specific historical conditions.⁶ According to Jenkins, these subcultures are frequently little more than social groups struggling to define their own culture and to construct their own communities within the context of their era (3). By focusing on the subcultures and studying the values and beliefs associated with them, we should be able to make some sense of the ways in which the Beauty and the Beast motif was (en)coded and (de)coded by a particular group. The conflicts or contradictions that are revealed will in turn bring to fore the points of rupture between (de)coded messages and the dominant ideology.

Janice Radway in her critical study *Reading Romance* casts writers as vanguard intellectuals who seek to lead their readers toward a more overtly political relationship to popular culture. While her contentions border perilously

⁶During the nineteenth century France as a nation had to respond to many political and historical pressures: the debacles of the First and Second Empire, the industrial revolution, the sad plight of workers. These historical conditions provoked debate and division whose import was picked up by the artists of the day.

on designating authorial intent, her views are apropos when applied to nineteenth-century French fiction. After all, the concept of cultural politics is nothing new. In almost every era, the dominant class or absolute leader has understood or at least suspected the power of artists (writers, poets, painters, dramatists, architects) to move the masses. They have understood and made overt and covert efforts to use these "intellectuals" to their own ends.

Victor Hugo, Prosper Mérimée, and Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly extolled their privileged positions as writers in their journals, prefaces and correspondence. They portended that their exalted positions permitted them to survey society and influence changes within it. According to them, such vantage points could be exploited in order to facilitate some types of understanding of new forms of convention, to legitimize their own works, to impose their own norms of perception, and to define a new aesthetic — or at least this is what they hoped would happen; but as Cecil James has shown in *The Idiom of the People*, they did not take into account the public who was to read their works, assimilating everything — adding much and discarding much — while exercising a selective instinct that would retain what it felt it could make its own (52). These "people," who most lacked the specific competence to legitimize art, would apply their own perceptions of everyday existence to what they read and thus subvert the writers' intentions. For Pierre Bourdieu, such a course of action is nothing more than "a systematic reduction of the things of art to things of life, a bracketing of form in favor of 'human' content, which is barbarism *par excellence* from the standpoint of the pure aesthetic" (*Distinctions* 44).

To counter the results of the popularization of an aesthetic, authors must seek to find new ways to astonish one group or another, and in the nineteenth century this would have been the evergrowing middle class. In that era attempts

to "épater la bourgeoisie" usually meant transgressing ever more radically the ethos of the populace and its censors in order to reaffirm the artist's power to confer aesthetic status once more (47). Romanticism, realism, naturalism, and symbolism in the nineteenth century were literary movements that were constantly seeking to create new boundaries, to develop new terrains of experience that would push the envelope, so to speak, a little further out of the reach of popular consumption. Given this, we cannot ignore these confrontations between author and reader in the nineteenth century any more than we can ignore the cultural, historical, and social context in which a given work was written, read or told, then adapted, appropriated, and transformed. In other words, there really is no privileged position from which to create a culture's aesthetic. Author and reader each have vantage points, which disclose advantages and limitations. As Jenkins has observed: "Debates about aesthetic choices of interpretive practices, then, necessarily have an important social dimension and often draw upon social or psychological categories as a source of justification" (16).

In the nineteenth century, the reading public was more sharply differentiated than it is today. Reactions to works were tempered by social class, education, ethical outlook, material possession. By examining the context in which the *belle et la bête* motif is embedded in certain texts of the aforementioned century, we should gain insight into the changing moral, social, and literary attitudes of the period. While this theme relies on familiar situations and follows a relatively unchanged pattern of progression, it is altered and reassembled in new ways in each new period that is treated. In fact, the writers and readers who are dealing with this popular fantasy are interacting with and reacting to subterranean sources within the collective subconscious of their society and

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embed the symbols of these societal shifts within their development of the texts.

In Chapter One, we shall examine the first manifestations of the Beauty and the Beast motif, as we quickly move from the literary theme in Apuleius's second century frame tale, *The Golden Ass*, through its manifestations and adaptations in the texts of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, *le Siècle de Louis XIV*, and the Age of Enlightenment.

Tale as Old as Time

Etenim omnes artes quae ad humanitatem
pertinent habent quoddam commune vinculum,
et quadi cognatione quadam inter se continentur.
(Cicero, *Pro Archia poeta*)

For all arts which pertain to culture
have a certain link in common and
so to speak are held together by a
kind of kinship.

When Victor Hugo asked his readers if the ancients “ont-ils jamais mis en oeuvre le laid et le grotesque? ont-ils jamais mêlé la comédie à la tragédie?” (Préface de *Cromwell* 417), he had a readymade answer: the ancients, with few exceptions, did not accept the grotesque as an element of art. The few who did, he concluded, were remarkable for their novelty.¹ “L'exemple des anciens, Messieurs! D'ailleurs, Aristote... D'ailleurs, Boileau... D'ailleurs, La Harpe... Ces arguments sont solides, sans doute, et surtout d'une rare nouveauté” (417). After all facts were facts. Furthermore, modern genius sprang from the union of the grotesque and sublime. Of course, the author of *Notre Dame de Paris* would later admit that the grotesque element was known by the ancients who indeed had had their share of horrible and monstrous creatures. It was, after all, they who brought us the Hydra and the Harpies; but the ancients, he deduced, only tolerated these beastly creatures while seeking to polish them into a more acceptable form. According to Hugo: “Les euménides grecques sont bien moins horribles, et par conséquent bien moins vraies, que les sorcières de *MacBeth*” (419). Moreover, the beasts of modern times must have sprung from some ancient source since: “Rien ne vient sans racine; la seconde époque est toujours en germe dans la première” (417). To support his arguments, Victor Hugo enumerated examples from the *Iliad* and cited Greek tragedies where “a touch of comedy” crept in; however, these representatives dissembled their true natures

¹ Hugo was adamant about the lack of examples from antiquity. He claimed that although some authors explored the notions of the grotesque and the sublime, they did so only to transform the ugly into the beautiful, which was the model of perfection.

comedy" crept in; however, these representatives dissembled their true natures and were scarcely deformed (418). Many examples later, Hugo proclaimed emphatically that "l'Antiquité n'aurait pas fait *la Belle et la Bête*" (422). Unfortunately that which this extraordinary genius held to be unquestionably true was in error.

Of course Antiquity did conjure a few examples of beastly or demonic lovers, who enjoined beauties to love them in spite of their grotesque shapes. Such figures have haunted oral and literary traditions for time immemorial. While documented evidence of this is relatively scarce today, there are sufficient textual remains to suggest that there was, at one time, a historical line of continuity that bridge the gap between ancient and modern times. Lamentably, because of the scarcity of texts, it is difficult to trace step by step the evolution of the Beauty and the Beast motif from its oral genesis to its encapsulation in a variety of different genres.² The theme may be found in legends, myths, romances, fairy tales, comedies and dramas.

There is even great disparity in beliefs about the theme's genealogy among the folklorists who study the sources of these tales. One group that has attempted to trace the origins of the central motifs of oral tradition holds that the derivation of plotlines and themes cannot be easily determined because of their "nomadic and promiscuous" natures. Motifs, such as that of the Beauty and the Beast, travel across vast expanses of the world, absorbing tragic and comic elements from hither and yon, adding to the mix popular beliefs and practices, and a modicum of pointed or veiled criticism.

Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson and the disciples of their school of folklore

² I suggest the etiquette of genres instead of fairy or folk tale because the Beauty and the Beast motif appears in so many literary and oral traditions that it cannot be restricted to one literary category, but must be studied in its many manifestations.

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Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson and the disciples of their school of folklore have tried to tabulate and to classify systematically story types and motifs within the tales. Unfortunately their work has generated a list of ingredients and formulae for the narratives without much thought to the elements that make one story different from another. Such taxonomies may be invaluable to determine the popularity of certain themes, but do little to recognize how a "motif" is adapted to apply to different regions, different genres, and different eras.

Academics who embrace archetypal theory suggest that certain recurrent motifs and plotlines are the result of "universal" structures of imagination, which produce archetypes that cross distant frontiers to depict and correlate common views of human experience. That is why we find tales of animal metamorphosis in every known culture. However fascinating these elaborate accounts of archetypal topoi may be, they too are beleaguered by a certain vagueness and are subject to multiple interpretations as the theme is adapted or changed vis-à-vis the societies and cultures in which they appear.

Other theorists have chosen to reduce the dissemination of certain motifs to scientific metaphors. Some have suggested that the fairy tale or folklore tradition might be akin to wave theory's image of a stone thrown into a pond, radiating in rings outward, only to meet other ripples and to join in chevron patterns with other stones cast in other seas of "stories." Robert Irwin in his 1994 companion to *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights* compared some of this text's images to the "selfish gene" of genetic theory, which continued to reproduce itself in different host bodies. If we applied Irwin's theory to popular fairy tales, we would find this so-called selfish gene particularly applicable to those stories where a frog becomes a prince, a witch is transformed into a beautiful princess, or a beast is metamorphosed into a suitable bridegroom.

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or a beast is metamorphosed into a suitable bridegroom.

While all of these theories offer insightful explanations for the prevalence of certain motifs in the legends, stories, and myths of people around the world, who seemingly could have never had any contact with one another, they do not advance acceptable explanations as to why some themes stand the test of time, space, and material circumstance to be reappropriated again and again by disparate communities. For this reason, I would suggest that an ethnographic interpretation of the Beauty and the Beast topos is more revelatory; first, because it attempts to characterize how the motif is used to interpret human behavior in terms of the aforementioned essays of time, space, material circumstance, social hierarchies, etc.; and second, because ethnography seeks to depict how and why a theme may be altered when it passes from one age to the next.

No one can be certain of the origin of the Beauty and Beast motif. Many point to the second-century tale, "Cupid and Psyche," found in Apuleius's *Golden Ass* as the literary source for "Beauty and the Beast." This classic myth certainly contains the germ of the story as Victor Hugo would even admit. Many of the elements that play integral roles in the well known fairy tale can be found in this narrative. Like its offspring, "Cupid and Psyche" tries to make sense of universal matters, like sexual identity and family relations, but the "beast" in this tale is neither ugly nor deformed but the figment of Psyche's imagination, born of faulty prophecy and wagging tongues. Notwithstanding, this does little to diminish the importance of this tale to the evolution and formation of "Beauty and the Beast." Occupying one-sixth of Apuleius's frame tale, it is the most celebrated portion of *The Golden Ass*. Its careful reworking of mythology also

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suggests that it was drawn from a missing literary source.³

"Cupid and Psyche" is classed as a Milesian comic romance, named for Aristides of Miletus, who had compiled a collection of stories of metamorphoses in the second-century A.D. However there is no version of "Cupid and Psyche" in his collection, nor in that of Ovid. Ruth Bottigheimer has suggested that the tale is related to the *Pachatantra's* "The Girl Who Married a Snake," given its motifs of a serpent groom, broken enchantment, and handsome prince. Yet Apuleius's version offers a very different frame tale (Bottigheimer, "'Cupid and Psyche' vs. *Beauty and the Beast*," 5). Unlike Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, which includes many stories about Cupid, but none about the mythical couple, Apuleius's protagonists are a very different breed. The male does not pursue the female, but the woman pursues the man. To grasp why this tale is important to the history of the Beauty and the Beast motif, a quick retelling of its narrative elements is essential.

A king and his wife have three beautiful daughters, the youngest of whom is Psyche. She is so beautiful that the goddess Venus becomes jealous of her and sends her son Cupid to make her fall in love with the most grotesque creature he can find. Psyche's father, who realizes that his youngest daughter is being ignored by many suitors because she is too lovely, goes to Apollo of Miletus to seek a husband for her. Unfortunately he is led to believe by the oracle that Psyche will wed a fierce serpent.

Cupid, when he sees Psyche, falls desperately in love with the maiden. He sees the young woman on the cliff, praying to be spared her predicted fate. Weary with despair, Psyche falls asleep. When she wakes, she finds herself near

³ Ruth Bottigheimer has carefully studied Apuleius's tale and readily admits this work to the evolutionary progress of the narrative. However, she believes that "Cupid and Psyche" is too well scripted to have been the original creation of Apuleius. There must have been literary or oral antecedents.

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Weary with despair, Psyche falls asleep. When she wakes, she finds herself near a splendid palace. A voice tells her that she is mistress of all that she surveys and every wish is her command. That night she is joined by Cupid who takes her as his wife. Psyche learns quickly to enjoy connubial bliss with a husband that she may know only with her hands, but not with her eyes.

In the meantime, Psyche's sisters are wed to old and ugly kings who do not satisfy any of their physical nor material needs. Naturally they are very jealous of their sister's good fortune and plot to ruin her, so that one of them might take her place with the demon lover. During a visit to the palace, the sisters convince Psyche, now pregnant with child, that she's married to the fierce serpent of oracular fame. They urge her to kill her husband because he will surely eat their offspring.

As Psyche prepares to kill Cupid, she lights a lamp and beholds, for the first time, the great beauty of her lover. She is so entranced by the vision, that she unwittingly lets a drop of hot oil touch his skin. He awakens only to disappear from her view because she has broken her promise to him. Psyche must now embark on a long quest to refind her lost husband. On the way, she must endure the torments of her mother-in-law Venus and perform a series of impossible tasks before she is once more worthy of Cupid's love and confidence.

Aware of Psyche's many tests, Cupid pleads their case before Jupiter and they are granted a decree of matrimony. All ends in a sumptuous marriage feast at which Psyche becomes immortal. In due course, the newlyweds become the proud parents of lovely girl whom they name Pleasure.

Found within this myth of metamorphosis are many of the elements of the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast*. The significance of Apuleius's story to the history of the motif is monumental, primarily because it suggests an established

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of the motif is monumental, primarily because it suggests an established tradition now lost to us. The fact that there are no other texts that recount the adventures of Eros and his mortal bride add to the mysterious origin of Apuleius's *Golden Ass*. This absence of other versions of the story coupled with the frame tale's strange tribute to Isis begs the question as to source material. As stated before the tale of Cupid and Psyche does not exist in Ovid's collection nor was it present in either of the two popular novels contemporary with it: Lucius of Patras's *The Ass* and Lucian of Samosata's *Lucius, The Ass*. These works incorporate animal bridegrooms but their ass is present merely for comic relief, to provoke functional and real laughter.

Apuleius's work concerns itself with sexual distinctions, sexual transgressions, family relationships, and questions of loyalty: wife to husband, sister to sisters, parent to child. At the heart of the story there remain the themes of enduring interest: the significance of sexuality vis-à-vis the individual and society; the change cultural standards undergo as codes of sexual conduct evolve. These are the very fabric of the Beauty and the Beast motif. Cupid and Psyche, like their progeny, are paired to illuminate the complexities of love and acceptance.

While Apuleius's second-century tale clearly blames Psyche for her misfortunes, it is interesting to note how important the heroine is to the outcome. She is very active throughout the narrative. In point of fact it is she who has ignored her "loving" husband's warnings. It is she who divulges the secrets of their relationship and tries to kill her beloved at her sisters' behest, and it is she who dispatches her siblings to their horrifying deaths from a sacrificial rock. Filled with patriarchal conceits, the tale of "Cupid and Psyche" creates a heroine who embodies the vengefulness, curiosity and "foolish speech" that Apuleius

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who embodies the vengefulness, curiosity and "foolish speech" that Apuleius touts as a woman's primary frailties.

Written in the liberal style of a bawdy Milesian comedy, "Cupid and Psyche" began its literary life as popular literature. Although their love story was already celebrated in the art of the Hellenistic Age thanks to the influence of Plato, Apuleius's telling is unique because it mirrors so genuinely its frame tale of *The Golden Ass*. Like Lucius, Psyche indulges her curiosity in spite of repeated warnings. As punishment she, too, must wander and perform the repulsive tasks assigned her. In the end the intervention of benevolent gods will free her from her travails so that she may once more embrace all that is well-ordered and beautiful in the world.

Apuleius's Latin was the language of the Roman Empire. The tales were combinations of elements that operate on multiple levels and successfully integrate comic and dramatic scenes to reflect the ups and downs of his hero(es) and heroine. The combination of comic, romantic, and tragic elements provides the crux of the entertainment while some of the inserted narratives, especially in "Cupid and Psyche" pique the interest of the more educated readers. It is little wonder that Apuleius's work remained popular for many centuries to come as evidenced by its discussion and incorporation in popular and scholarly works throughout the ages.

To the Middle Ages, Apuleius was a sorcerer whose magical gifts were wrought with the aid of the demons he invoked. It is interesting to note that by a queer twist of fate, *The Golden Ass* moved out of the realm of popular literature to a classically educated readership when it was published in Italy in 1469 because Apuleius's use of Latin restricted his tales to a small portion of the populace. Ruth Bottigheimer has suggested that the change in readership perhaps made a

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Ruth Bottigheimer has suggested that the change in readership perhaps made a difference in its diffusion and comprehension since it was now studied in the language of the church fathers and classical scholarship (7). Whatever the case, to the Renaissance, Apuleius represented the entertainer whose fanciful narratives enthralled the imaginations of the elite.

As we have stated before and will reiterate again, multiplicity, change and ambiguity are part and parcel of a work's literary function and value. As Cupid and Psyche are transformed to represent certain cultural standards they become less the antique couple of the Hellenistic Age and more the Beauty and the Beasts of the Moderns. Their evolution is a fascinating and intriguing tale of metamorphosis, but as they transform with each new setting it becomes more difficult to recognize their classic origin.

During the Middle Ages, the questions of a Beauty loving a Beast and that love transforming a monster into a Prince were subject to different strictures. The medieval thinkers often contested the questions related to what was human and what was animal. As people began to accept the notion of beasts acting like human beings and serving as human exemplars in fables and *contes*, it became easier to accept the existence of shape-shifting creatures who were part human. There is ample evidence that Antiquity was comfortable with fantastic beasts and their interspecies relationships; however, early medieval thinkers insisted that everything in the cosmos had its place and that animals were separate from humans.

Saint Augustine, whose influence on medieval thought was monumental, insisted upon the separateness. "And so I should not believe, on any consideration, that the body — to say nothing of the soul — can be converted into the limbs and features of animals by the craft or power of demons" (*City of God*,

limbs and features of animals by the craft or power of demons" (*City of God*, XVIII 783). Nevertheless, by the late Middle Ages, there was much less certainty about the distinction. It was becoming harder to define which traits determine one's humanity and which mark the beast. From 400 A.D., the age of Augustine, to about 1400 A. D. there was a remarkable shift in attitude. In the fifth century humans were qualitatively different from animals; yet by the fifteenth century thinkers and writers were readily acknowledging that humans shared more traits with animals than they cared to admit. Such a dramatic shift in thought would not again be experienced until the advent of Charles Darwin's theories on the *Origin of the Species* in the nineteenth century.

In the past, as today, notions of human versus animal were determined by how one defined animal relative to man. Of course such notions have never been accepted universally nor have they remained constant over time. Each age has produced conflicting views of how to define human and animal. It was only in the late eighteenth century that scholars decided that man and beast shared feelings.⁴

In the late Middle Ages, there was an increasing preoccupation with ambiguous creatures. This preoccupation led to the metaphoric linking of humans and animals and offered, if only briefly, the possibility for redefining humanity in terms of how one acts instead of what one is. Such a shift in attitude eliminated the categoric separation of species. By the end of medieval times, thinkers seemed more in tune with the Greco-Roman idea that placed man on a continuum with animals. If humans stooped to animal inclinations, they were lowering themselves to feral levels of appetite and passion. By the same token, it

⁴ Keith Thomas discusses such issues in *Man and the Natural World: A History of Modern Sensibility*, 1983. One of the examples he cites comes from the seventeenth century when it was believed that dogs were like clocks. When they were beaten and yelped, it was because one had struck a spring that emitted the sound.

lowering themselves to feral levels of appetite and passion. By the same token, it became possible for certain species to act more rationally, logically, and compassionately than others of their kind. At such times, these beasts were said to be embracing their humanity. There are two tales that date from the Middle Ages that reflect this attitude: Marie de France's "Bisclavret" and "Valentine and Orson." Both stories reflect a marked movement away from the Platonic and early medieval contentions that deformed bodies meant deformed souls.

"Bisclavret" is the story of a brave and handsome chevalier who served his sovereign well and who was loved by all his neighbors. Unfortunately, this noble lord has been condemned to run the forests three days per week as a werewolf. When he confesses his horrible plight to his curious wife, the latter is so appalled by the truth that she immediately finds a way to destroy her generous and loving spouse. "En maint endroit se purpensa/Cum ele s'en puïst partir:/Ne voleit mes lez lui gisir" (130). To rid herself of her beastly husband, the faithless wife enlists the aid of a knight suitor who has secretly loved her for years. Together they decide to steal the man's clothing, which is his only way to return to human form, and thus condemn him to remain a werewolf forever. There are, of course, inquiries made when the bridegroom disappears, but after a time it is assumed that some mishap has befallen him and he has departed this world and the suitor weds the faithless wife of Bisclavret.

All goes well for them, until one day when the king runs across the werewolf in the forest and recognizes the beast's human qualities: "Seignurs, fit-il, avant venez!/Cest merveillë esgardez,/Cum ceste beste s'humilie!/Ele ad sen de hum, merci crie" (134). Thus he proclaims the werewolf is blessed with intelligence and judgment and takes the creature to the palace with him. Unlike the faithless wife, the king has the vision to see beyond the beast and embrace

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the faithless wife, the king has the vision to see beyond the beast and embrace the man.

As fate would have it, the king convokes all his barons to court. Among them is the suitor who betrayed Bisclavret and wed the faithless wife. At the sight of his personal Judas, the werewolf attacks the knight who stole everything from him. Then he turns upon his wife and bites off her nose. The king, amazed by these startling events, forces the woman to admit her guilt and to restore the wolf's clothing. The beast becomes a man again. The vain and faithless wife is banished with her hapless suitor from the kingdom to bear noseless daughters.

This simple tale of love and betrayal reveals much about the changing mindset of the Middle Ages toward man and beast. Bisclavret, no matter how sympathetically portrayed, was nonetheless a man with a beast within and thus prey to the savage desires of such creatures. This acceptance suggests that the twelfth century believed in the animal side of people. Implicit in this belief is the sense that a brute's nature consumes the human through the agency of an inconstant woman. Through her, man loses all visible trace of his humanity; however, the creature still retains its inward compassion, reason, and sense of duty, witnessed by its tender display at the king's feet. Its loyalty is rewarded when the sovereign forces the vain woman to restore his clothing. It is as if Marie de France is suggesting that we are all subject to a loss of humanity if we focus on the carnal. Faith and loyalty in one's earthly lord will bind man to his spiritual Master.

In the second example, "Valentine and Orson," we witness the further evolution of medieval thought about the natures of man and beast. Into the *mélée* is thrown the question of what most affects a man's temperament: heredity or environment? In this legend dating from the fourteenth or fifteenth

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century, we find two brothers separated at birth. One, Valentine, is raised a prince in the city, while the other, Orson, is suckled by a she-bear and reared in the wild.

The selection of a she-bear as adoptive mother is significant, for to the medieval way of thinking, the bear was the fiercest of creatures, the strongest and largest animal to roam the Western world. Because of its physical prowess, it became emblematic of power and lordship in feudal heraldry, but it was not always associated with the noblest of traits. Saint Augustine equated the bear and the lion to the Devil. The bear was often called "the beast who walks like a man" because it sometimes walked upright. Due to its great strength and ferocity, the bear soon became the totem of the wild man, decidedly noble, but also savage, the incarnation of natural appetite and power. Thus, as Marina Warner has pointed out, the twentieth-century vision of a beast's nobility is not new, nor is it an example of male self-flattery as justification for toughness, brute strength, and independence, but rather the tacit acceptance or renewed awareness of medieval positions vis-à-vis man and beast. The unnatural pairing of woman with beast, this blend of desire and fear of violence were part and parcel of medieval life as suggested by the frequent coupling of *épou(x)* and *épou(vant)* in French. Man's (and woman's) fascination with the taboo served for many centuries as enticing invitations to adventure and to forbidden pleasure (*Six Myths of Our Time* 81).

In the Middle Ages, as today, it was widely believed that human and feral natures were intertwined. Since the bear was the most powerful of creatures to roam the forests of Europe, it is little wonder that the first drawings of the Beast of *La Belle and la Bête* fame were often reminiscent of the hulking mass of a bear. Also it was commonly believed in the Middle Ages that might makes right, he

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who had power could do what he pleased. Sooner or later his strength would enable him to gain the money, land, women, and social prestige that he so desired. In the medieval romance, *Valentine and Orson*, we have an outstanding example of this notion. In addition, the question of the role of nature versus nurture comes to fore in this often translated romance of the fourteenth century.

The Empress Bellisant of Constantinople gives birth to twin boys in the depths of the forest. One child is carried off by a she-bear that planned to share him with her cubs; the other newborn is saved by a passing nobleman and reared at court. The Empress, falsely accused of adultery, disappears, but her remaining child is given all the advantages of his noble birth and becomes a valiant prince. His twin brother Orson is not eaten for supper but accepted into the bear clan and grows up in the woods to become the legendary wild man: "infamous, a brute, who roamed the wild without restraint" (Burkert, np).

Since medieval romance demands that fate right all wrongs wrought upon the just, Valentine is dispatched to the forest to rid the countryside of the fierce Orson; but it is not by superior strength that he wins the day but by self-awareness of a bond. The brothers stared deep into each other's eyes and "felt a vivid sense of kinship rise" (Burkert). Valentine entreats Orson to come with him for "salvation lies in peace, and faith..." and thus begins the tale of the civilization of the wild bear child. The process is slow, for nothing permanent can be achieved quickly. First, Orson is taught to eat and drink properly, but proper attire is late in coming. It is only after a year or two at court that the wild man adopts a coat of mail and sets forth to do battle with the infamous Green Knight. It is on this quest that Orson meets the beguiling Fezon and falls in madly in love with the lady and she with him. In their first encounter we are quickly reminded that love is blind. "The maiden gazed upon the simply clad and rugged Orson.

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Ah, we hear it said that when the heart is dealt a blow, no love is less than beautiful. And, friends, above all others Fezon set her heart on Orson!" Having not the gift of speech, the grizzly youth can only pledge his troth with hands clasped across his heart and ride with his twin brother into battle.

When Valentine, who is the first to match lances with the Green Knight, fails to unseat his foe after a day of engagements, Orson replaces him on the battlefield, wins the day, and the hand of fair Fezon. However, it is not she who gives him the gift of speech, but a talking head who reveals the truth about his family, mysterious birth, and golden future. A thread of flesh is removed from his tongue and Orson is granted human speech. His adventures at his brother's side continue until all wrongs have been undone: a blameless mother found, a father reconciled to his family and two brothers wed to noble ladies of exceeding beauty, grace and virtue.

While Fezon's role in this tale of metamorphosis is relatively slight, it does suggest similar elements of voyage, quest, love and acceptance — elements found again and again in the myth of Cupid and Psyche and other folktales from around the world. Since "Cupid and Psyche" was a popular literary tale based on folklore, it provides a fertile source for the analysis of later manifestations of the animal bridegroom motif: Middle Ages to the present.

From approximately 1480 to 1650, most "successful" French authors were reclaiming the lost heritage of Greece and Rome. They touted the charms and elegant styles of Homer, Pindar, Horace, and Petrarch. This was a period of historical transition. The rising middle class, the Catholic Church, and the Protestant Reformation each sought in their own way to rationalize society and to free it from its superstitious dark ages. Their quest led them to adopt two currents in philosophy, platonism and rationalism, which were diametrically

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opposed to the chaos and delusions of the Middle Ages. All social deviates were to be eliminated for these creatures were surely spawns of the devil that would turn man from his true calling, that is the study of himself. It became preeminently important to learn everything that one might learn so that all might be rationally explained and order restored. Of course, popular literature still retained its stories of legendary beasts who seduced maidens, but these stories were largely forced back into oral tradition where they were often transmitted by nameless subcultural groups onto future storytellers. Although Apuleius's tale of "Cupid and Psyche" was still being told, the Neoplatonists of the Renaissance were praising it more for its "allegorization" of the spiritual quest of the soul for love than for its entertainment value (Warner, *Six Myths of Our Time* 50).

As we have seen so often before, a well-known motif was being reworked to fit the dominant ideology of an age. Of course, the central structures of the tale remained, the journeys and the travails of Psyche were ever-present, but these outer journeys were being interpreted as vehicles to depict the inner quests of the Soul, because writers of the first order were expected to pay close attention to classical purity of form and to put aside fantasy and superstition.

By the end of the Middle Ages, there existed no line of demarcation between the natural and the supernatural. The notion of natural law, which was familiar to the Ancients, had been quite lost to medieval thinkers. Nature and life were popularly regarded as subject to the will of good or evil spirits. The supernatural was bound to the natural and man's destiny was subject to the whims of supernatural beings. In other words, man might be allowed to pursue his fate without the interference or he might become the plaything of a capricious superior being (Clement, 109-110).

The Renaissance was less inclined to believe that human beings were

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unable to control their own destiny. There was a concerted effort to order society and thus free it from its crippling popular beliefs and superstitions. Tales of giants and monsters, like those created by Rabelais, were prized for their power to satirize social weaknesses and foibles. While familiar motifs, such as that of the Beauty and Beast, might remain relatively intact as they passed from one period to the next, their import was constantly being reevaluated. Various elements were combined to form new conglomerates of exposition. Unwittingly the writers and storytellers of a given age were responding to "subterranean" sources within the collective subconscious of their society. These new ways of seeing were embodied in the stories. In fact, under pressure from these sources, the new experiences and feelings being evoked changed the forms of the narratives, as Hall and Paddy have demonstrated in their seminal study, *The Popular Arts* (165). By looking at the context in which these themes are embedded, we can gain insight into the changing moral, social and literary attitudes toward them.

In its quest to imitate ancient classicism, the Renaissance set up beauty as the chief end of art — the beauty that resides in order and symmetry, truth and naturalness, and in unity of tone and impression; and this beauty, it believed, must bear the impress of serenity in order to fulfill what Clement has termed the "soul's quest to regain its primordial nature" (23). Such devotion to classical form and Antiquity's quest for perfection left the French Renaissance largely devoid of the frenetic passions, irrational superstitions, and grotesque images of the Middle Ages. For these new classicists reason, taste, and decorum were the prizes to be cultivated, controlled, and manipulated by the artists. However, the rules governing these elements became so strict that they actually began to govern the amount of self-expression that artists could permit themselves

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without fear of being ostracized.

By the turn of the seventeenth century, the turbulent Renaissance quests for self-control were being supplanted by the new era's search for perfection, a perfection that resided in the finite since the limitless was nearly synonymous with chaos. The emerging artists of this period sought what was clear, definite, and sharply outlined. There was a marked uneasiness toward popular material. The wits or "hommes d'esprit" now began using the classical tales as tools of social amelioration and instruments of civility. According to Gary Cummiskey, these changes in literature were conditioned by changes in society (*The Changing Faces of Horror* 14). From the previous century, artists had learned to cultivate and treasure the fruits of the Ancients and the first half of the seventeenth century would continue to glean many excellent themes and motifs from these invaluable sources. Unfortunately, some of the images, especially in the hands of the less skilled, were becoming hackneyed and trite. Some writers sought changes in the prevailing notions of perfection, residing solely in the purview of classical form. For them it became paramount that national literature be recognized for its power to provoke and evoke the strength of its people. *The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns* was joined because of and in response to the despotic constraints of the Court of Versailles. The confines of good taste should extend beyond the conservative inclinations of a few. As Théophile Gautier observed in his nineteenth-century tribute to *Les Grottesques*: "Les grands esprits qui ne sont touchés que du beau, n'ont pas cette préoccupation du neuf" (*Les Grottesques* x).

As we have observed, the story of Cupid and Psyche had been known in France since the early Middle Ages. In the second half of the seventeenth century, it enjoyed renewed popularity, especially in the Court of Versailles. There were at least four editions of Apuleius's *Golden Ass* in circulation. By 1648

there was a complete French translation of the tale available to the elite. In 1669 La Fontaine composed a satiric version of the tale entitled *Les Amours de Psyché et Cupidon* that took malicious aim at the follies of the age. In 1671 *Psyché, une tragédie-ballet* was performed at Versailles. The entertainment of song and dance was performed for Louis XIV to commemorate the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle of 1668. Given the prominence of these works, it is easy to assume that the story of these lovers was a part of society's repertoire. The success of Apuleius's tale fostered new interest in the Beauty and the Beast motif and stimulated a resurgence in the circulation of popular folk tales. The *précieuses* and their progeny, the ladies of the *ruelles* and the salons, who were well versed in these stories, having been entertained by them as children, began to rework their childhood legends to new ends.

The Moderns led by Charles Perrault and an extraordinary group of women writers took up pen and paper to challenge the prevailing patriarchal notions of women's lustfulness. They berated those who blamed Eve for the Fall of mankind and scorned fathers who married daughters at very young ages to strangers (Warner, *From Beast to Blonde* 277). The ancient tale of *Cupid and Psyche*, since it had become a secular myth, provided the perfect springboard to challenge the dominant cultural ideas about choice, passion, love and romance.

After all, Apuleius's story rebuked Psyche for her loss of Cupid. Her curiosity cost her her happiness. She was guilty of false cognition and would have to perform marvelous feats if she ever wished to be deemed once more worthy of her god of love. It is she who listened unwisely to wagging tongues and broke her husband's taboo to look upon him. Her lover was not a monster, nor even a beast. He was a god, Eros who had concealed his true identity from her sight in order to preserve his anonymity.

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In a reversal of this myth stands *Beauty and the Beast*, a fairy tale in which the heroine must learn to see beyond outward appearance to recognize the irresistible beauty and goodness of the beast. The marked difference highlights the changing attitudes toward love and marriage. The refashioning of the ancient story permitted the tellers of these tales to develop and transmit their own ideas of bliss. By the late seventeenth century, the writers and purveyors of the *contes* were women and men of wit who frequented the *ruelles* and salons of France's elite. The fairy tales that they spun in fashionable circles became a part of a polite protest against the dominant culture represented by the social order of the *ancien régime*. From their writings emerged radical ideas about celibacy, abolishment of arranged marriages, the overthrow of marital slavery and dynastic matrimony. In their stead, these writers called for education, shared status, the right to enjoy *tendresse* with men of equal intelligence, the end of the double standard that permitted masculine promiscuity but disgraced adulteresses (169).

When Charles Perrault, an academician, joined their dispute there was a renewed interest in their cause, but Perrault's involvement was less a recognition of their aims than a chance to direct their struggles in the intellectual *Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns*. By defending fairy tales, the nearly exclusive purview of women writers, he was also promoting native "modern" literature over the Ancients' "models of superiority," that is, all that was based on the Greek or Latin tradition. It was Perrault's belief that fairy or folk tales deserved more attention because they were leading examples of national culture and therefore superior to the Classics: "mais je soutiendray que les Modernes en ont inventé de plus spirituelles et de plus merveilleuses" (*Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* 22). Thus the fairy tales served as propaganda for the adoption of national themes and literary forms. For Perrault and the women writers who

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traveled in the same social circles as he, the fairy tale represented a body of "homegrown" knowledge, which allowed them to reappropriate their heritage. At the center of many of the stories, there stood an active heroine whose success or failure in the end had much to do with her ability to deal with adversity. Even if the endings frequently resulted in a marriage that promised to be "happily ever after," there was almost always some element of choice for the female protagonist, who earned her mate. According to Marina Warner, the Modernists saw themselves as the guardians of the French language, its nurses, and its shapers (*From Beast to Blonde* 170) and the women who supported the Modernists believed that they were furthering their own cause as they moved from the confines of wife and mother to create or at least narrate the tales.

One of the first to take up the cause was Catherine Bernard, who incorporated in her romance, *Inès de Cordoue*, the story of a repellent suitor, "Riquet à la Houppe" ("Ricky with the Tuft"). This gnome-like creature promises the heroine intelligence if she agrees to wed him after a year. When Riquet's bride reneges and marries someone else, the monster comes to reclaim her. In a cruel twist of fate, the husband is transformed into a gnome with a tuft like Riquet. The bride must now live with them both because she cannot tell one from the other nor know to whom to complain.

In 1697 Charles Perrault adapted and refined Apuleius's tale of Cupid and Psyche and Bernard's story of Riquet for his own purposes. The result was a more elegant and certainly more romantic blend of myth and fiction. In Apuleius's "Cupid and Psyche" there is no monster unless it be Psyche's fear of her own sexuality or death. Cupid is an extraordinarily beautiful creature whom she is not allowed to see with her eyes but feel with her touch. However when this myth comes into contact with folklore and literature the monster

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emerges. Perrault's beast, Riquet, is by all accounts very ugly, *monstrueux*, but blessed with great intelligence and gentility. As the story goes, a queen has given birth to twin daughters, one of whom is ugly but clever and eloquent, the other extraordinarily beautiful but emptyheaded. Her lack of wit makes her inappropriate for all suitors much like Psyche's great beauty kept prospective bridegrooms away. Strolling about on her own one day, she meets Riquet who overhears her complaining bitterly about her stupidity. Ricky, who is hideous, but exceptionally *spirituel*, promises the young princess wit and wisdom if she will agree to marry him in one year. The lovely twin tries to wriggle out of her promise like Bernard's heroine but Riquet assures her that if she will love him, he will become the handsomest man in the world. And so thanks to the magic of love, the beauty does fall in love with her beastly husband as Perrault concludes that what he has said is nothing but the plain, unvarnished truth; for "Tout est beau dans ce que l'on aime,/Tout ce qu'on aime a de l'esprit" ("Riquet à la houppe" 181).

It is easy to see that Perrault, for all his posturing, held out for a happy ending because from his male point of view marriage was a woman's source of fulfillment. Bernard, on the other hand, was railing against women's lack of freedom to choose a suitable mate, their lack of social mobility, and demanding equality for her sisters; therefore, her ending depicted the shameful state of affairs for women of her time. A happy ending was out of the question unless women were granted the same rights as men.

A contemporary of Perrault and Bernard, Madame d'Aulnoy, was one of the most successful authors of her time. Translations of her *Memoirs* and her *Tales of the Fairies* could be found in England as early as 1699. D'Aulnoy spun tales fraught with grotesque and satiric elements. Within each of her works could be

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found cruel undercurrents of brutality, ugliness, and murder that did not belie her own infamous past. She, like many of the salon ladies, lambasted arranged marriages, of which she herself had been a hapless victim. Her pages are filled with beastly husbands — rams, serpents, frogs, yellow dwarfs, and hinds. In her world of make believe, occasionally love and happiness are possible for her heroines but never without great struggle and effort.

In “Le Mouton” (“The Ram”), d’Aulnoy invents a delicate and charming animal groom who behaves with the utmost civility and grace during his brief union with the beautiful princess Merveilleuse, but when the latter is restored to the favor of her father the King, she forgets her promise to the beast who cared for her and returns to the pleasures of Court. The hapless ram is left to die outside the gates of the palace, pining the loss of his fair lady. The princess, passing by, finds her lover dead and kills herself.

Unlike Perrault, whose fame has long since eclipsed her own, d’Aulnoy wrote few tales with storybook endings. Her stories overflow with the violence and infamy of the period in which she lived. As she quickly points out humans, like the characters of her tales, must live under laws that are capricious, for the fairies are no more fair than the powerful lords who control the human populace and we are more likely to experience great tragedy at the moment we believe ourselves the most fortunate.

The choicest blessings sent by Heaven
Often tend to cause our ruin.
The charms, talents, that we’re given,
May often end on a sad tune.
The royal ram would have surely seen
Happier days without the charms that lead

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The cruel Ragotte to love, then hurl her mean
But fatal vengeance on his head.
In truth he should have had a better fate,
For spurning a sordid Hymen's chains;
Honest his love — unmasked his hate —
How different from our modern swains!
Even his death may well surprise,
The lovers of the present day:
Only a silly sheep now dies,
Because his ewe has gone astray
(d'Aulnoy, "The Ram" 399).

Like her kindred sisters of the *ancien régime*, Madame d'Aulnoy railed against arranged marriages. She believed that natural feelings, that is love or *tendresse* should blossom between men and women who recognize one another as equals. Critics have suggested that the macabre and violent tendencies of d'Aulnoy's storytelling were in response to aristocratic boredom at court, a form of compensation for the frustrations and helplessness they felt as puppets of the king (Zipes, *Beauties, Beasts, and Enchantment* 297). As we know, these feelings of frustration and helplessness smouldered for some time and were ultimately joined by a desire for liberty, justice, and equality for all. In 1789, they exploded into the rage of the French revolution.

While Perrault, Bernard, and d'Aulnoy may have truly believed that the Modernist view of literature would lead to progress and happiness, there is a real question as to whether their refined yet provocative folktales promoted what they portended. The first half of the eighteenth century certainly seemed to be on the right track as fairy tales and their tellers became the most sought after

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members of the elegant salons; however the masses were excluded from such gatherings and were not reaping the benefits of "progressive" thinking. Their lives were subject to the caprices of the aristocrats whose every wish was fulfilled. Life for the middle class may have been improving, but commoners were not granted the privileges of the Church or the State, and the peasants fared even worse. There was no recourse but revolution. In response, there arose a spate of solutions, some social, some political, some literary, but all calling for reform.

As Zipes and others has demonstrated, there were two major tendencies among French fairy tale writers of the period: either they took the genre seriously and endeavored to incorporate ideas, norms, and values in the narrative structure that they deemed worthy of emulation; or they parodied the genre because they considered it frivolous or trivial, thus associating it with the superstitions of the lower classes (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 15-16).

In *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias has demonstrated how the socio-political shift in favor of absolutism and religious orthodoxy in the latter part of the seventeenth century established modern attitudes toward civilization. The gleeful and self-indulging reaction to Louis XIV's demise led to more subtle forms of socialization, at least during the early years of the regency. Louis XV's regents relaxed the strict rules of the last years of Louis XIV and permitted the Court to frolic and play. The literature of the period responded or promoted this new attitude and the romance was transformed into the fairy tale to become a moral lesson in love, directed at the young and the impressionable ladies of the rising middle class. Material was now being directed more at children. The old hags of the seventeenth century tales were being transformed into well-meaning

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governesses or teachers. Beauty was not going to bed with the Beast, but deciding whether or not they should wed. The erotic discoveries and ordeals of the earlier plotlines were sanitized so that their messages became latent manifestations of their former selves.

In 1740, Madame Gabrielle de Villeneuve wrote the first version of a tale to bear the name "Beauty and the Beast." It appeared in *La jeune américaine, et les contes marins* and was later reprinted in its entirety in Volume 26 of *Le cabinet des fées, et autres contes merveilleux* (1786). Villeneuve's plotline is very complex: nearly one quarter of the text traces the origin of the Beast's enchantment and Beauty's lineage. The cast of characters is enormous — the merchant-stepfather; twelve children, six sons and six daughters, the Beast-Dream Prince, the Prince's mother, a Dream Lady-Fairy, the King of the Happy Isles (Beauty's father), the Queen of the Happy Isles (Beauty's mother and the Dream Fairy's sister), the Bad Fairy, the Mother of Seasons, the Queen of the Fairies, and her young daughter. Nevertheless much of the plotline of subsequent versions of Villeneuve's story remain, including the Father's loss of wealth, Beauty's request for the rose, the Father's journey to recover his lost wealth, the storm, and the visit to the Beast's castle, and the plucking of the rose leading to Beauty's journey to the Beast's castle, her stay and the Beast's proposals, the leave at home and the return to save the dying Beast. However, what is to follow these post fairy tale events — the Prince's story, Beauty's story, marriage and sovereign duties once the Prince's mother is convinced that Beauty is worthy of her son — are seldom found in other adaptations of the tale. Villeneuve's account is meticulous and ingenious, teeming with detailed descriptions of the furniture, dress and modes of the period depicted. It is a compendium of the mores of her age.

In stark contrast is Madame LePrince de Beaumont's seventeen page

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version of "Beauty and the Beast" found in *Le magazin des enfans* (1756) which was translated into English in 1759 and became part of *The Young Misses Magazine*. Many of the characters of Villeneuve's tale are dropped as are the long descriptions of the Prince's and Beauty's stories. Also gone are the dream sequences. The Beast, who is portrayed as utterly repulsive and fearsome, is seen before his transformation as irresistible. Hearne claims that Beaumont's version is actually lacking a hero, because the Beast's only function in the tale is to remain patient while Beauty decides what to do. It is Beauty who is the active protagonist. Like her classic role model, Psyche, Beauty is not without her faults. She breaks her promise to the Beast, her only true friend, and nearly causes his death. In an ending familiar to us all, she decides to return to the Beast and declare her love for him. He is transformed into a Prince and the two are wed.

The brevity of this the most popular version of the story greatly limits the detail presented by Beaumont, although one detects from time to time traces of the ambiance of the French court or hints of the rigors of salon life. Nonetheless, Beaumont did not stray very far from the folk motifs with which she was familiar. The result is a fairy tale that has perpetuated the story in the hearts and the minds of generations to come.

Toward the end of the century, the Comtesse de Genlis composed a comedy in two acts of five scenes each: *The Beauty and the Monster: A Comedy from the French of the Countesse de Genlis Extracted from the Theatre of Education* (1785). There is very little action in the play. Most of the material is revealed through exclamatory dialogues or posed conversations. There are three characters: Sabina, Phedima, a friend of Sabina, and Phanor. Sabina is the beauty; Phedima acts as the narrator, a go-between, and the chorus. It is she who tells the audience what is going on. Phanor represents the beast but unlike some of his

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predecessors he has great intelligence, wit and charm. Like Bernard's or Perrault's heroine in "Ricky with the Tuft" Sabina has limited intelligence, but a good heart. An orphan, she is engaged by unscrupulous relatives to a handsome but boorish suitor. Phanor, hearing of her plight, abducts her and takes her to his palace. At first like all the Belles, Sabina is very unhappy; however, little by little she grows fond of Phanor's attributes. Confused by this change of heart, she decides to leave the palace. Phanor gives her a magic ring and then leaves the enchanted castle so that his beloved will be spared his ugly presence. Realizing her mistake after Phanor leaves, Sabina opens the ring box to wish herself wherever he is, but finds a suicide note. Lamenting her foolish pride, she declares her love and her own suicidal intentions. "The wretched Sabina will follow you. Yes, Phanor, I loved you; and cannot exist without you" (34). Whereupon Phanor reappears as a handsome prince on a throne of flowers.

While suicide is implied in the folk tales by the animal groom's grieving or pining, the literary tales are the first to depict the acts deliberately and violently. In d'Aulnoy's "The Ram" Princess Merveilleuse kills herself after her beloved dies; in Villeneuve's version of "Beauty and the Beast" the newly transformed Prince-Beast and his mother are so depressed by his enchantment that they threaten to kill themselves. Such examples recall the rising discontent of the age. The violence is but one sign of the bloodletting to come.

Villeneuve, Beaumont, and Genlis, like their predecessors, all championed their heroines' right to choose a suitable mate. All three, as conscious "cultural representatives" of their epoch, embellished their versions with chaste formality and reaffirmed an ideal of love based on friendship; however, only Beaumont maintained the story in hand well enough to insure its impact on the following centuries. Without destroying its deeper sense, Beaumont's version of "Beauty

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and the Beast” moved the tale from the purview of the finest salons to the domain of children’s literature. Its new content was tailored for educational purposes and for its audience of children. The fairy tale scripted the difference between historical reality and fictional plausibility, constructing oppositions between what was possible and what was routine to give the readers some sense of how the world ought to be.

To intimate that there were no objections to the use of fairy tales in the socialization process would be erroneous. Some authors of the late eighteenth century could not bring themselves to accept fairy tales as suitable material for children. Jean-Jacques Rousseau warned against the use of fairy tales in a child’s education in *Emile*. Of course Rousseau’s arcadian worlds of love, education, and acceptance were quite separate from social reality. His idyllic revelries enjoyed a modicum of popularity for their novelty during his time, but would meet their demise somewhere between the fall of the *ancien régime* and the establishment of the bourgeois society. However, that is not to say that the quest for Arcadia or Utopia⁵ disappeared. It just changed. Henceforth such quests would be satisfied in one of two ways: either through the discovery of Nature in the form of lost naïveté and wholeness or by the exploration of a concrete rural life (Jauss, *Question and Answer* 176). The dominant society paid no attention to Rousseau’s warnings about the educative value of fairy tales, and the fairy tale became a popular form of moral instruction. The rise of printing houses stimulated an active demand for books for all ages, and the fairy tales were among the first to be placed in print for children. In the nineteenth century there were no less than sixty-four adaptations of “Beauty and the Beast” and its popularity was in great

⁵ Since the Renaissance, there had existed a quest for an ideal society that took one of two forms: that of Arcadia — a land of simple pleasures and quiet existence — or that of Utopia — a land in which all the evils afflicting society had been eradicated and in which the state’s sole purpose was to work for the good and happiness of its citizenry.

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evidence in France, England, and the United States. Certain elements of the tale, however, could not be held exclusively to the new educative format, and so they moved into new domains of existence and literary expression — the gothic and the fantastic.

As we shall learn in Chapter Two, Beauty and the Beast's motif worked itself marvelously well into the historical and social fabric of the nineteenth century. Since the tale focuses on a woman and attempts to define her and describe her innermost conflicts, it served a number of patriarchal agendas. Feminist scholars have long held that writers (male and female) of the period could use the theme to say what was female. Given the prevalent notion of kinship relations that attached most power and privilege to certain family lines, the female was the figure on whom depended the outcome of the struggle among competing ideologies. Doris Kadish and Nancy Armstrong have both argued that gender was politicized in the aftermath of the French Revolution, because sexual relations were the ideal site for changing power relations between classes and cultures and between gender and generations (*Politicizing Gender* 4). Old connotations of order, balance, harmony, and integration were overturned by the events of 1789 and in their stead arose popular imagination. Thus the romances of the late eighteenth century moved to wilder and stranger settings. As the fairy tale was being sanitized, the sentimental novel was being liberated from the sexual restraints it had endured for so long to subvert the longheld codes of conduct related to emotion. More extreme, more rapturous and ultimately more sublime expressions of passion were emerging in France.

In the next chapter we will examine the contexts in which the Beauty and the Beast motif came to be embedded. In this way we shall gain some insight into the changing moral, social and literary attitudes that marked nineteenth-century

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French fiction. We will trace the move from a "literature of ideas" à la Voltaire to a "literature of images" à la Walter Scott, dwelling at some length on the social and historical properties of France circa 1830 to 1914. We will consider the social and political features displayed in the literary works to be examined, because these issues were so prominent in the literature of the period. As we shall see, the opposing elements in nature and society were associated with socio-political traits embodied in the Beauty and the Beast motif. It will also be important to trace how the male and female protagonists of a popular fairy tale were appropriated to embody new cultural values. While these characters most often served the norms of the community from which they sprang and rejected those of the individual, occasionally they challenged the *status quo*. Multiplicity, change and ambiguity were all part of this couple's literary function and value. As we are soon to discover, Beauty and her Beast came to represent varying codes of sexual morality and cultural standards. Nineteenth-century authors used the pair to naturalize and legitimize or denaturalize and challenge particular social, historical, and literary mores. In the end each new combination or recombination of the central elements of the motif illuminates the familiar in unfamiliar ways to teach us to see the possible and the everyday from novel perspectives.

The Historical Context of the Beauties and Beasts of Nineteenth-century French Fiction and Their First Representatives: The Early Works of Victor Hugo

Like all other objects, works of art and literature bear the marks of their own evaluational history, signs of values that acquire their force by virtue of various social and cultural practices, and in this case, certain highly specialized and elaborated institutions — Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value."

As the third season of CBS's popular television drama *Beauty and the Beast* opened, the series's public relations firm repeatedly bombarded the airwaves with the message that their show was not a fairy tale anymore. Much in the same way, the beauties and the beasts of nineteenth-century French fiction proclaimed their independence from their fairy tale versions as they evolved beyond their folkloric forms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to embrace their cultural and social *milieux*. No longer would the stock characters be sheltered in timeless spaces and ahistorical settings. Now they would be set against specific backdrops in step with the rising popularity of the historical novel. Furthermore, in reaction to the political and social unrest of France since the events of 1789, their traits of monstrosity and elegance would be developed along newer and more contrasting lines of demarcation in an effort to create novelty within the repertoire.

The most startling changes within the story-line of the majority of nineteenth-century works using the motif were those associated with the dysphoric ending and the presence of a physically grotesque Beast, who would never change into a handsome prince. While some of these tales offer moral and spiritual changes in the protagonist, there is no physical metamorphosis. The hero usually dies in the same outward ugliness in which he was introduced. His demise defies the conventional ending of "happily ever after," pointing out that Beauty and her Beast are not complementary but polarized characters whose

differences cannot be resolved to either's mutual or everlasting satisfaction. According to Lewis Seifert the dysphoric ending denotes a "cultural malaise" or even anxiety about the place of sexuality in society. While on one hand, the use of the motif liberates sexual practice by accepting multiple visions of human sexuality, the dysphoric ending denies the possibility of a satisfactory sexual relationship between opposites (136).

During the last decade of the seventeenth century and throughout most of the eighteenth century, the story-line of *Beauty and the Beast* was a springboard for a variety of cultural and social agendas. As it mobilized stock feelings within the readers by surrounding them with familiar and comfortable frames of reference, it created new symbolic exchanges and images among the principal characters by vesting the original tale with personal symbols of distinction. Ultimately it would become a channel of change and provocation as it moved from the material of popular culture to acceptance in elite circles. To this day, certain elements of the tale still summon strong feelings of comfort or nostalgia in readers of all ages.¹ This evocative power is important because it posits an explanation as to why some versions of the Beauty and the Beast story survive and others do not despite their reliance on the same basic structures and elements. Of course, some of the works are not as well written nor do they successfully muster the requisite inspirational and provocative powers to stand the test of time and readership; but their history is as crucial to this study as those works that do manage to achieve a certain literary renown.

While it is common for scholars to discuss how a text, which began its

¹ Harold Bloom posits that a reader's familiarity with certain textual motifs amounts to an "anxiety of influence" in which the term influence is "a metaphor, one that implicates a matrix of relationships — imagistic, temporal, spiritual, psychological — all of them ultimately defensive in their nature" (*Anxiety of Influence* xxiii). Bloom further claims that for the writer what matters most is the "complex act of misreading, a creative interpretation that [he] calls poetic misprision" (xxiii).

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existence as popular literature, manages to pass into the literary canon, few deem it important to study the works that fail to garner the same consideration. However, for our purposes the "failed" versions that use the *Beauty and the Beast* motif have more value because they provide glimpses into the rise and fall of popular material, thus revealing a clearer picture of the attitudes, values, and experiences of the progeny of *Beauty and the Beast*. Hannah Arendt perhaps explained it best when she proposed that some works are destined to be studied as cultural objects because they become "phenomena of the world;" while other works only provide entertainment and become "phenomena of life." As she has demonstrated an object is "cultural to the extent that it can endure; its durability is the very opposite of its functionality, which is the quality which makes it disappear again from the phenomenal world by being used up" (*Between Past and Future* 208). If we accept this premise, then we must conclude that, by the middle of the eighteenth century, *Beauty and the Beast* had used up its functionality in France. In other words the motif that once had been used to draw upon common types and popular themes to point out or detect the flaws of French society had become useless to the movement that created it. If the theme ever wished to rediscover its stirring, inspirational voice, it would have to undergo the same profound modifications that the populace of the period was undergoing, for once a work relinquishes its provocative power, it loses its functionality and ultimately yields its capacity to entertain, to teach, and to motivate.

Théophile Gautier, who in his youth championed many of Victor Hugo's theories and most certainly agreed with his mentor that only the Moderns could create *Beauty and the Beast*, by and large repudiated the hypothesis by demonstrating how every age had had its own creators of the grotesque by

announcing: "Ce ne serait pas assez de deux volumes pour renfermer toutes les difformités littéraires, toutes les déviations" (*Les Grotesques* v). Furthermore, he claimed that, while it is difficult to understand certain vogues for writing that by today's standards appear stupid, one must recognize that at one time this sort of writing was esteemed by educated people, full of taste and judgment, who found in the authors of the grotesque quality, talent, genius. "Nul ne dupe entièrement son époque, et, dans les réputations les moins fondées, il y a toujours quelque chose de vrai" (vii).

Today ethnographers like Henry Jenkins and Norman K. Denzin argue that "good taste" is based on "fan" concepts of appropriate conduct or aesthetic merit. In other words, good taste is grounded on class interests, social experience (or the lack thereof), and education. Through the enculturation of particular tastes, social position is established and lines of distinction are marked to denote what constitutes "high" culture and breeding and what defies it. Then from such lines of demarcation desirable and undesirable strategies of interpretation and styles of consumption are drawn (Jenkins, 16). Pierre Bourdieu adds that tastes are shaped by our earliest experiences as members of a particular cultural group, reinforced by social exchanges, and rationalized through encounters with "institutions" that reward "proper" conduct and "good" taste (*Distinctions* 44).

For Théophile Gautier, however, it was not a question of styles of consumption but of innovation or renovation. The taste for the bizarre and the unnatural revived a palate weakened by a literary regimen that relied too heavily upon "healthy" and regular doses of classical purity. According to Gautier, the public needed to rediscover "le piment des *concetti* et des gongorismes" from time to time (ix) because such sojourns away from the mundane offered writers more freedom to explore worlds of fantasy and

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whimsy, and to espouse the fashions and jargon of the day without fear that such flights of fancy would endure, for "si rien n'est plus beau que l'antique, rien n'est plus laid que le suranné... Le génie seul est éternel, le talent est transitoire. Ce n'est pas à dire pour cela qu'il faille dédaigner le talent, car il est encore assez rare pour qu'on en tienne compte" (ix).

While Hugo claimed that only the Moderns could have produced *Beauty and the Beast*, Gautier reviewed the work of lesser known French authors who had teased the classical palate with grotesque literary deformities and subjects. His critical studies suggest a much longer history of the use of grotesque themes than Hugo ever recorded, and his critical reviews of France's authors of the grotesque clearly propose that certain works enjoyed greater provocative power precisely because they worried little about classical style. It is their destiny, if you will, to evoke "mille détails de moeurs, d'habitudes, de costumes, mille idiotismes de pensée et de style que vous cherchiez en vain ailleurs" (xiv). Nonetheless, this power inevitably fades as time passes and as reason reclaims its title and the order of the day.

Gautier's theories are important to the present study primarily because they refute Hugo's contention that only the Moderns could produce *Beauty and the Beast*, and secondly because they represent a critical attempt to explain why some works gain the canonical force of the classical while others lose their power to incite or to inspire and become unfashionable. To explain the phenomenon, Hans Jauss has suggested that "the original provocation through which an autonomous work negates the normativity of the actual and, along with it, the authority of the Past finally falls prey to the cunning of the tradition..." (*Question and Answer* 148). In other words, a work either suspends its original anticonformism and is appropriated by the dominant ideology or it falls into

disrepute.

A case in point is Victor Hugo's "Preface" to *Cromwell*, which in its day was regarded as provocative. However, twentieth-century readers who expect to find an open attack on the neoclassical tragedy in this document will be sorely disappointed as they begin to read the work itself, because, while the text which follows Hugo's celebrated "Preface" was hailed as a dramatic departure from the literary practices of its time, it scarcely reveals itself to be radical, progressive, or revolutionary by present-day standards. Historical distance and changes in taste and style have strongly deflated the original "romantic" force of Hugo's drama. The literary and social horizons of expectations that the text offered to its original addressees has been lost. There now exists a formidable gap between received expectations and depicted expectations. For this reason we must return to the historical period and analyze the manifestations of our selected motif vis-à-vis the critics and masses if we are ever to understand the provocative force of the Beauty and the Beast motif in the nineteenth century.

Most of the works that we are to study gained popular success in their day by appropriating the imagery of the fairy tale theme, but today these same texts are regarded as failed romances. One possible explanation for the unpopularity of these works in the twentieth century may be found in the way this century reads. Janice Radway discovered via her study of reading the romance that today's women (who are the majority of readers of romance) reject texts in which a woman is involved with more than one man because they have trouble identifying the hero (161). As we have observed previously, it was common in nineteenth-century fiction to focus on a woman and classify her by describing her amorous conflicts. In other words, how the woman handles love, courtship, and marriage delineates her ability (or lack thereof) to resolve her sexual

struggles.

In the works under study here, the Beauty is always involved in confounding relationships with more than one man. Many nineteenth-century romances embraced and exploited the pitfalls of triangulated and even quadrangulated liaisons. To find examples of these complicated romances we need look no further than Hugo's union of La Esmeralda, Phoebus, Frollo and Quasimodo; Barbey's linking of Jeanne Feuardent, Croix-Jugan, and Maître Hardouey; or Leroux's on again off again engagements of Christine Daaé, Erik the Opera Ghost, and Raoul de Chagny. In most of the stories, the complications of the relationships lead to violent death for the Beauty and the Beast. Occasionally, as we shall see, the Beauty survives but is robbed of her happiness and self-fulfillment because she resisted patriarchal authority in her quest for a mate. It is this ability to choose that underscores the changing male-female relationships in the nineteenth century. In the works that we shall examine, we shall encounter Beauties fighting to possess their bodies in situations where their right to self-individuation is not recognized.

During the nineteenth century sexuality was an evolving cultural construct, like history, and it tended to progress in fits and starts, much like the popular children's game in which participants move two steps forward then one step back. As we have noted, Apuleius's "Cupid and Psyche" held sex as the burning issue. Seventeenth and eighteenth century versions of the work sublimated such impulses and transformed the lustful Beast into a more platonic suitor who relinquishes control to the Beauty. It is she who is in command; the Beast waits for her to choose him. In the nineteenth century, one finds examples of both sorts of Beast — those who control and devour their prey and those who patiently await their fate. The distinct outcome of such stories has much to do

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with the way the author viewed middle-class authority.

For Victor Hugo, the nineteenth century was a new world that had to be re-formed, re-done. According to him the artist's position was privileged. "Les écrivains et les poètes du dix-neuvième siècle ont cette admirable fortune de sortir d'une genèse, d'arriver après une fin du monde, d'accompagner une réapparition de lumière, d'être les organes d'un recommencement" (*William Shakespeare* 405). However, with fortune comes responsibility and it falls upon the artist to do more than his predecessors. "Stimuler, presser, gronder, réveiller, suggérer, inspirer. C'est cette fonction, remplie de toutes parts par les écrivains, qui imprime à la littérature de ce siècle un si haut caractère de puissance et d'originalité" (409).

In the twentieth century, successful popular romances have to produce a happy ending. Of course, there are obstacles, and often another man does interfere in the development of the relationship but these obstacles ultimately serve to strengthen the union of the couple. Nineteenth-century romance was more commercially successful if the hero or the heroine died rather than embrace the bourgeois values of the era. The fact that Claude Frolo, Cyrano, or Erik the Opera Ghost try and fail to seduce La Esmeralda, Roxane, and Christine Daaé on so many occasions suggests that these women possess some kind of power over men other than that vested in their physical beauty. The men who love them must negotiate their positions. Ostensibly they are of significantly higher station or wealthier than their female counterparts and therefore better placed to make demands for sexual gratification; however, their social superiority fails to produce the desired effect and the women hold sway. In fact, the women preserve their essential self often at an exorbitant price — their life or the life of their beloved. Marriage, middle class respectability are not outcomes to be

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expected. Death, degradation or exile are more likely the destiny of such women.

In order to establish the literary predispositions of nineteenth-century French fiction, I shall apply the first two of Hans Jauss's principles for the objectification of the "generic" horizon of expectations, namely the period's pre-understanding of genre, and the form and theme of already familiar works. Such principles have received similar treatment by Wolfgang Iser, who suggests in *The Act of Reading* that readers bring to each work a repertoire made up of formal and thematic characteristics drawn from earlier works. If you will, this repertoire has produced Jauss's so-called horizon of expectations, that is, it has created a familiar territory in which readers are allowed to act and react to works based on their knowledge of previous narratives, social and historical norms, or the whole culture from which the texts have emerged. Clifford Geertz claims that patterns of relations or expectations are historically transmitted "embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (*The Interpretation of Cultures* 89).

Theories of reception such as those proposed by Iser, Geertz and Jauss deal with existing readings whose reactions testify to certain historically conditioned experiences of literature. In one sense such theories reconstruct a history of the readers' judgments of works. With each new text, readers add to their repertoire, that is, they add to the material that they use as points of reference. These referential contexts are composed of material selected from social systems and literary traditions that give a work its authority. Naturally, when this material is appropriated into a "new" work, there develops a skirmish

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line between modified expectations and transformed memories.² Because the original context and function are modified, new connections may be produced that in turn may represent insignificant or dramatic departures from the original context and function creating what Iser has termed a "constant tug-of-war" between the original elements, their transformation, and the modified expectations of the reader (111).

While literary fairy tales once were well designed to subvert the prevailing traditions, their subsequent retooling for pedagogic purposes in pre-revolutionary France no longer served the interests of the subversive writers of the late eighteenth century nor met the needs of the literary radicals of the nineteenth century. The reign of the fairy tale as a tool of dissent was over. Its confrontation with the bloody terror and violence of the French Revolution shattered the harmonious order of the world of the *ancien régime*, leaving most readers and writers searching for explanations for all the horror and loss. Some writers and politicians who witnessed the French Revolution at first hand compared the genocide in France to a woman who had lost her reason and become a devouring monster. André Chénier went as far as to suggest that women who participated in the French Revolution were "an inversion of the sexes," that they were emblematic of the conundrum that the revolution had become and to support his claim he pointed to the iconoclastic murderess, Charlotte Corday. While one might like to dismiss Chénier's remark as an isolated misogynist statement, it actually represents a popular belief that would gain literary support in the century to come. In 1793, Mary Wollstonecraft, once a

² Wolfgang Iser claims that the reading process actually affects the way in which literary conventions and traditions take their place in the readers' repertoire. The evolution or transformation occurs as a result of the manner in which the traditions are removed from their original context or function and reconnected to a new context that incorporates the original text, its transformed elements, and the readers' horizon of expectations.

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supporter of the French Revolution, noted how peculiar it was that "a people who often leave the theatre before the catastrophe should have bred up such monsters!" To explain the aberration, she declared: "Still we ought to recollect that the sex called tender commit the most flagrant acts of brutality (*"The Character of the Parisians"* 377).

Doris Kadish and Nancy Armstrong have both discussed at length gender and politics in the nineteenth century. Kadish argues that gender and politics went hand in hand in the nineteenth century; that nineteenth-century works must be read as retellings of the French Revolution, and that the political meanings of these works can be determined by studying their narrative strategies (2). According to Armstrong, nineteenth-century novels, which sought to serve their own political ends, "seized the authority to say what was female" by focusing on a woman, defining her and describing her amorous conflicts (5). Statements such as those of Chénier and Wollstonecraft depict a general belief in the decline of civilization after the events of 1789, closely linked to the degeneration of women, new illnesses, and social deterioration. It now fell upon the patriarchy to re-establish order. The return of harmony and peace became the priority. Multiple figures of authority arose adding to the confusion and polarization as the once sober language of reason was overtaken or overthrown by the passionate rhetoric of revolution. New monsters emerged but these were not the fictional beasts of popular legends. They were monstrous tyrants, despots, and madmen.

According to Fred Botting, the monster metaphor is often employed in political and literary rhetoric to invoke figures of resistance and to re-establish authority, because the monster is a symbol of instability and anxiety (139-40). Blame for the instability of the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first

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decades of the nineteenth is frequently attributed to monstrous institutions or overly ambitious individuals, also known as megalomaniacs à la Napoleon Bonaparte and women murderesses à la Charlotte Corday, who “inverted” their sex. The old regime with its elitist formulae was a greedy beast that incapacitated its people with chains of tyranny; the Reign of Terror was an insatiable monster that devoured its citizenry in bloody orgies of rage; Napoleon was a creature of darkness, a brooding hulk of ambition that sucked France’s resources dry; and the Restoration that brought back *la Terreur blanche* of the Old Regime, summary executions, revenge and retaliation was no better than a wolf in sheep’s clothing. In view of the sweeping political, economic and social changes engendered by the events of 1789, the demise of the fairy tale was inevitable because it no longer served any functionality in an age that demanded that it do so. Historical time now ruled, because survival depended on appropriate responses to the here and now.

As we know, the time of the fairy tale is imaginary and indeterminate, thus lacking a sense of historical moment. The characters of such stories are usually examples of true binary oppositions. They often represent the struggle between good and evil, beautiful and ugly, young and old. While such dichotomies still existed in the nineteenth century, there was a belief that binary oppositions were complementary. Victor Hugo suggested that modern genius was born of the fruitful union of opposites: “Revenons donc, et essayons de faire voir que c’est de la féconde union du type grotesque au type sublime que naît le génie moderne, si complexe, si varié dans ses formes, si inépuisable dans ses créations, et bien opposé en cela à l’uniforme simplicité du génie antique” (Préface de *Cromwell* 417).

Prior to the French Revolution most folk and fairy tales were peopled

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with beings who at their worst were mischievous or misunderstood. As a rule the principal characters were beneficent. They embodied a limited set of traits understood to be the symbolic summary of their completed destiny. Between 1789 and 1820 such beneficence was rare. Each new government seemed more cruel and devastating than its predecessor. With the advent of bloody revolts and war, literary characters became more complex, more contradictory creatures whose traits and motives could be directly correlated to their need to deal with a particular reality.

In most fairy tales readers are offered a literary exposition that paints scenes of serenity, gracefulness, gentleness, and resolution. The rare evil creatures who populate the stories may appear frightful at first but it soon becomes apparent that they will receive their just desserts by tale's end. Such justice was not apparent to those who experienced first-hand the consequences of the French Revolution. While the hero and heroine of a fairy tale normally have relatively little difficulty restoring harmony to their world, harmony, order, and peace were unknown to the French people of post-revolutionary France. Fairy tales might suggest that it was easy to re-establish social equilibrium from an initial situation of disequilibrium, but the historical moment had proven otherwise as Europe and many parts of the new world convulsed in paroxysms of transitory existence.

Of course, the events of the French Revolution greatly taxed the literary and intellectual life of the rest of the century, diverting all attention to the political melodrama that was unfolding in "real" time, "real" space, with "real" characters whose exploits and debacles would be recorded in history and popular accounts. While careful literary analysis of fairy tales might indeed reveal that these popular traditions do address the conflicts, contradictions and

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tensions on which myths are founded, within both the dominant and conflicting ideologies, they also espouse the fiction of unimpaired existence, and after the events of 1789 existence was greatly impaired as social order broke down completely, destroying any illusion of unity.

Important conservative manifestoes of the 1790s accuse the Enlightenment of having led France to disaster through its simplistic and abstract conception of people and its utopian quest for perfect social order. Its spokespersons had promoted fantasies and crowned them Reason when they were really fabrications that were woefully lacking and rejected tradition, religion, familial (some would say feudal) relations between the nobles and the commoners. For all that the Revolution promised, it only delivered the godless slaughter of its people. In such an environment there was no longer any room for mythical heroes slaying giants or time for naïve maidens to discover a prince concealed in the guise of a beast. In fact, there was no room for any member of the aristocracy in a nation where all were equal partners in a classless society.

The French Revolution had effectively put an end to the old way of life. Schools were closed, the monarchy abolished, salons outlawed, traditional religion attacked and nearly vanquished. Prior to the events of 1789, most writers felt themselves a part of the fabric of their society; after the Revolution, however, they found themselves adrift without the material or spiritual support of their literary predecessors. The *mal du siècle* began its existence as a reaction to a very real political, social, and economic dilemma — the young were disenfranchised, without useful work, and facing an uncertain future. This malaise was informed by a negative appraisal of the immediate past and scant hope for any immediate amelioration.

In his *Essai sur les révolutions* published in London in 1797, Chateaubriand

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accused the Encyclopedists of having destroyed the monarchy, the aristocracy, and Christianity without creating anything but a government of senseless mob rule. Some years later in his *Mémoires*, the author of *René* would describe the Paris of 1792 as a drunken people marching toward its destiny. The images of Chateaubriand's personal monsters as portrayed in his descriptions of Marat as the "Caligula de carrefour" or Danton as the "Hun à taille de Goth" are quite indicative of the general malaise with which the nineteenth century began. For the young aristocrats expelled from their homeland, all was lost. The only salvation lay in "forced individualism" from which one might learn the benefits of solitude, the charms of nature, and the virtues of primitive men (Bishop 32). One might thus surmise from this quick survey of but one of France's lost children that these new feelings of *le mal du siècle*, the quests for solitude, individualism, and nature were experienced before they ever were recorded in literary annals.

Begun as a counterpoint to the dominant eighteenth-century themes of reason, moderation, and order, the early essays of the Romantic movement cultivated wilder elements for the literary palate than those offered by rationalism and empiricism. The grotesque, the primitive, the mysterious, and the sublime were esteemed over the beautiful. While there are plenty of examples of primitive quests in the writing of the period, sentimentalism and emotion made deeper inroads into the popular literature of the Age of Reason. The last years of the eighteenth century witnessed the arrival of the Gothic novel with its eerie abodes and phantoms as the British embraced the fantastic. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Byron were all the rage. As the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars ravaged Europe, German Romanticism flourished. Goethe and Schiller took up the romantic manner of their literary

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father Rousseau. Schlegel, Novalis, Schelling, and Jena proclaimed themselves romantic and propagated the theories so important to the philosophy of the movement. Add to these the theology of Schleiermacher and the music of Beethoven and it is no wonder that German Romanticism held such remarkable appeal for French exiles. In fact, in most of Europe, Romanticism reached its maximum influence between 1810 and 1830; however, France's interest and involvement in the movement was delayed by the Empire's penchant for neoclassicism and the Restoration's conservative ideologues. Of course France had always had her share of romantics. Madame de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Chateaubriand, and Charles Nodier were among the first whose writings ignited the souls of Hugo, Lamartine, Vigny, and Dumas.

While there was a proliferation of chapbooks or *livres de colporteurs* that featured the fairy tale versions of *Beauty and the Beast* and imprinted the story on the subconscious of many French, English and American children of the period, there were also other popular genres, especially the novel and the short story, that sought boldly to restructure the fairy tale *topoi* to meet adult needs. These new interpretations and representations of the motif sought to rediscover what was natural to the fairy tale's basic make-up and render it more palatable to grown-up taste. The startling new appropriations of the theme suggest that some literary texts at least were engaging a particular moment in history in order to redefine its socio-historical context.

There is no question that the socio-historical context of a work influences the selection and detail of a story's telling; however, as we shall soon see, the central aspects of *Beauty and the Beast* (or any romance, for that matter) must remain the same in order to exploit, with maximum effect, the story's power to evoke strong reactions, promote new thought connections, and form a solid,

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recognizable nucleus to stimulate what Barthes called the "collective mentality."³

Perhaps *Beauty and the Beast's* power to captivate can be explained in terms of the way the tale retains powerful old elements expressed with profound new considerations. Like all literary commodities that endure, the narrative structure and form of *Beauty and the Beast* are the result of a complicated and lengthy process of production that is itself subject to a host of material and social factors. The most common elements of *Beauty and the Beast* deal with physical and sentimental descriptions of the principal characters. The Beast is horribly disfigured and repulsive. He is isolated, feels pain at his disfigurement, and despairs that no one will ever love him for himself. Beauty is portrayed as extraordinarily beautiful, but naive, easily led by the "patriarchs" who dominate her existence. In every tale, there is the fervent belief that if the Beast can inspire, accept, and reciprocate love, he will be saved. If love is rejected by both or either character, death awaits.

While the Beauty and the Beast theme certainly falls within the category of formulaic literature because it relies on a recipe that dictates the essential ingredients to be included in each new version of the story, it also demonstrates its resilience and adaptability to other literary genres by reworking the manner in which conventions and narrative elements take place. By retaining the central form of the referential contexts and incorporating the original elements with slight transformations of the same via reduction or modification, the new versions of the tale can successfully draw out and expand the horizon of

³ In *Critique et vérité*, Roland Barthes notes that the literary work is essentially paradoxical because it represents history and at the same time resists it. Everyone feels that the work cannot be pinned down, and that it is something other than its own history, or the sum of its sources, its influences, its models. Accordingly then, "Le rapport critique à l'oeuvre est celui d'un sens à une forme. Le critique ne peut prétendre 'traduire' l'oeuvre, notamment en plus clair, car il n'y a rien de plus clair que l'oeuvre. Ce qu'il peut, c'est 'engendrer' un certain sens en le décrivant d'une forme qui est l'oeuvre" (64).

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expectations of the readers. Romantic fiction is well suited to this task because it is fantasy that seeks to cultivate repetitive, stereotypical, and unrealistic situations, as fairy stories are wont to do. (Studies of popular culture have shown that best-selling novels are often formulaic, that is they relate stories already familiar to the reading public).

Like the Brothers Grimm, who embraced their roots and proudly proclaimed their Germanic heritage, the French Romantics of the 1820s and 1830s felt it incumbent upon them to re-examine the primordial roots of France's modern man so that they might trace man's continuing progress to a greater good. They claimed that they were on the verge of a new frontier that had to reject the two previous periods of production if it wished to survive. "Nous sommes à l'aurore d'une grande ère littéraire, et cette flétrissante opinion voudrait que notre époque, si éclatante de son propre éclat, ne fût que le pâle reflet des deux époques précédentes" (Hugo, "Le Parricide," *Le Reveil*, 19 février 1823). While the Romantics purported themselves to be new or novel, they were in fact appropriators of well-known tales who created imaginative retellings of a story. The novelty, if indeed it were novel, stemmed from the way they put the well-known elements together. The finished product was a reaction to the thought systems they chose to explore. Romanticism moved France from the traditional form of culture to a more modern form of mass culture. There was a blurring of lines between the elite and *le menu peuple* as new modes of book distribution opened the world of reading to the masses, who here-to-fore were unable to afford such luxuries.

The early romantic period was characterized by a certain infatuation with mystery and thirst for the absolute that the *jeune France* felt lacking in their nation. This penchant for mystery and the supernatural provided fertile ground

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for the emergence of the fantastic short story and the gothic novel. Inspired in part by the somber English gothic novels and the German ballads of the late eighteenth century, the first works of French romanticism followed the tradition of Walpole, Radcliffe, and Goethe in their exploration of the world of the supernatural and terror. Nineteenth-century French fiction is replete with bipolar conflicts of movement and resistance, revolution and restoration. As Peter Brooks has observed most of the narratives rely on uncertainty (uncertainty of fatherhood, uncertainty of authority) to shape the plot (*Reading the Plot* 64). The main characters of such narratives continually struggle to assert their personal legitimacy in the face of a conflicting principle of authority. Like the Beast of fairy tales, they await a Beauty who is clever enough to discover their "true" nature.

Demographic statistics of the late 1820s reveal that seventy percent of the French population was under the age of forty and yet this majority of young voices had no vote, no way to legitimize their concerns except through the press. Victor Hugo, as the self-proclaimed leader of the young lions, took advantage of the disenchantment of his generation to set in motion his program of reform. Hugo exploited the world of the criminally deviant, the monstrous, because he found it limitless, the perfect wellspring of transgressive behavior vis-à-vis the increasingly unappealing social and literary manifests of his era. Using popular themes and motifs, such as that of *Beauty and the Beast*, Hugo ridiculed social control by likening the pariahs of society to its minions.

Two of Victor Hugo's earliest works contain trace elements of the Beauty and the Beast motif. In his first literary effort, written at the age of sixteen, Hugo creates the romantic triangle of a beauty in love with a noble white man, but

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beloved by an even nobler if class-inferior black slave, Pierrot, who because of his menial status on the plantation ranks no higher than a beast. His lowly station furnishes the ideal position from which to explore the image of a creature of transgression, desire, and displacement. To complicate the plotline, Hugo incorporated into the concoction a grotesque dwarf whose small size is eclipsed by the blackness of his soul and his evildoings.

Bug-Jargal is a historically-based tale that recounts the story of a black prince, enslaved by French colonizers, who leads his people in a slave revolt in Santo Domingo. As a Negro slave, Pierrot or Bug-Jargal is little better than a beast, but his physical appearance and station in life belie his extraordinary virtues of leadership, courage, self-sacrifice, and compassion. In a song, Pierrot, also known as Bug-Jargal, explains to his beloved Marie why she must look beyond the prejudices of her day to see his true nature. "Et pourquoi repousserais-tu mon amour, Marie? Je suis roi, et mon front s'élève au-dessus de tous les fronts humains. Tu es blanche et je suis noir; mais le jour a besoin de s'unir à la nuit pour enfanter l'aurore et le couchant, qui sont plus beau que lui!" (37).

Written in fourteen days on a dare, Hugo first published the work in serial form in the May and June issues of *Le Conservateur littéraire* of 1820. Six years later he published an expanded edition in January, 1826, that immediately was rejected by the literary critics of its time for its lack of realism. Most of the objections leveled at the work dealt with Hugo's "unrealistic" portrayal of the

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slaves' abilities to show compassion and justice. Lady Sydney Morgan found the hero "too virtuous" because "according to physiologists, the African organization does not lend itself to such qualities" (*France in 1829-30* 184-85). *Le Globe* claimed that few white men — let alone Negroes — were such models of courage, generosity and good taste... (March 2, 1826). Nevertheless, *Bug-Jargal* proved itself exceptional because of its detailed, albeit somewhat haphazard, account of the 1791 rebellion in Santo Domingo. It was also remarkable because of its portrayal of a self-sacrificing black hero who hurls himself between the white heroine and a crocodile to save his beloved and then forfeits his own life to save her fiancé Léopold d'Auverney from certain death, but was Hugo protesting the plight of the slaves in the New World or trying to escape from his own prejudices, as Graham Robb suggests, by giving Pierrot the emblematic 'ug' of his name and the physical portrait of his creator (123)?

While *Bug-Jargal* may not appear to be an exemplary version of *Beauty and the Beast*, because of its lack of a deformed and hapless lover seeking to be recognized and redeemed by the Beauty of his dreams, it certainly represents an imaginative escape to the New World that permitted Hugo to toy with the combination of the grotesque and the sublime, and also affords us a first glimpse into Hugo's sympathies for social, political, and racial outcasts. In the misunderstood Pierrot are trace elements of the Beast who would sacrifice anything for his beloved, even vengeance. Like the Belles of the fairy tale, it is she who controls his destiny as he eloquently points out. Love has blinded him to his duty. He would renounce everything for her. "Hélas! ta voix est plus douce pour moi que le chant même des jeunes oiseaux qui battent de l'aile dans le ciel, et qui viennent du côté de ma patrie; De ma patrie où j'étais libre! Libre et roi, jeune fille! j'oublierais tout cela pour toi, j'oublierais tout, royaume, famille,

devoirs, vengeance, oui, jusqu'à la vengeance" (36).

As Hugo's style and interests evolved, the comical farcical and the monstrously horrible would be shaped into a vision of the grotesque that went beyond physical deformity to embrace multifarious shapes and sizes.⁴ His first attempts to couple the grotesque and the sublime tended to restrict the defining characteristics of the grotesque to isolated figures (the dwarf, the hunchback) or objects (gargoyles). The contrasting portraits of Habibrah, the obi conspirator in *Bug-Jargal*, and his more physically attractive, but no less beastly counterpart Pierrot are but one example. Habibrah is a dwarf-like hunchback who serves as a clown or jester in his owner's house. For his colonial master, he represents a loyal and faithful servant, but Habibrah secretly plots his enslavers' destruction and death. A mulatto and an obi or witchdoctor, the red-headed dwarf is an enigmatic first sketch of Hugo's future beasts.

C'était un de ces êtres dont la conformation physique est si étrange qu'ils le paraîtraient des monstres, s'ils ne faisaient rire. Ce nain hideux était gros, conventru, et se mouvait avec une rapidité singulière sur deux jambes grêles et fluettes qui, lorsqu'il s'asseyait, se repliaient sous lui comme les bras de l'araignée. Sa tête énorme, lourdement enfoncée entre ses épaules, héri d'une laine rousse et crépue, était accompagnée de deux oreilles si larges que ses camarades avaient coutume de dire qu'Habibrah s'en servait... Son visage était toujours et n'était jamais le même... (22-23).

The traits that Hugo first emphasized here would recur in his portraitures

⁴ Wolfgang Kayser has suggested that Hugo assigned a function to the grotesque — that of one pole of tension whose opposite pole is constituted by the sublime. Accordingly, the grotesque ceases to be a feature of modern art and becomes a confronting device that must confront its opposite, the sublime. While the sublime points to a loftier, spiritual world, the grotesque points to an inhuman, "abysmal realm" (57).

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of Han d'Islande, Quasimodo, and Gwynplaine. In startling contrast is Hugo's portrait of Pierrot, the white man's slave and beast of burden:

Ce nègre, d'une taille presque gigantesque, d'une force prodigieuse, pouvait bien être la rude adversaire contre lequel j'avais lutté la nuit précédente...mais je rappelai, non sans étonnement, l'air de rudesse et de majesté empreint sur son visage au milieu des signes caractéristiques de la race africaine, l'éclat de ses yeux, la blancheur de ses dents sur le noir éclatant de sa peau, la largeur de son front, suprenante surtout chez un nègre, le gonflement dédaigneux qui donnait à l'épaisseur de ses lèvres et de ses narines quelque chose de si fier et de si puissant... (45-46).

Evident in these two portraits is the isolation and alienation of the contrasting figures. While Hugo throughout the work largely separates the grotesque from the sublime, he plays with the notion of who is the beast in this scenario and who the beauty and they are not the fairy tale characters of old but men thrown together in struggles for supremacy. There are hints within the text of Victor Hugo's future course of action in this regard. In the revised edition of *Bug-Jargal* (1826), Habibrah asks Léopold: "Crois-tu donc que pour être mulâtre, nain et difforme, je ne sois pas homme? Ah, j'ai une âme, et une âme plus profonde et plus forte que celle dont je vais délivrer ton corps de jeune fille!" (240). The obi's lament echoes the Beast's complaints when Beauty shuns him, turning away to escape his sight.⁵ Unfortunately, there is no salvation for this dwarf obi, whose blind hatred blackens his soul literally and figuratively.

⁵ In one version of "Beauty and the Beast," the Beast reveals how dismayed he is by Beauty's attempt to conceal her disgust. He tells her: "Je sais ce que je suis, que j'ai mérité d'être; bête d'effroi, bête d'horreur, qui doit te faire frissonner plus que l'araigne et le crapaud. . . Si tu pouvais me deviner. . ." ("La Belle Rose," *Le Trésor des contes* 237). These lines reflect the same painful realization as those of Habibrah, but dismiss hatred and disdain as responses to the slight.

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Evidently Victor Hugo was not quite ready to embrace all creatures great and small in this the first of his works to use the Beauty and the Beast motif. Via Léopold, Hugo states his position by replying to Habibrah: "Monstre! tu te trompes, il y a encore quelque chose du baladin dans l'atrocité de tes traits et de ton coeur" (242).

Borrowing from the fairy tale and fantastic stories of the late eighteenth century, Victor Hugo played with and upon the readers' familiarity with the depiction of a dualistic world composed of natural and supernatural elements. The combination of the two orders is particularly striking in Hugo's second fantastic story of Han of Iceland, a red-headed, long-nailed dwarf born of a witch and Ingulphus the Exterminator. Like his literary descendent Quasimodo, this ugly spawn is taken in by a cleric who attempts to christianize him; however, Han will not be swayed by religion nor charity. He torches the bishop's home as he sets sail for Norway and a life of evil destruction and murder.

Han is perhaps Hugo's most terrifyingly malevolent character. Devoid of a conscience, he slaughters animals, soldiers and seditious miners alike, envelopping himself in the skins, hair and blood of his victims. "Il s'arma d'une pierre tranchante, s'accroupit sur le corps chaud et palpitant du loup,... fendit la peau dans toute sa longueur sur le ventre... Il jeta cette dépouille sur ses épaules meurtries de morsures, en tournant au dehors le côté nu de la peau humide et tachée de longues veines de sang" (295).

As early as 1818, Hugo began experimenting with the coupling of grotesque and sublime elements. The grotesque chez Hugo was constituted by the striking contrasts between form and content, the use of the fantastic, a certain eerie sensation of individual isolation from the world, and insecurity or instability. Paired with the sublime, these clashing forces seemed both ridiculous

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and terrifying, causing Lamartine to remark about Hugo's first novela, *Han d'Islande*: "Nous relisons vos ravissantes poésies, votre terrible *Han*. Soit dit en passant je le trouve aussi trop terrible; adoucissez votre palette; l'imagination, comme la lyre, doit caresser l'esprit; vous frappez trop fort: je vous dis ce mot pour l'avenir" (Saint-Point, par Mâcon, 8 juin 1823, in G. Simon, *Lamartine-Victor Hugo Lettres inédites* 671).

Han d'Islande appeared in four pocket-sized volumes in February and July 1823. Difficult to read today, *Han* enflamed generations of readers who devoured fantastic and gory tales. Appearing as fantastic stories were riding a wave of popular success, *Han of Iceland* was translated twenty-three times into English during the nineteenth century and appeared in Norwegian in 1831. For a time the short novel basked in its success. While Lamartine found the work disturbing, others embraced it wholeheartedly for its uniqueness. Charles Nodier became one of Victor Hugo's first admirers. Reviewing the first edition of *Han d'Islande* for *La Quotidienne*, he noted with unbridled enthusiasm the coming of a new literary giant. "On y trouve enfin un style vif, pittoresque, plein de nerf, et, ce qu'il y a de plus étonnant, cette délicatesse de tact et cette finesse de sentiment qui sont des acquisitions de la vie, et qui contrastent ici de la manière la plus surprenante avec les jeux barbares d'une imagination malade" (*Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie* 153). In 1825, the first English translation was published with four etchings by George Cruikshank. The novel was abridged but not educolrated for its targeted juvenile audience. Mme la Marquise de K** commanded a lithograph of Han for her boudoir with the following legend: "Han d'Islande, après la révolte de moeurs, sourit appuyé sur sa hache de pierre. Il vient de déchirer de ses griffes dégoulinantes de sang plusieurs corps étendus à ses pieds, quelques vautours. Corbeaux, loups, chiens

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sauvages et l'ours favori accourent prendre part au festin (Grossiord, 150). The marquise's lithograph depicts the feral Han towering above his kingdom of beasts atop the body of one of his victims. He stares directly forward and raises his left hand in victory as his friend the bear cowers at his feet. The monster's depiction in this drawing surprisingly reflects future visions of his creator's eminence in the literary world. I am reminded of Benjamin Robaud's lithograph of "Victor Hugo: La Panthéon charivarique" and Emile Zola's disparaging remarks of 1878, which characterized Hugo as "le géant dont les pieds posent au seuil du siècle." Zola wrote: "Lorsqu'une époque a reçu une empreinte si profonde, les générations qui suivent en souffrent, font de longs efforts avant de pouvoir se dégager et retrouver le libre usage de leurs facultés créatrices" ("Les Poètes contemporains," *Le Messager de l'Europe*, février 1878). (For a look at these lithographs, see Appendix One).

The power of Hugo's Han to capture popular imagination and to stimulate non-conformity became immediately apparent as young men from respectable families turned themselves into hugolian characters replete with Merovingian curls, cloaks, daggers, skulls and long pointed shoes. One devotee, Gérard de Nerval, who had just adapted *Han d'Islande* for the stage, was often seen at the Petit Moulin Rouge, ordering 'sea-water' because that was Han's favorite drink. To add to the mystique, Nerval placed next to him a skull to which he had attached a brass drawer-handle in order to suggest that he too drank from skulls as Han was so apt to do (*Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie* 463). Hugo had successfully reached an enclave of youthful dissidents, who found in him a voice to air their grievances and displeasures.

In *Han d'Islande*, more so than in *Bug-Jargal*, we find trace elements of the celebrated fairy tale. There is a couple who, in spite of their love for each other,

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must overcome many obstacles to earn their happiness; however, neither is ugly nor deformed. Both are of great physical beauty. The character who takes on the role of the monster in this short novel is the legendary Han, who appears magically from nowhere and whose moral and spiritual deformities are but outward signs of his black soul. Han has no conscience and so he tortures one and all without any forethought to class, political credo, or gender. His frenetic zeal is emblematic of a generation that found itself with little voice in social, economic, and political circles. Nevertheless, he, like Pierrot and Habibrah, is not a true precursor nor represents the forelorn Beast in the pairing of the *belle et bête* model. Han loves no man nor woman. He is self-reliant, self-determining even in matters of his own death. It is he, who choses the form and hour of his demise.

The Romantic period in French literature was a time of exacerbated polarities. The writers who embraced the theories of the new school were marked by exaggerated sensibilities, which were attributed to their cult of popular literature. They often portrayed man as hostile to society, flouting its laws and conventions, leading a solitary existence because individualism had been forced upon them by the instability of their past and the uncertainty of their future. The romantic hero, like his creator, hated traditional ideas, fixed formulas, and was suspicious of all external authority. He may be outlaw, criminal, or courtesan but inevitably championed the causes of the social reprobates and defended the innocents from political aggressors. In many ways this new hero (or antihero) was a mirror-like reflection of the wild man of the Middle Ages, rife with vices and virtues, emblematic of what man had lost when he became civilized. Found in similar narrative themes and popular situations, this hero was frequently described in bestial terms, a half-man, half-beast. The physical descriptions of Han of Iceland and Mérimée's Michel of Szémióth

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readily recall their literary ancestors, Orson and Jean de l'Ours.

In the third of Victor Hugo's works to use the Beauty and the Beast motif, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, we find our most compelling reworking of the fairy tale. Set in fifteenth-century Paris, the novel skillfully blends the grotesque and the sublime as it relates the story of Quasimodo and La Esmeralda. Like his Hugolian predecessors, Quasimodo is a red-headed dwarf, but this time the hunchback's wretched exterior belies a beautiful and tender soul, which, if shown tenderness and kindness, will respond in kind. Hugo's predilection for deformed creatures with prominent foreheads and protruding brows may stem in part from his self-deprecation and the serious question as to his lineage, as biographers like Graham Robb have suggested; but the author of *Bug-Jargal* also believed that it was the poet's mission to preserve essential myths, adapting them to modern audiences. "Le génie moderne conserve ce mythe des forgerons surnaturels, mais il lui imprime brusquement un caractère tout opposé et qui le rend bien plus frappant; il change les géants en nains; des cyclopes il fait des gnomes" (Préface de *Cromwell* 419).

Hugo's description of Quasimodo, like those of the Beast in fairy tales, is not excessively detailed nor specific, leaving much to be deduced by the reader. The narrator steps back and lets the reader imagine the physical characteristics of the monster:

Nous n'essaierons pas de donner au lecteur de ce nez tétraèdre, de cette bouche en fer à cheval, de petit oeil gauche obstrué d'un sourcil roux en broussailles tandis que l'oeil droit disparaissait entièrement sous une énorme verrue, de ces dents désordonnées, ébréchées ça et là, comme les créneaux d'une forteresse, de cette lèvre calleuse sur laquelle une de ces dents empiétait comme la

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défense d'un éléphant, de ce menton fourchu, et surtout de la physionomie répandue sur tout cela, de ce mélange de malice, d'étonnement et de tristesse. Qu'on rêve, si l'on peut, cet ensemble (75).

Through the characters of Quasimodo and Claude Frollo Victor Hugo succeeds in creating a dazzling allegory of the double presence of the "beasts" in the world, "car les hommes de génie, si grands qu'ils soient, ont toujours en eux leur bête qui parodie leur intelligence. C'est par là qu'ils touchent à l'humanité, c'est par là qu'ils sont dramatiques" (Préface de *Cromwell* 427). Frollo and Quasimodo are fraternal twins engendered by their hugolian father to portray clashing notions of goodness and evil, ugliness and beauty, asceticism and concupiscence, stupidity and erudition. Even to the naive or ignorant eye the binary oppositions are evident, but beneath the surface there lies a greater truth about the nature of human beings. While the world possesses many creatures who appear alien, abominable, and separate, there are greater monsters that roam the earth whose ugliness and maliciousness are less evident but far more insidious. All creatures great or small are entitled to a modicum of respect and to be offered the chance to be loved and accepted. Is not Quasimodo a human being whose *méchanceté* is the result of the inhumanity of others towards him? There is ample evidence in the text to suggest that Hugo attributed Quasimodo's ill-nature to the bellringer's status as outcast and that his deformity exacerbated society's prejudices against him. "Il était méchant en effet, parce qu'il était sauvage; il était sauvage parce qu'il était laid" (*Notre-Dame de Paris* 174). While it is true that the Quasimodo strongly resembles the terrifying Beasts of folklore, growling and snarling at civilization, there are reasonable explanations for his behavior. Man is good; society makes him wicked. "D'ailleurs, il faut lui rendre

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cette justice, la méchanceté n'était pas innée en lui... En grandissant il n'avait trouvé que la haine autour de lui. Il l'avait prise. Il avait gagné la méchanceté générale. Il avait ramassé l'arme dont on l'avait blessé" (174). Kindness and love can tame the most savage beast. Quasimodo, like his literary predecessors, awaits the metamorphizing power of a Beauty who will take pity on him, and show him kindness. Unfortunately, it is not the fate of the Romantic hero to experience a "happy life." It is his destiny to suffer the many obstacles that living thrusts upon him.

The nineteenth century, like the late Middle Ages, witnessed a growing acceptance of the belief that man and beast were not polar opposites but creatures who share a nature that is intertwined and inseparable by history. There was a nostalgic yearning for the power, the freedom, and necessity to become a wild man. This sympathy for the uncultured and the untamed reveal that the romantics were suspicious of the Restoration and its socio-political agenda. Via a wild man, like Quasimodo, Hugo was free to speak out against prevailing social and economic prejudices. This social outcast proved to be the perfect model for the marginalized hero, someone to reflect and pass judgment on the world from a unique perspective because the hunchback "n'avait sur son visage ni honte, ni rougeur. Il était trop loin de l'état de société et trop près de l'état de nature pour savoir ce que c'est que la honte" (252). If he is ever to be acculturated into society, Quasimodo must be willing to submit body and soul to a woman who by chance will be extraordinarily beautiful and the unique object of adoration. As Marina Warner has noted: "This new assignation of higher value to wild creatures gains force when there is a woman in the picture. The seductress sets alight inherent sensuality, which in these stories is coded animal. But the value of this animal wildness grows by contrast to the domesticating

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threat of women's love" (*Six Myths* 76). For this type of myth, women represented the domain of culture. It is they who provided the nurturing power to change. Unfortunately not all metamorphoses once completed produced the effect desired and some Beauties found themselves pining for their beloved Beasts once they had been transformed into lackluster princes.

Earlier in the chapter we discussed how it was common for male writers to "seize the authority" to say what was female by vesting the female figure with the power to establish the tale's outcome. It was she whose wise or frivolous choices of sexual partners would determine the fate of the principal characters. Often these heroines find themselves alone in the world. They are orphaned or abandoned. Kadish has posited that novels that present stories of fathers relinquishing patriarchal authority serve to dramatize social disorder (*Politicizing Gender* 2). Furthermore she suggests that one can determine the author's attitudes toward social class, systems of government, and ideology if one studies the names, nationalities, family roles, and clothing of the male and female protagonists (3). Her observations are particularly appropriate to the early works of Victor Hugo who conducted intensive searches for detailed historical information in order to paint the atmosphere of the epoch he chose to describe. If we were to examine hugolian heroines, we would discover a little about their creator's feelings toward the opposite sex and his perceived role for them in society and history.

The Beauty in *Han d'Islande* was modeled after Adèle Foucher, Hugo's fiancée and future wife. On February 16, 1822, the author wrote to his beloved that Ethel was conceived in her likeness: "Je voulais peindre une jeune fille qui réalisait l'idéal de toutes les imaginations fraîches et poétiques" (Quoted in Gasciglia 27). Later in his memoirs Hugo would admit that *Han d'Islande* was a

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coded romance for his beloved, replete with secret messages about the man who suffered for her through periods of hope and despair as their union met with minor successes and major obstacles.

In Hugo's mind, Ethel and Adèle were prisoners of overzealous patriarchs, who guarded their daughters jealously from suitors, because they feared the new control another man might exercise over their children. Even if these young men were noble of heart and faithful to their ladies of desire, they were not worthy. In *Han d'Islande* we find a heroine, who is her father's pawn in a political game of chess. She readily follows his every wish, loving who and what he chooses for her to love, and despising those whom he despises. Ordoner, Ethel's suitor, has concealed his real identity from her because their fathers are political enemies. To establish his love and devotion, the young man must prove Ethel's father innocent of crimes against the State. If he fails, he will face their fate of certain death.

A cursory examination of Hugo's early pieces of fiction clearly depict the chaos that results when fathers, through death, disappearance or imprisonment, relinquish their authority. The disorder that results sets the Beauties adrift in hostile situations whose consequences they no longer, or never, fully grasp. Ultimately they are unable to decide what to do for themselves and relinquish their freedom of choice to a man or the men who vie for them.

In *Bug-Jargal*, Hugo presents the lovely Marie, who has grown up on a plantation in Santo Domingo. Although she possesses all the feminine qualities of a demure young lady, she has missed out on the finer points of her station because she finds herself in the colonies, far from the salons and the court that would have curbed her "natural" inclinations. The selection of Léopold d'Auvergny as a mate is designed to soften her extravagances, but Marie is not

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so easily controlled and roams the plantation freely. She delights in the melodic tones of her secret admirer even though she protests her dismay at his audacity. It is never a question of Marie living up to the chaste model of her Virgin namesake. No man, not even Habibrah, would accuse Marie of lascivious behavior. She is nothing but a freer spirit, seduced by the tropical humors, cavorting through the world without fear of reprisals. It is only after the Slave Insurrection that she realizes how dangerous her carefree life has been. Pierrot comes to the manor house and takes her away before the rebellious slave kill her. Léopold is also saved when the Bug-Jargal sacrifices himself in his place. In a cruel twist of fate, we learn that Marie dies shortly after wedding d'Auvergny in the first fire on the Cape, suggesting that her choice of spouse was swayed by old world conventions. The Beast (of burden) who forfeits his life for them would have been the better candidate. At the end of *Bug-Jargal* the narrator oddly comments that the failed revolt was providence's way of indicating that perhaps the slaves were not ready to be free, a suggestion, too perhaps, of Hugo's belief that *le peuple* was not yet prepared to listen to his program of reform.

The third Hugolian heroine, La Esmeralda, is, like her predecessors, beautiful and pure. Gringoire calls her "une créature inoffensive et charmante, jolie; ... une fille naïve et passionnée, ignorante de tout, et enthousiaste de tout; ne sachant pas encore la différence d'une femme à un homme, même en rêve" (*Notre-Dame* 277). La Esmeralda is a great consternation for the men who pursue her, especially the archdeacon Claude Frollo, who is obsessed and frustrated by her charms. For him, she is a pagan temptress whose superhuman beauty must have come from hell, for no mere mortal could destroy his priestly resolve. "Ce n'était pas là une simple fille faite avec un peu de notre terre, et pauvrement éclairée à l'intérieur par le vacillant rayon d'une âme de femme. C'était un ange!

mais de ténèbres, mais de flamme et non de lumière" (343). Deprived of satisfaction, this would-be lover consumes the object of his desire with his gaze which disturbs and wounds until it destroys what it covets.

In *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Hugo shifts the story from the female subject to stress unfulfilled male erotic hunger for beauty. Moreover he appears to be pleading on the male behalf for understanding, for in his view the men of *Notre-Dame* who fail to win La Esmeralda's affections are her anguished victims. It is they who suffer enormously from her cruel indifference. Therefore La Esmeralda must pay for her sins against man and society. By bestowing her favors wrongly upon an inferior individual, the deceitful and stupid but handsome Phoebus, she has unleashed destructive forces that will consume her and all those in their wake. It is she who is responsible for the story's unhappy ending.

Eugène Sue, who found Hugo's novel moving for the richness of its poetry, thought and drama, esteemed the work even more for its craftily designed portrayal of the female nature.

C'est que, Quasimodo en résumant pour ainsi dire la beauté d'âme et de dévouement; — Frollo l'érudition, la science, la puissance intellectuelle, — et Châteaupers la beauté physique, — vous ayez eu l'admirable pensée de mettre ces trois types de nature face à face avec une jeune fille naïve, presque sauvage au milieu de la civilisation, pour lui donner le choix, et de faire ce choix si profondément femme (*Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie* 311).

For Sue and his contemporaries, Victor Hugo had become the spokesperson of their generation. However Hugo's first full-length novel did not meet with universal critical acclaim. Balzac found the work most unsatisfactory: "Je viens de lire *Notre-Dame* [...], deux belles scènes, trois mots, le tout invraisemblable,

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deux descriptions, la belle et la bête, et un déluge de mauvais goût — une fable sans possibilité et par-dessus tout un ouvrage ennuyeux, vide, plein de prétention architecturale” (Quoted in Gossiord, 49).

It is easy to understand why Gosselin lamented his decision to publish *Notre-Dame*. He should have known better for, when he gave the manuscript to his wife (“une personne agréable et lettrée qui traduisait les romans de Walter Scott”) to read, she hated it. Adèle Hugo reports that “Elle trouva l’ouvrage d’un ennui mortel, et son mari ne se gêna pas pour dire qu’il avait fait une mauvaise affaire et que cela lui apprendrait à acheter les livres sans les lire” (309). However, the Romantics rallied around Hugo and enflamed the passions of the masses with their unabashed praise for the work. Lamartine gushed: “C’est une oeuvre colossale; une pierre antédiluvienne. Je n’aimais ni *Han*, ni *Bug*, je le confesse; mais je ne vois rien à comparer dans notre temps à *Notre-Dame*. C’est le Shakespeare du roman” (Letter dated July 1, 1831 from Hondschoote, in G. Simon, 685).

In *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Victor Hugo had finally succeeded in blending the key elements of his complex mythic structure. Through the characters of Claude Frollo and Quasimodo, the author presented his vision of the microcosmal beasts and angels who battle the incoherence of their dual natures of good and evil. Little is idealised within the work; the mythology created explains itself through the tension generated between clashing forces of the grotesque and the sublime. The expression of the ideas is carried out by combining historical realism and gothic fantasy, but throughout there remains the frenetic, myth-engendering catalyst of the imagination, the hugolian credo that to create a new order one must restore the forgotten past and build upon its foundations. Such a quest demands intellectual synthesis and unswerving faith in *le menu peuple*.

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Victor Hugo, above all Romantics, represented the impossibility of creating a new order in a society where there was no foundation upon which to build, where there was no synthesis upon which to project, and where there existed only limited moments of coalescence upon which to erect cornerstones; but for his generation he was the one man who dared to challenge the *status quo* and take on the Herculean task of reforming society.

In later years, Victor Hugo would reappropriate the Beauty and Beast motif in *Le roi s'amuse* and *L'homme qui rit*; but neither text would articulate more clearly Hugo's vision of the world than *Notre-Dame de Paris*, which finally fulfilled his famous Preface's promise to reveal creation in all its glorious and sordid detail for after all:

Le beau n'est qu'un type; le laid en a mille. C'est que le beau, à parler humainement, n'est que la forme considérée dans son rapport le plus simple, dans sa symétrie la plus absolue, dans son harmonie la plus intime avec notre organisation. [...] Ce que nous appelons le laid, au contraire, est un détail d'un grand ensemble qui nous échappe, et qui s'harmonise, non pas avec l'homme, mais avec la création tout entière (421).

It is perhaps unfortunate that Victor Hugo's ambitions evolved beyond the parameters of his original mission to resurrect art by creating history, and that he increasingly began to take on his adversaries in the political arena where his chances for success were scant. In the end his hopes were dashed by the failure of the Revolution of 1848 and dismantled with the imposed victory of the *coup d'état* of 1851. The Romantic guru would be exiled from his homeland for twenty years and his literary creation forced to combat the evils of France's Second Empire from foreign soil.

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Given the meteoric rise of science during the second half of the nineteenth century, one might presume that the Beauty and the Beast theme would disappear completely from literature, but there were countercurrents to the evolutionary tide that continued to seek solace in the folkloric motif in order to counter the numbing effects of a mundane society eager bent on conformism.

While it is true that the reading public still showed sharp lines of class demarcation, there were publishing houses that sought to bridge the social gaps by producing a series of books that could be marketed to a larger, more heterogeneous public. With success came the first bestsellers and the birth of fandom with its prerequisite substrata of devotees. It is into this latter group that the Beauty and the Beast motif would be relegated until the end of the nineteenth century when its popularity would be born again in the works of the late Romantics, Barbey d'Aurevilly and Edmond Rostand.

For many writers and artists of this period, these were bleak years wracked with the ugly smells and sounds of industrialization. The silence of the dominant ideology was most disturbing and proved a fecund source for literary material. As we shall learn, "Lokis" and *La Canne de Jaspe* would warn their readers to be wary of love for it might literally and metamorphically devour them. *L'Enfermée* would plead for a nostalgic return to the monarchy, while *Cyrano* and the *Opera Ghost* would ferociously try to survive in societies where their physical differences were causes of great consternation and prejudice. As the average man of the nineteenth century basked in the glow of complacency; the intellectuals plumbed the depths of the world's fearful asymmetry and quaked in the fear of what was to come.

In Chapter Three, we shall explore the new schools of thought that monopolized the last decades of the nineteenth century. We shall also examine

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the works of those authors who found the new systems and dominant ideology too confining. It will be interesting to note how they would use the Beauty and Beast motif to subvert the reigning notions of good taste and thus propose alternate visions of fin-de-siècle France.

**Subversion, Introspection, and the
Works of Mérimée, Barbey d'Aureville,
Régnier, Rostand, and Leroux**

Fans are not only poachers; they are also nomads always in movement, not constrained by permanent property ownership but rather constantly advancing on another text, appropriating new materials, making new meaning. — Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*

Shortly after the failure of the 1848 Revolution, France rejected the lofty political principles of Romanticism that had led to the debacle and sought a new aesthetic to serve their evolving modes of expression. The populace sought more realistic goals in their society and a literature that portrayed the facts of life. The Beauty and the Beast motif, which tended to depict more fanciful themes, returned to its folkloric roots, finding expression from time to time in the popular works of Jules Barbey d'Aureville, Prosper Mérimée, Henri de Régnier, Edmond Rostand, and Gaston Leroux. Victor Hugo, who had employed the theme with much commercial success, became more absorbed in the world of politics and turned away from fantastic literature to embrace the more sobering realities of a modern France industrializing itself at unbelievable speed. The champion of the people had moved from the margins to the very heart of his culture. As Blake might have said of him, "He became what he beheld." The change in the leader of the Romantic movement marked the close of an era. While there still existed dreamers who sought to champion individualism, there was a general move afloat to stabilize all aspects of society and create a nation of conformity.

Ill prepared to cope with the masses of people abandoning the provinces for the "golden" opportunities of the city, the French nation struggled with new demands upon its resources. Social functions moved from the closed confines of the salon or *cénacle* to the more open space of the street and public places. People

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the salon or *cénacle* to the more open space of the street and public places. People entertained themselves by watching others and by being seen. The city became the platform upon which aspiring newcomers must succeed. Paris was, of course, the main stage. To be among "les grands," one had to be known in the fashionable Parisian circles. Interestingly enough, the City of Light was frequently compared to a beast that could change, like a bolt of lightning, from a mild-mannered creature into a monster. "Elle s'éveille, gronde, étend ses griffes ou ses tentacules. Cette bête peut devenir un monstre qui fascine et dévore" (*Itinéraires littéraires* 199).

By and large, the first half of the nineteenth century had been an era of optimism bolstered by the exuberance of the majority of the Romantics, who dreamed vast dreams of progress and who threw themselves into the task of delivering what they promised.¹ At first glance such a statement might appear difficult to believe given the often dysphoric endings of the work that they produced; however, the Romantics were dreamers who yearned for a tenable society that would recognize its place in time and history. They were keenly aware that their nation needed to return to its rich historical past and embrace its dynamic historical figures as exemplars. For this reason they often gave primacy to personal memory and imagination. The culture of the period found itself caught up in what F. W. J. Hemmings has termed "a crossfire of encouragement and suspicion" (155). While some writers accepted Hugo's challenge to "marcher devant les peuples comme une lumière et leur montrer le chemin," others, like Théophile Gautier, demanded that art be left out of the *mélée* to find its own depth free of the need to work for social reform and progress. According to

¹ Most Romantics welcomed progress and look forward to changes in society as heralds of advancement; however some, such as Vigny, hated the industrial revolution and the social and economic transformations it brought in.

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depth free of the need to work for social reform and progress. According to Gautier, "Il n'y a pas de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut servir à rien; tout ce qui est utile est laid, car c'est l'expression de quelque besoin, et ceux de l'homme sont ignobles et dégoûtants, comme sa pauvre et infirme nature" (Préface de *Mademoiselle de Maupin*). Gautier was dismayed by the political agenda of old friends who sought to mold Romanticism into a goulash of art and social reform. There was a distressing aura of messianic mission that surrounded the movement. It seemed to him as if all of France were being called to march bravely forward to discover a magnificent new world, but this was not the role of an artist. Artistic creation must be free of constraints. As a result, writers must exclude politics, philosophy and sentimentalism from their work.

Point de contraintes fausses!
Mais que pour marcher droit
Tu chausse,
Muse, un cothurne étroit.
Fi du rythme commode,
Comme un soulier trop grand
Du mode
Que tout pied quitte et prend!
(*"L'Art," Emaux et camées* 295)

In spite of the literary bickering, France was experiencing a "comfortable" period of middle-class domination replete with its prerequisite industrialism and bourgeois virtue. Many of the young rebels of the late 1820s and early 1830s were now minions of respectability who dictated the "norms" of good taste rather than berating them. It was time to reconstruct French civilization. To reformers like Comte, Proudhon, Saint-Simon, and their disciples, this meant

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reformers like Comte, Proudhon, Saint-Simon, and their disciples, this meant developing a highly organized social structure. The Romantic Age was about to give way to a new world order. While the youthful exuberance of Romanticism had been a necessary interlude of "humane" anarchy between the First and Second Empires, its reliance on individual liberty and political *laissez-faire* must be put aside to embrace a new, positivist world order. Underlying the political rhetoric of the period was the erroneous assumption that the middle class had solutions to all of France's woes, if the nation would just embrace its bourgeois values and sensibilities. Unfortunately, middle-class respectability demanded sexual repression and unswerving conformity. Those who were different must be ostracized, for success depended on wholehearted acceptance of the dominant ideology. Sadly the "New Society" failed to recognize that the working class was severely distressed and that women were oppressed because both groups lacked the means to fit within the narrow parameters of the bourgeoisie.

In literature and the fine arts, there developed a strong reaction against Romanticism, whose uncontrolled flights of fancy had created a civilization of diversity that lacked the unity that its conservative predecessors and aloof offspring enjoyed. The chaos of the first half of the century must be tempered, because it insulted morality and common sense. "Good taste" demanded that every aspect of society reflect, embrace, and demonstrate the intrinsic value of the real, the ordinary. In other words French citizens must incorporate the bourgeois ethic in all aspects of their life if they wished to acquire success, wealth, and wisdom.

With new-found wealth came the rapid expansion of the entertainment industry, including a startling growth in the publication and sale of popular literature. A larger readership brought with it more earning potential for writers

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literature. A larger readership brought with it more earning potential for writers and offered them a curious status in society, placing them in privileged but precarious positions. While they were often viewed as authorities who could engage the problems of the century and propose solutions, their ability to challenge authority or ideology was restricted because financial success depended upon catering to the taste and demands of their "patrons."²

That Romanticism should dislocate itself and be transformed was inevitable. Just as it had supplanted the previous ideological contexts to establish its own rhetorical stance, it too would be replaced. Of course the Romantic artists tried to protect themselves against the upstarts who would eventually usurp their place in the hearts and minds of the masses but to little avail. By the late 1840s a new school of thought was earning a great deal of attention and its own share of the publishing market, illustrating clearly that Romanticism's fall from grace was imminent and that there would soon be another group that would effectively manipulate, control, and reform popular culture.

The development of popular literature was a phenomenon of the nineteenth century. It relied upon social conditions that produced a new public and upon economic data that determined the growth of the press. Since there were more readers than ever before who could assert their authority over possible development in serials, there needed to be more sensitivity to their expectations. Balzac, speaking of himself and his brethren, noted that "even if we are so strangely constituted as to be nine-tenths purely literary, there must still

² A cursory examination of popular literature prior to 1850 reveals that the works produced frequently sought to reveal the flaws of society, propose cures, and thus civilize the masses. After 1850 popular literature was adapted to its middle-class readership and became a vehicle of conformity. Since the arrival of Romanticism, literature had been touted as a part of intellectual history. Many of Romantic works were treatises or meditations on religious, ideological, and social history that seized the authority to demand a more dynamic and organic world view.

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are so strangely constituted as to be nine-tenths purely literary, there must still be that one-tenth that makes us want to buy the book and sit down to read it" (Quoted in Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination* x).

Speaking of the mission of literature in 1834, Lamartine noted: *C'est elle qui plane sur la société et la juge, et qui, montrant à l'homme la vulgarité de son oeuvre, l'appelle sans cesse en avant, en lui montrant du doigt des utopies, des républiques imaginaires, des cités de Dieu, et lui souffle au coeur le courage de les atteindre* (*Des destinées de la poésie*, 249). While Lamartine clearly was aligning himself with Romanticism's concept of Christianity as a religion of progress and universal love, future generations would transform his lines into a *summa* for Science, the new god of the intellectual. Although Romanticism fell in popularity, something of the movement still remained in the new school of Realism that also sought to expose the horrible vulgarity of the "nouveaux riches" and to demonstrate their own sense of alienation and disenchantment. In a letter to George Sand, Flaubert complained bitterly about the society that surrounded him and his peers. He found that he was witness to a debacle that was rushing toward him unbridled. "Nous ne souffrons que d'une chose: la Bêtise. Mais elle est formidable et universelle" (Croiset, 14 novembre 1871, cited in *Contre Courants* 270).

After the failure of the Revolution of 1848, writers witnessed uneasily the transformation of their long-sought utopia into a dung-heap of greed and exploitation. While some moved to embrace the principles of Karl Marx and others attempted to shield themselves from the corruption by enveloping themselves tightly in the mantle of art for art, there remained a "happy few" who sought salvation in the past because they felt, like Barbey d'Aurevilly, that "notre époque, grossièrement matérialiste et utilitaire, a pour prétention de faire

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“notre époque, grossièrement matérialiste et utilitaire, a pour prétention de faire disparaître toute espèce de friche et de broussailles aussi bien du globe que de l’âme humaine” (Préface de *L’Enfer* 26). These were writers who saw bourgeois life as the chief enemy of “true” culture. They objected to a homogenizing social agenda that strove to make all equal without tolerance for individual differences of any kind, be they class-based, moral or aesthetic. This intolerance became a call to arms for the writers whose works we are about to examine.

One of the first of these disenfranchised authors to appear on the scene was Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly. Catholic and royalist, he railed stubbornly against the realistic and positivist manifestoes of the period that followed the 1848 Revolution. Barbey reacted to these movements in frenetic fits and starts that ultimately found an audience in a small but intense group of enthusiasts interested in the occult and the diabolic. This subculture found its credo in the English frenetic novels that had introduced into some French circles a taste for satanic characters and acts. In the decadent literature of the period, it found its voice in a return to medieval satanism with stories spinning around alchemy, astrology, vampirism and white magic.

The characters created by Barbey are frequently examples of the *honnête homme*, who is torn away from his good impulses and thrust by society into a world of torment. He falls from grace to embrace evil because society has made him a rebel. According to Albert Camus, there is no recourse for such men. “Pour combattre le Mal, le révolté, parce qu’il se juge innocent, renonce au bien et enfante à nouveau le Mal” (*L’homme révolté* 68). A wild, savage, mysterious hero who finds himself nearly crushed by Fate stands alone against a dominant ideology that has destroyed all that was familiar, all that was comfortable. He

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ideology that has destroyed all that was familiar, all that was comfortable. He believes himself more noble than other men. Always in movement, he finds satisfaction neither within himself nor in others. A man of immense energy and dynamism, he is conscious of a goal that drives him onward in the face of overwhelming odds. He is the aurevillian vision of modern man's tragic hero.

Of all the heroes that Barbey d'Aurevilly created, the most striking is perhaps the Abbé Jéhoël de la Croix-Jugan, a handsome young nobleman designated by his family for Holy Orders because of his birth rank, the last male born to the family. A model priest, Jéhoël leaves the abbey to become a soldier and sacrifice himself for his sovereign by fighting for the Royalists during the French Revolution. When he realizes that his cause is lost, he attempts suicide as the sun is setting in the evening sky and upon the Chouan war. Unfortunately his tentative is botched, leaving him horribly disfigured but still attractive to certain females, notably Jeanne de Feuarent who falls in love with him inexplicably (or perhaps not) the first time she sees him at Mass. "Ce chêne humain, dévasté par les balles à la cime, avait toujours la forte beauté de son tronc. Jéhoël n'avait perdu que les lignes muettes d'un visage superbe autrefois; mais il s'était étendu sur ces lignes brisées une surhumaine physionomie, et, partout ailleurs qu'à la face..." (*L'Ensorcelée* 134). Jeanne is struck by fear. She trembles before the scarred face of this extraordinary man who seems to affect only her with "une sensation sans nom." Barbey is quick to explain the reason for her singular reaction. She is unique, "parce que son âme n'était pas une âme comme les autres" (92). She is "une femme de race," a noblewoman whose social position was lost as a result of the Revolution. Forfeiting pride to survive, she marries a money-grubbing collaborator. "La prévoyance, cette sévère conseillère, la prévoyance, ce sentiment si profondément normand, lui montra l'avenir dans

toute sa sombre et inquiétante réalité" (100). Her response to Jéhoël is natural. They are kindred spirits, having both endured the agony of the vanquished. For Jeanne, Croix-Jugan is a hero. "Aux yeux d'une âme faite comme celle de Jeanne, ce prêtre inouï semblait se venger de l'horreur de ses blessures par une physionomie de fierté si sublime qu'on en restait anéanti comme s'il avait été beau! Jeanne ne savait pas ce qu'elle avait, mais elle succombait à une fascination pleine d'angoisse" (93).

When *L'Enfermée* was published, there were a few writers who were troubled by the alarming rise in illness and disease in France, and the decline in morality. In response to their concerns, they produced a significant body of literature, some scientific, some fictional, that examined people whose ruined existences put them at risk vis-à-vis the dominant ideology. With the advent of Darwinism in the 1860s came popular theories suggesting that human beings differed in degree rather than in kind from other animals. According to Asti Hustveldt, there existed a belief among some marginal *litterati* that human beings were on their way to bestial regression (*The Decadent Reader* 10). With time, these theories would find voice in a loosely knit group of writers who found human degeneration a fecund source of creativity. Sickness, hysteria, deformity, and moral turpitude became preferable to health, beauty, and morality because these subjects were subversive and defied social order. By embracing the marginal, the writers could attack their perceived enemy of artistic freedom — the bourgeois way of life.

Writers like Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly objected to the middle-class's homogenization platform. While the Realists and later the Naturalists rummaged through medical journals for explanations and applied the scientific methodology to their works, the so-called Decadent School explored the

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mysterious and unknowable deviant psyche to reveal the human monsters of France's underbelly. Gone were the happy endings of popular romance. Marital bliss was unattainable. It became more fashionable to paint the other side of love replete with its cruelty, duplicity, and sterility. Passion and death were constants in these tales.

The last half of the nineteenth century was driven by contradictory impulses. On one hand stood the satisfied majority that covered itself in a veil of conformity; on the other rose the frenetic artists who charted one scene after another of humiliation and painful frustration. Barbey d'Aurevilly conceived himself as a spokesman for the monarchy, a defender of royalist tradition. He sought to be modern while retaining the aesthetic values of the past, the cyclical sense of history and creative liberty. He opposed all forms of literature that sought to teach, and chose dreams and mysteries as the only means to attain "la vraie réalité." Like Flaubert, Barbey believed that a writer was above all an observer. "La fantaisie [d'un écrivain] peut être charmante ou puissante, mais le roman dans lequel il peut très bien entrer de la fantaisie doit toujours prendre sa base dans la réalité, qu'il idéalise ou qu'il n'idéalise pas, mais qu'il ne peut jamais fausser" ("Préface aux romanciers," *Barbey d'Aurevilly: critique littéraire* 176).

In order to capture reality, Barbey relied, as Hugo did, upon the union of opposites — greatness and humility, love and suffering, beauty and death.³ The most interesting pairing for this study is the latter, which couples beauty not with the grotesque but with death. Beauty, which continues to represent innocence or timidity in Barbey's work, is associated with passions that lead to

³ According to Victor Hugo, "... la poésie vraie, la poésie complète, est dans l'harmonie des contraires" (Préface de *Cromwell* 421). Barbey d'Aurevilly finds the juxtaposition of contrasts most alluring because of its range of aesthetic possibilities.

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destruction because all attempts to restore the old order are thwarted on three dualistic battlefronts — body over spirit, materialism over idealism, and the masses over the gentry. The violent deaths of Jeanne and Jéhoël (Jeanne by drowning and Jéhoël by an assassin's bullet) recall the dysphoric endings of the tales of l'Héritier, d'Aulnoy, or Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*. The end of this novel, like its predecessors, blames the woman, who has chosen her love interest badly, wreaking chaos and death in the wake of her decision.

Although Barbey's heroines are active, aggressive women in matters of the heart, their attraction to certain men is destructive, leading them to death rather than life. Jeanne de Feuarent, the heroine of *L'Ensorcelée*, is one such woman of action, "une jeune femme dans la fleur mûrie de la jeunesse, active, courageuse, et de ce sens droit, perçant et supérieur. . ." (90). Her cardinal sin is not so much her love for the rebel priest but her misalliance with a commoner, a collaborator who enriched himself on the ruins of the aristocrats. Jeanne suffers because she has wed an inferior. Barbey's ambiguous treatment of his heroine can be explained by his misogynist leanings. According to the author of *L'Ensorcelée*:

Les femmes sont faites pour être victimes. Elles sont marquées pour l'être. Savez-vous pourquoi? . . . Le manque de fierté... Dès qu'il y a un monstre quelque part, il y a une jolie femme qui lui a donné sa main. Elle le trompe (parbleu!), mais par cela même elle est deux fois sa merci, et l'a deux fois mérité ("Pensées Détachées," *Oeuvres romanesques complètes*, Vol. II, XLV 1263).

Thus Jeanne is revered for her aristocratic roots but condemned because she has opted for a *mariage de convenance*. She is attacked because she has set up a household with LeHardouey and thus promotes bourgeois morality. When she

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becomes destabilized by her unrequited love for the monk, she rises in Barbey's estimation to a privileged position because she threatens middle-class social order. "Cette femme d'action et de race, ... ne s'était jamais consolée d'avoir humilié la sienne dans une mésalliance" (123). Marriage, which by the tradition of her Catholic Church should be creative, is destructive. Jeanne rejects her role as mother and wife to pursue Jéhoël's futile attempt to revive a lost cause. She loves unwisely and will suffer physical and spiritual mortification because of her excessive passion for the horrible creature who has moved her to pity. However, as she is to learn, she is not the first to fall prey to the power of la Croix-Jugan, "une créature qui en a rendu d'autres aussi malheureuses et criminelles qu'elle était" (59). Her position is untenable but she can do nothing to escape her Fate. She has been drawn to him and must serve him in whatever way he demands. "Elle souffrait alors des peines cruelles. Elle était arrivée à cette crise de l'amour où les épreuves du dévouement ne suffisent plus à l'apaisement du sentiment qu'on éprouve" (157).

In psychoanalytic studies of myth and fairy tales, it is common for the Beauty's pity for the Beast to be interpreted as an erroneous placement of maternal instinct. According to Marie-Louise von Franz, "people neither want to realize that they have such a figure within themselves, nor put an end to it. So the things get twisted into having pity with the outer figure and self-indulgence in one's blind spot" (*The Problem of the Feminine* 62). In Jeanne's case we find a woman whose life is a shambles. Her husband is unloved, even despised. Finding herself isolated, she is revitalized by the heroic energy of a disfigured monk who stands tall and unbowed in the face of great loss, a sort of conquered Vulcan whose ethics are not those of the common man. His uniqueness moves her to pity (and passion) precisely because Jéhoël de la Croix-Jugan refuses to

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conform to the mediocre conditions of those who surround him. Unfortunately, Jeanne realizes too late that she has given herself completely to someone who does not possess nobility of the soul but soulless nobility. The monk is not a saint but a devil who uses people, especially women, to advance his Chouan intrigues. When his schemes fail again, Jéhoël ceases to see Jeanne and confines himself to the tomb of the abbey.

Après avoir abdiqué l'espoir de vaincre, comme Charles-Quint l'ennui de régner, l'ancien moine de Blanchelande se faisait-il dans son propre coeur, un cloître plus vaste et plus solitaire que celui qu'il avait quitté dans sa jeunesse, et prenait-il dans sa froide stalle de chêne, la mesure du cercueil au fond duquel il se couchait tout vivant, en récitant sur lui-même les prières des morts? (163)

In many ways *la Croix-Jugan* is a stereotypical romantic hero who believes himself singular, a superior being floating on an island in the midst of a paltry sea of men. Like many of his predecessors, he burns with the desire for revenge. He is what Peter Brooks would term a "desiring" monster, a "figure of displacement, transgression, desire, deviance, instability" (*Reading for the Plot* 84). Jéhoël is a prime example of the aurevillian hero who fails to recuperate his heroic male self-image and who is unsuccessful in his attempts to reestablish the traditionalist and monarchist order in France.

Barbey relished creating deeply flawed heroes reminiscent of the Byronic satanics of the early nineteenth century. The rebel monk is, like most aurevillian protagonists, a man of mystery who guards his private battles far away from the prying eyes of society. He resorts to the mask of repentance to conceal his all-consuming desire to rekindle the Chouan wars. Although Jéhoël possesses a

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modicum of idealism or virtue, these saving traits have been sublimated to produce a more troubling portrait of a conniving megalomaniac who has fallen from grace because he cannot tolerate the society that has been imposed upon him. In some ways the priest's situation vis-à-vis society recalls Mary Shelley's Frankenstein monster, who laments his fate to his creator:

Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend.

Make me happy and I shall again be virtuous (*Frankenstein* 101).

While *L'Ensorcelée* is now deemed a mediocre fantastic tale, it was viewed in its day as a complex interpretive document involving Barbey's understanding of a particular situation, cultural form and social process. Jéhoël de la Croix-Jugan represents the Beast who speaks out against the dominant ideology. He is a marginalized character who resists established authority. Jeanne le Hardouey is the Beauty who will destroy herself in her blind desire to obey the priest's wishes. They are both guilty of crimes against society, but their defiance is a personal expression of tragic heroism that envelops their last gestures of individual resistance to the numbing conformity of middle-class domination.

Thus Barbey has produced a novel that blends mystery with the supernatural. His meticulous depiction of the unnatural runs counter to his quest for historical accuracy. It is as if the author wishes to gain the reader's complicity by portraying realistically both the fantastic and non-fantastic elements of the story. Once he has gained the reader's confidence, he attacks the mediocrity of his age vehemently. According to Philippe Berthier, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly despised his contemporaries. "Il a tout construit, de lui et de son oeuvre, *contre*

son temps, offensivement discordant par principe agressif envers tout ce qui sollicitait l'engagement ou l'espoir de la majorité" (Préface de *L'Enfermée* 15).

In stark contrast to Barbey d'Aurevilly stands Prosper Mérimée, who learned to make the best of his circumstances and work within the government of Napoléon III. After nineteen years of absence from the literary scene, Mérimée suddenly took up his pen again to imitate the absurd novels being read at Court. "Il m'arrive comme aux vieillards, je retombe en enfance, et depuis mon retour de Fontainebleau je me suis mis à faire des nouvelles" (Lettre à Mme Delessert, le 20 septembre 1868, t. XIV 245). His problem, he said, was to invent a story that would be sufficiently atrocious to be appealing.

On lisait à Fontainebleau toutes sortes de bêtises, et je voulais faire pour S. M. quelque chose dans son goût, par conséquent j'ai pris le sujet le plus extravagant et le plus atroce que j'ai pu, mais il a fini par me plaire, et si j'avais le courage de le recommencer d'une autre façon, j'en ferais peut-être quelque chose de tolérable (245).

The tale mentioned was "Lokis," a novella that the author read to amuse the empress Eugénie and her entourage at the Saint-Cloud Palace in July, 1869. Although he claimed that he would never publish it, the short story appeared in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* on September 15, 1869.

Like its fairy tale predecessors, "Lokis" is a tale within a tale. It is but a portion of the Journal of the German Philologist Wittembach. As the story unfolds, the professor is reading his diary⁴ to two of his assistants, Théodore and

⁴ According to Michelle Perrot, the diary or journal in the latter part of the nineteenth century was a form of inner discipline. Writing observations and reflections down made it possible to analyze one's inner guilt and to record one's failures to fulfill social and sexual desires ("The Secret of the Individual 499).

Adélaïde. As he reads, he explains his newest project for the Bible Society, which erroneously translated the Holy Scriptures into Lithuanian for the Samogitians, who speak only *jmoude* and thus cannot understand Lithuanian. Faced with this dilemma, the Society has commissioned Wittembach to translate the Bible into *jmoude*. The professor decides to go to Samogotie to learn about the people's folklore in order to establish appropriate vocabulary for the text. He discovers that one of the local gentry, Count Michel Szémioth, possesses a fabulous collection of the legends. The professor manages to obtain an invitation from the Count to visit his library. Thus the frame tale dissolves into the background and the fantastic tale takes center stage.

The Count is a strange creature who is burdened by violent migraines, supposedly the result of a troubled birth. It seems that Michel's mother, an avid hunter, was carried off by a bear. She was so frightened by the experience that she is reduced to debilitating states of hysteria. After her rescue the doctors discover that she is pregnant. They predict the birth of her child will restore her reason. Unfortunately the newborn has a different effect upon her. She tries to strangle him. "Tuez le! tuez la bête!" ("Lokis" 188). It seems that her child bears an uncanny resemblance to a bear cub and the Countess cannot abide his presence.

Now adult, the Count Szémioth possesses a presence that terrifies animals. His fearsome ability to intimidate is evidenced by the fear he inspires in horses and dogs. Wittembach describes Michel as a man of great size and strength with hairy arms and hands that could crush another human being. He has a piercing glance and radiates a powerful animal magnetism that leads the peasantry to speculate that he is a were-bear who will one day assume his role in the kingdom of beasts. "Tu seras leur roi, non pas lui; tu es grand, tu es fort, tu as

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griffes et dents. . ." (202).

When Professor Wittembach first meets Michel, he is struck by his features. "Ses traits étaient d'une grande régularité, seulement ses yeux étaient trop rapprochés, et il me sembla que d'une glandule lacrymale à l'autre il n'y avait pas la place d'un oeil, comme l'exige le canon des sculpteurs grecs. Son regard était perçant" (192). While the professor attributes his aversion to the Count to his lack of classical features, there is something alarming but intriguing about the young man, who is so brutish in spite of his pleasant and aristocratic manner.

Excursions into the countryside with Szémioth do little to assuage Wittembach's consternation, for at every turn the linguist is confronted by another suspicious occurrence. The most remarkable episode of the novella describes the day that the Count and the professor meet an old hag in the forest. Her basket is full of mushrooms, some clearly poisonous. When Wittembach tries to remove them from her basket, a serpent appears. The old woman tells Szémioth that he would do better to make his way to the swamp and avoid visiting Dowghielly, the chateau of the beautiful but coquettish Ioulka Iwinska. Although Michel is mindful of the hag's warning, he lets his horse decide their path, thus tempting his fate. The horse leads the party to the castle.

Once inside, the professor and the Count become ensnared in Mlle Iwinska's games. Both men are enthralled by the young woman's exquisite skin. She possesses "une peau d'une blancheur vraiment extraordinaire... Je me rappelle un ghazel persan où un amant célèbre la finesse de la peau de sa maîtresse. 'Quand elle boit du vin rouge, dit-il, on le voit passer le long de sa gorge.' La panna Iwinska m'a fait penser à ses vers" (196). Michel and Wittembach wonder what it would be like to drink the blood that courses

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through the neck of such an exquisite creature. "Sans doute on peut dire que c'est une beauté! . . . Sa peau est merveilleuse!... monsieur le professeur, le sang qui coule sous cette peau doit être meilleur que celui d'un cheval? Qu'en pensez-vous?" (214).

Like Barbey's *L'Enfermée*, "Lokis" is narrated by a pedantic observer who is collecting clues (behaviors, body language, speech) and following up the traces to build a dossier on the extraordinary manbeast. Throughout the story, tellers and listeners swap facts, interpretations, and suppositions without arriving at a clear resolution of the dilemma because their exchanges are reeling around one another. The narrators and characters are playing games with the information being conveyed. There are lengthy "dialogues of transmission," to use a Peter Brooks's term, in which teller, listener, and reader are in competition and in collaboration as they attempt to construct the story. While the primary narrator suggests that his ending has but one plausible interpretation — the Count killed his bride — Wittembach casts doubt on his conclusion because of the way he presents the data that he has collected.

Mérimée is tantalizing his listeners and readers with little bits of information presented as true yet bound with fantastic elements whose veracity is in doubt. Embracing the popular demand for documents and rational solutions to the inexplicable of his epoch, Mérimée then sets out to reveal the insufficiency of such rationality. He hesitates between the probable and the impossible, creating uncomfortable moments of tension.

When Ioulka is found dead (throat torn open) the morning after her wedding and the Count disappears, our narrator delineates his case to prove that Szémioth killed his bride. He concludes that, once Michel's animalistic appetite is sated by blood, the young bridegroom returns to his natural habitat far from

the prying eyes of the moral majority. However the reader should be wary of the professor's conclusion. After all, he and the Count were apparent rivals for Ioulka. Does not Wittembach extol her beauty and desirability as often as Michel, and was not the linguist piqued when he failed to capture la panna during one of her games? Irène Bessière suggests that fantastic authors of the nineteenth-century were playing with the readers' concepts of order and disorder, life and death, dream and reality.

S'attacher à l'in vraisemblable, c'est questionner les limites de l'objet, tenir que toute saisie de l'extériorité est provisoire et partielle. Le fantastique dramatise la constante distance du sujet du réel, c'est pourquoi, il est toujours lié aux théories sur la connaissance et aux croyances d'une époque. Il n'est de "caution de l'impossible" que par la lucidité et l'intelligence, par le recours à la raison. Le fantastique marque la mesure du réel à travers la démesure. Le scepticisme qui seul trace l'intimité de la raison et de la déraison est l'ingrédient obligé de l'inimaginable (*Le Récit fantastique* 60).

When Mme Delessert asks to read the story, Mérimée warns her that his work is very mediocre. "Si vous le désirez je vous apporterais cette drôlerie, mais pour la comprendre, il faudrait que vous eussiez passé par les absurdes romans qu'on lisait à Fontainebleau. Le problème était de trouver quelque chose de plus atroce, et sans me flatter mon sujet a le pompon" (le 22 septembre 1868 248). Other letters reveal that the author clearly had rewritten portions of the novella at the behest of Jenny Dacquin and Valentine Delessert to tame the "implausible" segments of the story. Rather than suggest that Michel is the son of the bear that kidnapped the Countess and impregnated her, the ladies convince Mérimée that

“les bizareries du héros tiennent à une peur ou à une fantaisie de femme grosse” (Lettre à Mme Delessert, le 11 octobre 1868 264). Nonetheless, the writer holds steadfastly to his belief that fantasy is not illusion — the proof resting in the fact that a man-bear existed. It killed its fiancée, and while there may have been a distinguished linguistics professor who clearly desired the same prize, there is no concrete proof that Wittembach acted out his fantasy, only hints that he too was capable of such a dreadful deed. Szémioth is the man caught between his two natures: animal and human. Moreover, his beastly disposition is not well managed and his humanity is governed by a plurality of systems that lead to feral displays of passion and desire. Michel transgresses one law to obey another. In his case, nature vanquishes nurture and civilization is subjugated by the call of the wild. Thus “Lokis” reprises the theme of Marie de France’s “Bisclavret” — the animal side that consumes the human through the agency of a woman.

Like Hugo and Barbey d’Aurevilly, Mérimée defines Ioulka’s amorous conflicts in terms of a polarized model of angel or trollop.⁵ She is described as a brainless coquette, but “une bonne fille au fond, et elle a toutes les qualités solides. Elle est très bonne musicienne, elle peint divinement les fleurs, elle parle également bien le français, l’allemand et l’italien...” (204) thus fulfilling her patriarchal role of a woman empowered by her sexuality and desirability. Like the beauties of the fairy tales, la panna Iwinska is depicted as a naïve, spoiled child who lacks the maturity to deal with sex and love. As the story progresses

⁵ The belief that women had two natures was not new. Delphine Gay de Girardin noted in 1840 that: “la femme véritable n’existe plus. Il doit donc y avoir deux catégories de femmes à aimer: les femmes anges et les femmes démons; les vierges voilées, couronnées de lis; les bacchantes couronnées de pampre; celles qui chantent doucement en s’accompagnant de la lyre, celles qui dansent follement en agitant le thyrses et le tambour; celles qu’on aime avec enthousiasme; celles qu’on idolâtre avec ivresse; les unes sont prestigieuses en bien, les autres sont prestigieuses en mal; mais toutes sont également idéales...” (*Courier de Paris*, 12 mars 1840, *Contre-Courant* 202).

she is given opportunities to grow up, but she clings to her childish ways well beyond the expected limits of maturation witnessed by her aunt's lament: "Souvent elle me désespère avec ses folies. A seize ans, j'étais plus raisonnable qu'elle l'est à vingt..." (204). Apparently Ioulka's only way to reject patriarchal authority is to shock sensibilities by exploiting her corporal gifts for music, dance, and storytelling. Her public displays of creativity and imagination hint at more depth than the textual descriptions of her capricious follies. In essence, then, we might conclude that Ioulka's artistic abilities refute the repressive definitions of her worth, for, when she gives up her subversive coquetterie and submits to patriarchal authority by wedding the Count, she literally and figuratively forfeits her life. Wittembach is in part responsible for Ioulka's death. It was he who admonished the newlywed to abandon her childish past and embrace her adulthood. "[E]t comme j'avais encore sur le coeur le *post-scriptum* déplacé de Mlle Iwinska, je lui rappela qu'elle entrait dans une vie nouvelle, non plus accompagnée d'amusements et de joies juvéniles, mais pleine de devoirs sérieux et de graves épreuves" (218).⁶ The bride is murdered; a doctor examines the wounds and declares that they are the result of animal bites; the professor closes his journal and lectures his assistants on the origin of the title of his notes.

In many ways, "Lokis" appears to be an updated version of Mérimée's "Vénus d'Ille." Both stories feature pedantic narrators in exotic locales who witness a variety of unsettling incidents that result in violent death the morning after a wedding; however "Lokis" does break new ground by accompanying the tale with scientific data. For the first time, Mérimée explores the psyche of his

⁶ The *post-scriptum* to which the professor refers is attached to a note that accompanied the couple's wedding announcement. Ioulka reveals that, in spite of her intuition to flee, she has decided to marry Michel. "Il n'y a que moi en effet qui sois assez folle pour vouloir d'un garçon comme lui" (215).

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characters. The author infuses a pathology into the murderer's act that suggests the dangers of unbridled lust coupled with primitive, bestial urges. In spite of the explanations and obsessional undertones furnished by the narrator, there remain the monstrous deeds that stand at the core of the work — a dramatic departure into the realm of the subconscious for the author of "Carmen" and "Mateo Falcone." In a letter to Mme Delessert, he indicates that he has decided to publish the work because it appears that few will understand what he has written and thus he will be spared the embarrassment of having gone too far.

J'ai lèché un peu mon ours, et les personnes timorées qui n'admettraient pas le croisement entre *plantigrades*, pourront supposer que les bizarreries du héros, tiennent à une peur ou une fantaisie de femme grosse. Tout le monde croit à cela, et ma mère attribuait un certain nombre de mes défauts à une peur qu'un singe lui avait causé (le 11 octobre 1868, t. XIV 264)

Many of the elements examined in the preceding works of Barbey d'Aurevilly and Mérimée are also found in Henri de Régner's *Canne de Jaspe*; however, they have been updated to reflect the age and blended with the emerging Modernist style that had made its way from Latin America to Western Europe in the 1890s. Régner, who gained fame in the twentieth century for his poetry, wrote a collection of short stories in 1896 that he believed would amuse the readers clamoring for pleasant but tantalizing fiction enveloped in an elegant cloak of mystery and voluptuousness. He chose to reject the realist and naturalist modes of expression that were so prevalent, and create tales punctuated with exoticism, refined language and an overall appeal to the senses and musicality.

Un roman ou un conte peut n'être qu'une fiction agréable. S'il présente un sens inattendu au delà de ce qu'il semble signifier, il

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faut jouir de ce surcroît à demi-intentionnel sans y exiger trop de suite et en le considérant comme né fortuitement des concordances mystérieuses qu'il y a, malgré tout, entre toutes choses ("Au lecteur," *La Canne de Jaspe* 5).⁷

The concordances that Régnier evokes recall the correspondances drawn by Charles Baudelaire, who sought to establish the hidden rapports that exist between nature and man. According to the author of *Les Fleurs du mal*, we must explore in depth objects that surround us if we are ever to seize the essence of our "soul." In *Symbolistes et Décadents*, Brunetière reiterates Baudelaire's position that "entre la nature et nous il y a des 'correspondances,' des affinités latentes, des identités mystérieuses, et que ce n'est qu'autant que nous les saisissons que, pénétrant à l'intérieur des choses, nous en pouvant vraiment approcher l'âme" (195).

For Henri de Régnier and his generation, objects were symbols of expression that generated impressions, analogies, and comparisons. They were reflections of their possessors and hence could reveal subtle hints as to the true nature of the owner. In "La Mort de M. de Nouâtre et de Madame de Ferlinde," there appear long descriptive passages that elaborate the contents of Adalbert de Nouâtre's foyer. Of particular import is the Centaur that stands in the center of the vestibule. It is "un bronze antique qui représentait un Centaure. Le large poitrail bombait ses muscles; la croupe ronde luisait; les flancs semblaient palpiter; le sabot levé attendait et le monstre équestre d'un bras agile élevait au-dessus de sa tête pamprée une pomme de pin en onyx" (72-73). This description is followed by an inventory of "un choix exclusif d'objets" that recount the

⁷ Régnier's comments suggest that, before reader-response theorists expounded upon their repertoire theories, there were poets and writers who were well aware of the horizon of expectations of their readership.

history of earthly demigods, sirens, harpies and satyrs. M. de Nouâtre's library is filled with texts that examine the mythological origins of his creatures and offer recipes to conjure metamorphoses.

While the contents of this residence would appear singularly remarkable today, they are but a reflection of the late nineteenth-century penchant for collections. Among the rising middle class, collecting *objets d'art* satisfied a desire for amassing private property. Michelle Perrot suggests that the collectibles were "a form of escape, a way of seeking refuge among objects that were nothing less than narcissistic equivalents of the self. . ." ("The Secret of the Individual" 545). In the case of Régnier's M. de Nouâtre, we move from fondness to the level of obsession as the objects in his home dissolve into a field of suggestive visual energy, thus establishing an affiliation between psychological exploration and interior space as a domain of self-projection.

Adalbert, like his collection, is a curious blend of the Ancient and Modern. He is described as a man of medium stature who radiates surprising strength and union with the earth. When M. d'Amercoeur first meets him, as the sun is setting over a monotoned plain, Nouâtre appears on horseback at a gallop. His description hints at his bestiality. "Sa chevelure brune s'éclair-cissait par places d'un reflet fauve et sa barbe en pointe roussoyait un peu. Le soleil, déjà sur son déclin, le mordorait tout entier et la couleur de sa personne s'accordait avec l'ocre de l'horizon et l'or des feuillages d'alentour" (65). The two men decide to travel together. In the course of the evening they discuss the landscape through which they are passing. Adalbert tells Amercoeur that there is a Centaur⁸ that still roams this region because it is "propice à l'oeuvre fabuleuse." The creature

⁸In mythic narratives the Centaur is often associated with overindulgence, wildness, and violence (for example Homer's *Iliad* 1.263 or *Odyssey* 21.303); although a few were teachers of Greek heroes, like the Centaur, Chiron. Writers used the centaur to symbolize man's dual nature.

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is reportedly the last of his race and is seeking a mate to regenerate his line. Nouâtre tells his companion that man and beast are still capable of consanguinary exchange.

Le temps a dispersé des formes jadis conjointes. L'homme s'isola de ce qui l'environne et se retira dans son infirmité solitaire. Il a rétrogradé croyant se parfaire. Les dieux se muaient jadis aux apparences de leur choix, y prenaient le corps de leur désir, aigles ou taureaux! Des êtres intermédiaires participèrent à cette faculté divine; elle dort en nous, notre passion y crée un satyre intermittent; que ne sommes-nous incorporés aux désirs qui cabrent! Il faut devenir ce que l'on est; il faut que la nature se complète et retrouve les degrés qu'elle a perdus (62-63).

Amercoeur is surprised by the discourse but is reticent because as the night progresses he witnesses a surprising transformation in his traveling companion, whose appearance alters with the changes in light. "Je voyais à mon côté sa forme noire se sculpter sur l'ombre environnante" (69).

Throughout the tale, it is clear that Nouâtre has the facility to change appearance like certain creatures of nature. When enflamed, Adalbert's countenance moves from its normal darkness to golden tones, especially yellow. The transformation is accompanied by odors especially of hide leather and hooves. His first encounter with Madame de Ferlinde is particularly telling.

Dans ses yeux très noirs des paillettes de cuivre scintillaient par instants et parmi sa barbe brune trois fils d'or s'entrecroisaient. Au départ il serra les mains de Madame de Ferlinde entre ses doigts aux ongles aigus, et, pendant qu'il la regardait, M. d'Amercoeur vit les parcelles métalliques se multiplier dans ses yeux qui jaunirent

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d'une sorte d'éclair furtif, passionné, violent et presque aussitôt évanoui (74).

Like la panna Iwinska, Madame de Ferlinde is an extraordinary beauty who tempts every man she encounters. M. d'Amercoeur is not an exception. His description of her details the striking contrasts of her "nature."

Elle était svelte et rousse. Son corps longuement souple supportait une tête païenne couronnée d'une chevelure dont le jaillissement ondé s'achevait en volute. La masse incandescente de cette coiffure semblait à la fois fluide et ciselée, avec la hardiesse d'un casque et la grâce d'une fontaine. Cela allait avec l'air et le port d'une Nymphé guerrière. Elle vivait, veuve, dans un vieil hôtel au milieu de beaux jardins... Cette chaste Diane aimait à parer sa beauté de tuniques plissées et du croissant lunaire, et ce nom qu'elle portait, elle l'eût mérité (71).

Nymphé, warrior, widow, she is described in terms of her habitat — a transparent world of greens and blues that is sweetened by the murmur of three fountains. M. d'Amercoeur is completely enamored of her, as is his friend, M. de Nouâtre; however the lady appears to be more interested in the solitary scholar. She describes him in terms that recall Michel Szémioth. He is "un homme à manies, mais érudit et charmant, d'une science prodigieuse et d'un goût raffiné. D'ailleurs vivant fort solitaire, absent pour de fréquents voyages, grand amateur de livres, de médailles et de pierres gravées" (72). The triangle is aggravated by the strange friendship between Amercoeur and Adalbert. Neither man dares to seek explanations for the secrets of the other. Nevertheless, there arises in the fall an alarming series of events that greatly trouble Madame de Ferlinde. For several days her rest has been disturbed by dogs howling at night, not in anger but in

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fear. Her gardeners have discovered unusual prints on the lawn that contain yellow hair. Traps have been set but to no avail.

One rainy night at the end of autumn, M. d'Amercoeur appears at Madame de Ferlinde's residence and discovers the guards asleep. Upon entering the house he hears muted sighs, then the sound of furniture being overturned. Suddenly there is a bloodcurdling cry from the chaste Diane's bedchamber. Amercoeur hastens to her rescue but it is too late. "Madame de Ferlinde gisait à demi-nue sur le parquet, ses cheveux se répandaient en une longue flaque d'or et, accroupie sur sa poitrine, une sorte de bête velue, informe et hargneuse, l'étreignait et lui dévorait les lèvres" (76).

The beast is described as a "bloc de poil jaune" that snarls at the man as it bounds backwards. Oddly enough, the room is filled with the smells of hide leather and hooves eerily mixed with sweet perfume. Amercoeur draws his sword and drives it into the monster's belly. The brute hurls itself out the window and disappears into the night. Madame de Ferlinde lies dying in a pool of warm blood, her throat torn open. Panicked by the scene and cognizant of the fact that he may be blamed for the murder, M. d'Amercoeur flees into the night. Claiming no awareness of where he is going, he arrives at M. de Nouâtre's home. The servant tells him that Adalbert is in the bedchamber that he has occupied for weeks. Amercoeur enters the dark room. He finds M. de Nouâtre dead, a gaping wound made by a sword the probable cause of his demise. The room is filled with the odors of hide leather and hooves.

The tragic deaths of Madame de Ferlinde and Adalbert de Nouâtre enflame the gossips of Ochria. Since M. d'Amercoeur was known to be their confidant, he is enjoined by the town's elite to recount all that he knows about the affair, but M. d'Amercoeur refrains from "slandering" the dead, in part to

uphold his friends' reputations, but also to avoid casting suspicion upon himself. In his last will and testament, M. de Nouâtre leaves the statue of the centaur to his friend.

Within the framework of a very familiar tale, Régnier has woven a tale of blood and lust. Like Mérimée's short story, "La Mort de M. de Nouâtre et de Madame Ferlinde" presents three characters whose lives are interlocked by games of flirtation and eroticism. As the males compete for the beautiful widow, one's passions overcome him and his bestial nature emerges to consume them both. Once more we find the woman being blamed for the outcome of the tragedy. It is she who provokes the violence by pitting two males against one another.

The events recounted in "Lokis" and Régnier's tale echo other *fin-de-siècle* themes of mutilating women. The public's fascination with the image of the semi-nude female body ripped open is emblematic of the period's growing interest in female anatomy. Via Mérimée's "Lokis" and Régnier's "La Mort de M. de Nouâtre et Mme Ferlinde," the reader is invited to cast a quick glance at the dissection of the New Woman, who has rejected her traditional role of wife and mother to become a man-devouring seductress, be she a prostitute à la Zola's Nana or merely the other woman, the mistress, whose very existence chips away at middle-class morality. Both short stories illustrate art's ability to construct images that mobilize, concentrate and redirect the readers' responses to transgressive behavior, here represented by the rising sexuality of certain females. The authors are "selling" fear, fear of women, who participate in sexual activities that flirt dangerously close to animal-like sexual transgression. Of interest to us are those females, who unite with grotesque creatures or bestial men. Nevertheless, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the role-reversing

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works of the era that transformed women into beasts, sphinxes, or lionesses, notably *Les Diaboliques* of Barbey d'Aurevilly or Zola's prostitutes. While these women are not a part of the current study, their presence in the literature of the era might prove to be interesting illustrations of alternative visions of what constituted being female at the end of the nineteenth century in France.

The growing interest in sexuality caused great consternation among the male populace, because female appetites for power and sex were deemed out of control. It became man's self-appointed mission to determine why the female had rebelled against her nature. To do so he must first silence then dissect her to reveal her abnormalities.

There is a cartoon drawn during this period that depicts Gustave Flaubert gleefully examining Emma Bovary's heart as it pours forth its last drops of blood (See Appendix Two for illustrations of the dissection.). The caricature is but one image of an ever-expanding industry that made it its business to study the New Woman. It was believed that the female body was a treasure trove of information that must be penetrated in order to unlock its hidden truths. Elaine Showalter has suggested that as doctors of Science and Medecine explored female anatomy and essayed their first inquiries into female hysteria, there appeared literary works of fact and fiction that attempted to make the New Woman a case study to be opened, analyzed, and reassembled by the male writer (*Sexual Anarchy* 128).

It was during this era that medical textbooks first displayed anatomically correct models of the female and discussed the secret differences that these bodies held. Fin-de-siècle art also began to represent one of the most popular themes of the period, a doctor performing an autopsy on the body of a drowned woman. A comparison of the death scenes of La Esmeralda with those of Jeanne Le Hardouey, Ioulka, and Mme de Ferlinde would reveal more detail about the

appearance of the corpse as the century progresses. The more elaborate descriptions of a cadaver suggest that it was important to the *fin-de-siècle* writer to cut into the female body and peer deeply into its recesses to unveil the enigmas held therein. (Appendix Two offers some examples of the better known artistic representations of autopsies and female suicide).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there arose crisis after crisis in matters of race, class, and gender relations. To the men of this period, women were either agents of destruction who rejected reasonable order to embrace chaos, or venerable envoys who represented the most lofty icons of womanhood. Toril Moi has observed that because this phallogocentric view was so widely held, women were marginalized (culturally and socially) in "the frontier between men and chaos," making them inhabitants of a mysterious and frightening wild zone outside of patriarchal culture. "Women seen as the limit of the symbolic order will in other words share in the disconcerting properties of *all* frontiers: they will be neither inside or outside, neither known, nor unknown" (*Sexual/Textual Politics* 167). Of course the authority to determine into which category a woman fell still rested with the male, but it was becoming more difficult to control certain groups of females, who rejected tradition and sought self-individuation, outside the standard models of homemaking and child-bearing. To counter these feminists *avant la lettre* the patriarchy once more set about manipulating the curriculum for males and females. There was a renewed disdain for works of imagination and romantic fiction that presented themes, characters and events that did little to prepare a young woman for her future role as wife and mother. If reading was to prepare women for their places in society, it must deny the worth of complete autonomy and depict a particular kind of female self that was cognizant of part in the scheme of things. The

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establishment pointed to a long literary tradition that warned against the pitfalls of reading too much romantic fiction, citing the works of Dante, Cervantes, Fénelon, and Flaubert.⁹

To stem the ever-rising tide of rebellion, France's "moral majority" assembled a formative program for boys and girls that reflected their social and worldly values. By the turn of the twentieth century, the curriculum was based on a small number of standard texts. Every educated person in France had read the classical tragedies of Corneille and Racine, could recite the Fables of La Fontaine, and had learned his "Petit Lavis," a history manual that claimed that the French Revolution was the defining moment for contemporary France. They were also very familiar with "Le Tour de la France des Deux Jeunes," which inventories France's material and human wealth. To these core texts were added the poetry of Victor Hugo and the then popular, now scarcely remembered Paul Déroulède. Literacy had increased at all levels of society, especially among the *petite bourgeoisie*. The best-selling reading materials of the day were the penny newspapers, their illustrated supplements, and serialized novels.¹⁰ The once popular melodrama was in decline as the masses sought their entertainment in Boulevard Theaters and *la guinguette*, an open-air cafe where one drank and danced on the lawn. With the decline of positivism in the 1890s and the rise of bergsonian philosophy, young French intellectuals became more attracted to religion, social action and national pride. The elite upheld their positions with a

⁹ The middle-class patriarchy reminded their charges that Dante had assigned Paolo and Francesca to the second circle of Hell for reading the Arthurian cycle; that Don Quijote was an indictment of fiction; that Fénelon had warned that girls must avoid romances because such works would not prepare them for the drudgery of housework; that Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* clearly showed what disasters await young women who fill their heads with romantic notions.

¹⁰ For an outstanding study of the period with many examples of the bourgeois rituals, see a *History of Private Life* edited by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby.

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call for antigermanic attitudes, a taste for the burlesque or *gaudriole* humor, and a quest for the exotic, especially of oriental expression.

In this shifting climate Edmond Rostand prepared to stage a heroic comedy that he himself believed was doomed to failure because the directors of the theater told him that the public was clamoring for philosophic or moral discourses à la Strindberg or Chekhov. Rostand's play recounted a simple story, centered on a flawed hero who questions his self-worth at every juncture. Madame Rostand reported in her memoirs that her husband was so distraught that he threw himself into the arms of Coquelin, the comedian playing Cyrano, and cried: "Pardon! Ah! pardonnez-moi, mon ami, de vous avoir entraîné dans cette désastreuse aventure" ("Introduction," *Cyrano de Bergerac* 9).

In December, 1897, *Cyrano de Bergerac* opened. Its success was startling, durable, and lucrative. The house was sold out for four hundred shows. The play's success was due in part to the theatrical context of 1897, a theater dominated by elitist battles raged between the naturalists and symbolists; but also due to Rostand's timely creation of a swashbuckling comedy that preyed upon the growing patriotism of the public in search of past French glories. The spectators and critics alike were drawn to the mythmaking, the wit, the panache. In the characterization of Cyrano, they once again had a brilliant individual battling an oppressive society that sought to normalize him. Here was a hero marked by his exterior and interior deformities, who ran to his nation's defense, who fought and loved honorably.

Et ce qui m'enchanté plus encore, c'est que cet auteur dramatique est de veine française. Il nous rapporte du fond des derniers siècles les vers de Scarron et de Regnard; il le manie en homme qui s'est imprégné de Victor Hugo et de Banville; mais il ne les

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imite point; tout ce qu'il écrit jaillit de source et a le tour moderne.

Il est aisé, il est clair, il a le mouvement et la mesure, toutes les qualités qui distinguent notre race.

Quel bonheur! quel bonheur! Nous allons donc enfin être débarrassés et des brouillards scandinaves et des études psychologiques trop minutieuses, et des brutalités voulues du drame réaliste.

Voilà le joyeux soleil de la vieille Gaule qui, après une longue nuit, remonte à l'horizon. Cela fait plaisir; cela rafraîchit le sang (Francisque Sarcey, *le Temps*, 3 janvier 1898, cited in the "Annexes" 339).

Thus Cyrano appears to have reinforced (at least in the minds of some critics) the order of his day, to reestablish "la belle France" to its former glories. Even the British did not fail to notice the import of the Rostand production. Max Beerbohm, who succeeded George Bernard Shaw as the dramatic critic of London's *Saturday Review*, was struck by the startling patriotism of the work. "I have said that the play is unlikely to suffer under the lapse of time. But though it has no special place in time, in space it has its own special place. It is a work charged with its author's nationality, and only the compatriots of its author can to the full appreciate it ("*Cyrano de Bergerac*," *Saturday Review*, July 9, 1898).

At the heart of the play stands a heroine who is so close to finding a perfect soulmate, yet so far from the discovery because of the social and cultural conventions of the day. She is blinded by the physical beauty of Christian and fails to see the shallowness of this handsome young man. When Cyrano reminds his cousin that she loves only "beau langage, bel esprit," Roxane protests that Christian must be witty because "il a les cheveux d'un héros de d'Urfé" (*Cyrano de Bergerac* 2.6.818). Of course Bergerac cannot accept such a response and enjoins Roxane to explain herself as he plays the devil's advocate.

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CYRANO: S'il était aussi maldisant que bien coiffé!

ROXANE: Non, tous les mots qu'il dit sont fins, je le devine!

CYRANO: Oui, tous les mots sont fins quand la moustache est fine. Mais si c'était un sot! ...

ROXANE: Et bien! j'en mourrais, là (2.6.819-822).

From the beginning it is obvious that Cyrano will not win this battle, for his cousin is too much the *précieuse* and too enraptured by the pastoral tales of the period. She, like Emma Bovary, has been influenced by the literature she reads and the poems she recites or hears. While she claims that she rejects her beauty, — “J'étais belle, alors!” (2.6.777) — she never overtly rejects Christian's praise of her physical attributes and surrounds herself throughout most of the play with witticisms that are adorable, inventive and drole. If Cyrano's obsession with his nose is his *casse-pieds*; it is Roxane's preciosity that blinds her to the truth. She is not mature enough to see beyond her little sphere of friends who determine her thoughts, her dress, and her comportment toward others. The irony of her situation is that she finds justification for her choice in narratives that ritually recite the history of patriarchal marriage. To meet her needs for emotional replenishment, she elects the arms of a male who is incapable of satisfying her needs, desires, or wishes because he lacks the wit to understand her. It will take her fifteen years to shake off her blinders and realize the error of her ways, but by this time it is too late to save herself or her lover. Unfortunately, Roxane is not the only character who refuses to move beyond social convention and see with her heart. Cyrano also plays his part in causing this dysphoric end to what should have been a “fairy-tale romance.”

Cyrano de Bergerac is flawed by his perverse inability to play any role other than the brave Gascon warrior who flaunts his individuality within a

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gallery of miming apes. He is a hero because he suffers unjustly. It seems as if he is doomed by poor timing or Fate to always be a step behind his quests for love and glory. He is his own worst enemy: an elocutionist who is speechless, a master of combat who cowers in the presence of his beloved. "Et je m'évanouis de peur quand je vous vois" (2.4.703). The reason for his behavior eludes him. In part he attributes it to a profile that no one could love. As he tells Le Bret in the first act:

CYRANO: Regarde-moi, mon cher, et dis quelle espérance
Pourrait bien me laisser cette protubérance!
Oh! je ne me fais pas d'illusion! —Parbleu,
Oui quelquefois, je m'attendris, dans le soir bleu;
J'entre en quelque jardin où l'heure se parfume;
Avec mon pauvre grand diable de nez je hume
L'avril; je suis des yeux, sous un rayon d'argent,
Au bras d'un cavalier, quelque femme, en songeant
Que pour marcher, à petits pas dans de la lune,
Aussi moi j'aimerais au bras en avoir une,
Je m'exalte, j'oublie... et j'aperçois soudain
L'ombre de mon profil sur le mur du jardin! (1.5.515-526)

Cyrano's nose is but an overt manifestation of the interior struggle of the man who finds himself on the margin of society because he is not like the others. His perceived ugliness is aggravated by his desire for Beauty — represented primarily in his quest for Roxane but also in his befriending of Christian, who gives him the physical means to incarnate his love. Interposing his words on the body of Neuvillette, Cyrano finds the instrument to tantalize Roxane. His use of a surrogate distinguishes him from the other beasts of our study, who have

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sought to capture the affections of their Beauties on their own terms. Cyrano teams up with Christian to seduce Roxane.

CYRANO: Si j'avais

Pour exprimer mon âme un pareil interprète!

CHRISTIAN: Il me faudrait de l'éloquence!

CYRANO: Toi, du charme physique et vainqueur, prête m'en:

Et faisons à nous deux un héros de roman!

CHRISTIAN: Quoi?

CYRANO: Te sens-tu de force à répéter les choses

Que chaque jour je t'apprendrai?...

CHRISTIAN: Tu me proposes...

CYRANO: Roxane n'aura pas de désillusions!

Dis, veux-tu qu'à nous deux nous la séduisions? (2.10.1128-1135)

Thus Cyrano sets into motion an ill-conceived scheme to satisfy the puppy love of Christian and Roxane at his own expense. He believes that he will derive pleasure from seeing them content. He even tells Christian that it will amuse him to participate in the conquest of his cousin's affections.

CYRANO: Cela m'amuserait!

C'est une expérience à tenter un poète.

Veux-tu me compléter et que je te complète?

Tu marcheras, j'irai dans l'ombre à ton côté:

Je serai ton esprit, tu seras ma beauté (2. 10.1144-1147).

Unfortunately, Cyrano fails to realize how costly such a deception could be. Should he lose his surrogate body, he would no longer have the means nor appearance to perpetuate the lie. The demise of one of them predicates the death of the other, and for at least one member of the duo, rejection by the fair Roxane

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would mean instant death. Thus the life or death struggle of Christian and Cyrano is bound.¹¹

When the amorous Neuville is killed at Arras leading an advance, de Bergerac can find no other solution than to continue the fantasy that he initiated. As Roxane grieves over the body of her husband, the Gascon warrior pulls his sword and advances. "Et je n'ai qu'à mourir aujourd'hui,/Puisque sans le savoir, elle me pleure en lui" (4.9.2217).

Sadly Fate is not ready to absolve Cyrano from his sins. He will not expire on the battlefield and reap his revenge, but be cursed to play out his folly for fifteen years until death finally releases from his suffering. Under the cover of darkness, he pretends to read the letter that he sent Roxane before the battle of Arras. The Beauty is astonished by the sound of his voice and the ease with which he "reads." Suddenly she realizes that she has been deceived and all the feelings for the lost lover well up within her. She has not understood until this evening the import of the words "J'ai l'âme lourde encore d'amour inexprimé,/Et je meurs!" (5.5.2441-2442). For a second time she is on the verge of losing her beloved. She begs him to live but it is too late. As Cyrano reminds her, their story is not a fairy tale.

CYRANO: Non! car c'est dans le conte
Que lorsqu'on dit: Je t'aime! au prince plein de honte,
Il sent sa laideur fondre à ces mots de soleil. . .
Mais tu t'apercevrais que je reste pareil.

¹¹ Neuville always contended that if he were rejected by Roxane he would die. "Je meurs si je ne rentre/En grâce, à l'instant même..." (3.6.1346). In the sacrificial battle scene of Act IV, Christian makes it clear that he can no longer live with the deception. "Je veux être aimé moi-même, ou pas du tout!" (4.9.2176). Heartbroken by Roxane's revelation, he leads the first Gascon assault. His "suicidal" act of courage is praised for its valor, but beneath the rhetoric remains Christian's revenge. If he is not loved for himself, nor will his double be, for by his death he silences the lover's voice and eliminates his rival from the pool of suitors.

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ROXANE: J'ai fait votre malheur! moi! moi!

CYRANO: Vous? .. au contraire!

J'ignorais la douceur féminine. Ma mère

Ne m'a pas trouvé beau. Je n'ai pas eu de soeur.

Plus tard, j'ai redouté l'amante à l'oeil moqueur.

Je vous dois d'avoir eu, tout au moins, une amie.

Grâce à vous une robe a passé dans ma vie! (5.6.2508-2517)

While Roxane laments having loved but one man and having lost him twice, Bergerac battles his last demons and carries into the other world the one thing no one can steal from him, his panache. When he proclaims in death's throes that his life "ce fut d'être celui qui souffle — et qu'on oublie!" (2.6.2497), he was happily mistaken, for the little known Baroque poet has been immortalized for generations to come by the gifted pen of Edmond Rostand. His style, conceits, and love for the unattainable are the stuff of legends, and like don Quijote seeking the impossible dream, Cyrano de Bergerac reaches for the moon and grabs his place in posterity.

Francis Huster, who accepted the monumental task of reincarnating Cyrano for the centenary celebration of Rostand's heroic comedy, suggests that the play's continued success is due to its appeal to the basest emotions. He claims that the spectacle is composed of the four elements that once were believed to constitute all matter — earth, wind, fire and air. "Le feu-Roxane brûle d'amour, l'air-Christian souffle la jeunesse, l'eau-de Guiche voudrait tout noyer, et la terre-Cyrano se joue des trois autres, les porte et les génère. L'énergie créatrice du rôle est tout à fait surprenante. Ce qui touche à proprement parler en Cyrano, c'est l'éphémère (*Cyrano: A la recherche du nez perdu* 147). These observations link Cyrano's thematics to its roots in Antiquity and folklore and

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reiterate the messages of hope that this play proclaimed to the twentieth century fairy tales of mystery, courage, and sacrifice, like Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*.

While the commercial success of *Cyrano de Bergerac* certainly illustrates Edmond Rostand's ability to tap into the "culture industry" *avant la lettre*, there is also ample evidence within the text that the playwright knew how to muster his material into an aesthetically pleasing and enduring piece of art. The disciplined versification of the work amply bears witness to Rostand's technical accomplishment and raises *Cyrano* to an elitist position of high art while still acknowledging the power of pleasure and popular entertainment. Rostand was one of the first to successfully bridge the gap between a thoroughly composed masterpiece and a fantasy of pleasure. In evidence throughout the work are subtle traces that blur the edges between what is being expressed and how it is being interpreted by the audience. *Cyrano de Bergerac* continues to be performed and to entertain new generations precisely because of Rostand's ability to maintain the ambiguity that opens the work to multiple interpretive choices and to manifest the ambivalence of depictive elements that endow the text and production with a duality of symbolic power. The deep textures drawn by the verse and stage directions open the play to multifarious systems of signification. The title character may be played with some success for its sheer panache or with subtle shadings of dementia or schizophrenia. It is to the author's credit that the protagonist is so well-drawn that he can be successfully portrayed in a multitude of ways, to the delight of the reader or the spectator. According to Francis Huster:

Cyrano de Bergerac est un conte de fées, mais aussi un génial coup de patte de Rostand qui, au lieu de nous donner un final où l'amour transformerait la bête en *beau* héros, nous montre un

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monstre, un monstre qui parvient à conquérir le coeur de sa belle tout en demeurant laid! (45).

Such a characterization amply bears witness to the play's power to tap into its folkloric roots and draw sustenance from the past in order to create a new type of romantic hero.

If one were to describe Mérimée and Régnier as surgical technicians who dissected their female characters by penetrating their bodies via a devouring creature of lust, then Rostand would be a magician who distances himself from his creations in order to create illusions with glimmers of light and shadow that tantalize and enthrall precisely because they are mysterious and unknowable. Death is depicted, at least in *Cyrano's* case, as a growing shadow that gradually surrounds him. Edmond Rostand, its conjurer, enchants his audience by capturing the uselessness of the "beau geste," by seizing the right word to express nothing about everything and nothing at all in startling scenes of dexterity like the "nose" tirade. From these elements he then weaves a tale where ugliness is truth and beauty a lie, as embodied in the characters of *Cyrano* and *Christian*.

According to Max Beerbohm:

Realistic figures perish necessarily with the generation in which they were created, and their place is taken by figures typical of the generation which supervenes... *Cyrano* will survive because he is practically a new type in drama. I know that the motives of self-sacrifice-in-love and of beauty-adored-by-a-grotesque are as old, and as effective, as the hills, and have been used in literature again and again. I know that self-sacrifice is the motive of most

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successful plays. But, so far as I know, beauty-adored-by-a-grotesque has never been used as stage-hero. At any rate it has never been used so finely and so tenderly as by M. Rostand, whose hideous swashbuckler with the heart of gold and the talent for improvising witty or beautiful verses — Caliban+Tatarin+Sir Galahad+Theodore Hook was the amazing recipe for his concoction — is far too novel... (4).

In the twentieth century Rostand's hero would serve as a model for future generations of beasts whose physical appearance belies extraordinary gifts of intelligence and artistry. One such creature is Gaston Leroux's phantom, who reportedly stalked the stately Paris Opera House in the 1890s. According to the author, he had heard rumors of a ghost who haunted the building while conducting research for an article at the National Academy of Music in 1911. Intrigued by the score of accidents and the number of deaths attributed to this specter, the journalist by trade and amateur detective by avocation decided to pursue the story. He thought that it might lead to a tantalizing column for his readership. Little did he know that the material he gleaned from the memoirs, archives, and personal revelations of those who experienced the horror would provide him with sufficient fodder to create a novel. Armed with the facts, the author proudly proclaims in the Avant-Propos:

Le fantôme de l'Opéra a existé. Ce ne fut point, comme on l'a cru longtemps, une inspiration d'artistes, une superstition de direc-

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teurs, la création falote des cervelles excitées de ces demoiselles du corps de ballet, de leurs mères, des ouvreuses, des employés du vestiaire et de la concierge.

Oui, il a existé, en chair et en os, bien qu'il se donnât toutes les apparences d'un vrai fantôme, c'est-à-dire d'une ombre (*Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* 20).

Written in a journalistic style, supported by first-hand accounts of some of the minor characters of the story, Leroux's novel had little popular success until newspapers in France, Great Britain and the United States carried it in serialized form, accompanied by images of the phantom seated at his organ or swinging from the chandelier. The visual aspects of the tale caused more of a stir and gained more of an audience. Commuters waiting for public transport found reading such sensationalism a perfect vehicle for passing time in crowds of strangers. It was a quick, episodic read that had little resemblance to their own existence.

Gaston Leroux had long ago discovered that this sort of writing was very profitable. Although he would never become wealthy by writing for the masses, he knew that it would provide him with a comfortable living. It mattered little to him if the book sold well or not. By the time his serialized version had run out of print, he was well on his way to completing his next adventure novel or mystery for popular consumption. As a professional journalist and theater critic, Gaston Leroux was fully cognizant of the ephemeral popularity of a "story."

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It is probable that Leroux's sad tale of the Opera Ghost would have suffered the same fate as most of his publications if Universal Studios in Hollywood had not become interested in obtaining the film rights of the novel for their popular young actor, Lon Chaney. With the release of the film *The Phantom of the Opera* in 1925, Gaston Leroux's tale of horror and romance took on a new life and form for the next century. Since 1925 there have been a dozen film adaptations and eight theatrical productions of the novel's material, hinting at the provocative power of this work.¹²

As one century came to a violent and deadly conclusion and another imploded repeatedly upon itself, horror stories and phenomenal challenges to middle-class authority became commonplace. The themes of the novels and short stories that were written prior to the onslaught of the First World War seemed to foreshadow the devastation and destruction of the century to come with its two world wars, atomic and nuclear ages, ravaging diseases, and sexual anarchy. However, these works also offered a preview of the potential of science and industry to create marvelous devices to counter the world's horrors.

The title character of *The Phantom of the Opera* is emblematic of this age of discovery and chaos. He represents the often-discussed "other" who emerged in psychoanalytic discussions of the period as a formidable challenge to patriarchal authority. Introduced as a grotesque and perverse voyeur who threatens to derail the restrictive codes of sexual purity by attracting then capturing the

¹² It is interesting to note that during the twentieth century it has been film, theater, and television that appropriate the Beauty and the Beast motif for subversion and introspection.

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interest of desirable females, he is depicted as a brilliant architect and talented musician who loves deeply but is vulnerable because of the poor treatment he has received by society. Afflicted by a mysterious disfiguring disease, he has known little tenderness. Christine is at a loss each time she tries to explain why she is drawn to him. On one hand she is repulsed by his horrible face yet inexplicably fascinated by the softness of his voice, by his heart wrenching cries for pity, and by the touching strains of his opera. Trying to explain Erik's charm to Raoul, Christine recounts in great detail how she came to be moved by the Opera Ghost. It was through his music.

Je revoyais le cahier aux notes rouges et j'imaginai facilement que cette musique avait été écrite avec du sang. Elle me promenait dans tout le détail du martyre; elle me faisait entrer dans tous les coins de l'abîme, l'abîme habité par *l'homme laid*; elle me montrait Erik heurtant atrocement sa pauvre hideuse tête aux parois funèbres de cet enfer, et y fuyant, pour ne les point épouvanter, les regards des hommes... [J]e compris que l'oeuvre était enfin accomplie et que la Laideur, soulevée sur les ailes de l'Amour, avait osé regarder en face la Beauté! (*Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* 258).

Unfortunately the young soprano underestimates her ability to look upon ugliness. While she swears to Erik that she can accept his ravaged face — “Je vous jure que vous êtes le plus douloureux et le plus sublime des hommes, et si Christine Daaé frissonne désormais en vous regardant, c'est qu'elle songera à la

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splendeur de votre génie!" (259) — she closes her eyes and quakes with fear. "Il embrassait le bas de ma robe; il ne vit point que je fermais les yeux" (259). She is not yet ready to embrace her phantom lover.

As Raoul de Chagny listens, he is torn by jealousy. How could Christine be in love with him and be so moved by the monster who tortures their happiness. According to Andrew P. Williams, the viscount finds Erik's attractiveness "doubly repellent, sexually and culturally," because like most Western romance heroes, he regards "women as the rightful property of worthy men" ("The Silent Threat" 90). Of the suitors who present themselves before the new diva of the Opera House, only he is suitable and it is he who lays claim to Christine Daaé in the name of fairness and decency. Raoul's frequent jealous rages throughout the novel suggest not only his immaturity in relationships but his lack of regard for Christine's safety. He appears to be more preoccupied by the affront this creature represents to his masculine authority than to the fears of his fiancée that Erik may consume her.

As the novel opens, Christine is presented as the powerless pawn in a dangerous battle between ruthless suitors. The viscount wants to marry the singer and rescue her from the fame and fortune of her newfound celebrity. If he is successful in his quest, he will effectively silence the voice that has seduced the Opera's audiences, effectively gaining sole control of the prized soprano. On more than one occasion he asks her to swear her allegiance to him. "Nous nous engageons à ne plus vous poser une seule question sur le passé, si vous nous

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promettez de rester sous notre sauvegarde à l'avenir..." (198). To her credit, Christine denies him such a privilege. "Je suis libre de mes actions, monsieur de Chagny; vous n'avez aucun droit à les contrôler et je vous prierai de vous en dispenser désormais. Quant à ce que j'ai fait depuis quinze jours, il n'y a qu'un homme au monde qui aurait le droit d'exiger que je lui en fasse le récit: mon mari!" (198) The seriousness of her tone silences the suitor, especially when he sees the gold band that she wears as a token of "alliance" with her Angel of Music. Fearing a complete breakdown in their relationship the viscount is quick to beg her forgiveness. He claims that he only meddled in her affairs because he holds her in such high esteem, and because he fears that she has been bewitched by an evil sorcerer. His sole purpose was to protect her. Moved by pity, Christine asks Raoul to forget his torment, forget the name of the man who causes him such pain, and above all to cease his attempts to penetrate the mystery of "la voix d'homme" because "il n'en est point de plus affreux sur la terre!" (202). No good can come from discovering the truth.

In stark relief to Raoul de Chagny's manic displays of temperament stands the cool but frustrated passion of Erik, who uses Christine's voice as a seductive but visible instrument of his musical genius. In her he has discovered the tender resonance of an imaginary mother's lullaby. Her beauty and musical gift inspire him, making him believe that a return to the civilization that he has abandoned for the depths of his solitary existence might be possible. In a desperate plea to win her, he tells her that all he needs is to be loved for himself.

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Moi, il m'est impossible de continuer à vivre comme ça, au fond de la terre, dans un trou, comme une taupe! *Don Juan triomphant* est terminé, maintenant je veux vivre comme tout le monde. Je veux avoir une femme comme tout le monde et nous irons nous promener le dimanche. J'ai inventé un masque qui me fait la figure de n'importe qui. On ne se retournera même pas. Tu seras la plus heureuse des femmes... *Il ne m'a manqué que d'être aimé pour être bon!* Si tu m'aimais, je serais doux comme un agneau et tu ferais de moi ce que tu voudrais (411).

In Erik's laments we find an echo of Frankenstein's monster, who also believed that his salvation lay in finding love and affection. Love had the power to change him into the stuff that dreams are made of. In this declaration, we find bourgeois images of happiness — a wife, Sunday walks in the park at the side of the happiest of women for being loved by a devoted husband. Laura Mulvey suggests that the phantom's rhetorical stance is no better than the viscount's. Both men long to possess the young singer physically and completely. Raoul (perhaps because of his inexperience) is the more vocal about his rights; Erik is less sure of himself but more energetic and obsessed to "take form and command her love" (203). While the viscount listens at the door of Christine's dressing room on several occasions, Erik watches his beloved from the safety of his lair behind the mirror. Deprived of physical satisfaction, he soaks up her essence through his gaze. He conceals himself behind a mask, envelops himself in a cloak

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of darkness, and marvels at the object of his desire always avoiding the excruciating reality of his own reflection. Williams maintains that the phantom thus establishes a privileged position from which to realize his fantasy as he becomes "the beast who can gaze into the mirror and see the beauty"(91). Of course his status of "other" makes his quest frustrating. He is riddled with doubt and fear; therefore, his first advances toward Christine are tentative, concerned, and gentle. As he gains her trust and feels himself empowered, he gives himself over to the dream of a "normal" existence. It is only after Christine unmasks him that his sexual aggressivity comes to fore, revealing him to be no less lustful and desiring than his handsome patriarchal brother. Stripping the mask away uncovers his "phallic grimace," to appropriate a Lacanian term. Having been rejected by his parents because of his ugliness, he cannot imagine anyone loving him for himself; therefore, like some beast of prey, he must overcome his quarry's resistance. If he does not act, he will lose his last chance at happiness. Driven by a sort of bloodlust for satisfaction, his actions become more intense and violent. He must find normalcy in a world where his outward appearance would never permit him to do so.

Moi, je ne m'exprime jamais comme les autres!... Je ne fais rien comme les autres!... Mais j'en suis bien fatigué!... bien fatigué! J'en ai assez, vois-tu, d'avoir une forêt dans ma maison, et une chambre des supplices!... Et d'être logé comme un charlatan au fond d'une boîte à double fond!... J'en ai assez! j'en ai assez. Je

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veux avoir un appartement tranquille, avec des portes et des fenêtres ordinaires et une honnête femme dedans comme tout le monde! (427).

It is interesting to note that Christine blames herself for the flood of tears, recriminations, and violence that follows the revelation of Erik's face. She finds herself akin to the first Eve or the mythical Pandora who unleash evil upon the world because they cannot contain their curiosity in spite of all the warnings. Had she but controlled her inquisitiveness, she might have found a more peaceful resolution to her dilemma.

Il m'avait répété que je ne courais aucun danger tant que je ne toucherais pas au masque, et j'y avais touché. Je maudis mon imprudence, mais je constatai en frissonnant que le raisonnement du monstre était logique. Oui, je serais revenue si je n'avais pas vu son visage... Déjà il m'avait suffisamment touchée, intéressée, apitoyée même par ses larmes masquées, pour que je ne restasse point insensible à sa prière. Enfin je n'étais pas une ingrante, et son impossibilité ne pouvait me faire oublier qu'il était la Voix et qu'il m'avait réchauffée de son génie. Je serais revenue! (257).

Her confession scarcely endears her to the aristocratic suitor, whose virility is in question not only because he has a rival but also because he was reared by two sisters and a maiden aunt who provided him with an "éducation féminine" from which he gained "manières presque candides, empreintes d'un charme que rien,

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jusqu'alors, n'avait pu tenir. A cette époque, il avait un peu plus de vingt et un ans et en paraissait dix-huit. Il avait une petite moustache blonde, de beaux yeux bleus et un teint de fille" (41). Spoiled by his older brother Philippe, young Raoul is marked by whimsical fantasies and an overly sentimental soul that jeopardize his status as a "male." He and Christine grew up listening to and learning folktales leading to "à peu près la même petite âme rêveuse et calme. Ils ne se plaisaient qu'aux histoires, aux vieux contes bretons, et leur principal jeu était les chercher au seuil des portes comme des mendiants" (100). This tendency seems to have stamped upon the two a certain susceptibility to superstition and fantasy, so that they have fewer difficulties believing in the supernatural powers of the Phantom of the Opera than the other principals of the story, who constantly seek rational explanations for each event. Their credulity amply demonstrates their youth and inexperience vis-à-vis the more worldly members of the ensemble: the Persian, Mme Girya, and Philippe de Chagny. Even the brash and often childish Erik tells Christine that her virginal ears are not ready to listen to his work. "Voyez-vous, Christine, il y a une musique si terrible qu'elle consume tous ceux qui l'approchent. Vous n'en êtes pas encore à cette musique-là, heureusement, car vous perdriez vos fraîches couleurs et l'on ne vous reconnaîtrait plus à votre retour à Paris" (251). Of course, after she sees the phantom's face and experiences the tragedy of his solitary existence, she becomes equal to the task of singing his Opera and as he has predicted the change in her is remarkable both physically and spiritually.

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As her voice matures and reaches its full potential, it is clear that Christine has undergone an extraordinary transformation. Gradually she takes charge of her destiny and the destinies of her suitors, assuming some autonomy over their existence. It is she who tries to prepare Raoul for the "inevitable" and it is she who attempts to predispose poor Erik to a more peaceful existence. Her untenable position often comes into open conflict with her conscious love relationship and her playacting. Her vacillations between reality and fantasy create scenes of horror and anguish and result in the deaths of innocent victims.

In the middle of the romance there occurs a defining moment for Christine. The soprano suddenly realizes that her existence with the Opera Ghost (Eros) will be nothing more than a luxurious prison of deceit. While she, like her solitary companion, yearns for human companionship, normalcy, and an escape from the underworld, she recognizes that they may not reach this goal together because their relationship is predicated on a lie. Until now she has drifted along in a stream of semi-unconsciousness depicted by her trances as Erik sings; but now that she sees the quality of her "sexual paradise" in contact with her Angel of Music, she takes full cognizance of her womanhood and creates "scenes" to manipulate both men — secret engagements, a household in the Phantom's cave, an idyllic romance with the noble Raoul. Ultimately it is she who puts an end to the fantasy and accepts her fate as the bride of the monster, whom she no longer hates but cannot love on his terms.

Our only account of what occurs between the parties comes from the

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Persian, who has heard the conclusion of the tryst from the Phantom himself. When Christine consents to wed the Opera Ghost, Erik commutes the death sentences of Raoul and him. (They were drowning in the adjacent torture chamber). Once he has assured their safety, he returns to his "wife." To his great surprise he finds a living bride. "Jusqu'alors, dans le fond de ses yeux, daroga, j'avais toujours vu ma femme morte: c'était la première fois fois que j'y voyais *ma femme vivante*. Elle était sincère, sur son salut éternel" (478).

Like the fairy tales of old, it is the heroine's affection and devotion that transform the beast, if not physically at least spiritually, into a human being. She permits him to kiss her and does not draw away — a moment that moves him to tears and sacrifice as he releases her from her promise to marry him. He sends her back to Raoul. Erik's surrender enables Christine to behold the true profile of her fantasy lover and to recognize the ambivalence that exists between a psyche that hates the beast and a psyche that loves the "husband." Again in Erik's words we learn that "Christine m'a embrassé pour la première fois, à son tour, là, sur le front... (ne regarde pas, daroga!) là, sur le front... sur mon front à moi!... (ne regarde pas, daroga!) et ils sont partis tous les deux... Christine ne pleurait plus..., moi seul, je pleurais..." (482). While clearly a melodramatic moment, this scene of metamorphosis changes the villain into a self-sacrificing hero and Christine into a woman of depth and discernment.

The world depicted in Gaston Leroux's novel is one of pleasure to be sure, but also paints a portrait of social unrest and political turmoil manifested in the

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conflicts between the principal characters. Set against the backdrop of a life of luxury and leisure where aristocrats and the wealthy middle class exploit the rising ambitions of new artists, singers, and dancers, the novel traces the evolution of difficult relationships. Erik, Christine, and Raoul are but emblems of an age of insatiable quests for satisfaction amid a sublimated hatred for the "other" who challenged their notions of normalcy.

One might compare the rivalry between the viscount and the Phantom to the growing tensions between France and Germany. We are presented with a powerplay model in which Christine Daaé represents France; Raoul, her beloved citizen; and Erik, the enemy, Germany. Since 1870 the majority of the French held a negative image of Germany. Deemed as menacing, warlike, politically archaic yet technically superior, the Prussians were feared for their "otherness." While not seeking open conflict with the enemy, there could be no other resolution to the problem if the nation were aggressed.

It is interesting to note how such terminology may be applied to the events of Leroux's novel. We have already observed Raoul's jealous and bellicose reactions to Erik's challenge to him. In a key dramatic chapter of the text, the Phantom asks the Opera directors: "C'est donc la guerre?" (131), and while the war is not immediately enjoined there are continued displays of power and influence until we reach the infamous "point of no return." Erik surrenders and Christine is returned to the viscount safely. Unfortunately France and Germany would not realize such peace until the blood of more than a million people was

spilled.

It is perhaps folly to suggest that Gaston Leroux was aware of the dynamics that he had put in motion; but one might suggest that his work had internalized the expectations of his nation and sublimated their unrest in a popular mode of expression that manifested the threat and challenge of the "other." The socio-political conflicts precipitated by the presence of a rival can be seen as a product of an era that was being forced to reevaluate its dominant ideology and to acknowledge the power of exterior forces. In the end, the French, like Erik, Christine, and Raoul, must come to terms with factors beyond their control.

From the representative works presented in this chapter, it is evident that the Beauties and Beasts of late nineteenth-century French literature underwent their own sort of metamorphoses. They certainly were different from the defining model proposed by Victor Hugo in his early works. Barbey d'Aureville and Rostand, as late Romantics, in part continued the tradition but infused it with the colors and thematics of their respective ages.

Barbey's *Beauty*, Jeanne Le Hardouey, finds herself ill-at-ease as the wife of a mediocre collaborator. Her plight echoes the sentiments and position of Emma Bovary, who seeks happiness, activity, and existence outside the confines of marriage. While both novels end in suicide, Barbey hints that Jeanne's death was more honorable because of its origin in a failed quest to reestablish the monarchy to France. The quest, however disappointing, provided a series of

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unusual experiences that transcended the bleak existence that Jeanne had known prior to her meeting the rebel priest, Jéhoël de la Croix-Jugan. Since their lives were bound by the same desire to break free from the confines of a society that they despised, their deaths were more noble. This hero and heroine challenged the dominant ideology and lived their lives unconventionally. Their existences were marked by the decadent aesthetic of immorality and perversity, yes, but these behaviors were perfectly acceptable because of their elevated status as renegades.

By the end of the nineteenth century, it became more practical to envelop oneself in a cloak of superiority, by virtue of artifice, grandiose actions, and exquisite language. This new Beast was represented *par excellence* by Cyrano de Bergerac, whose reincarnated figure reawakened the French public to the empowering myths of patriotism, nationalism, honor and duty.

Between these two redefining moments of late Romanticism stand the reactions to realism and naturalism, which sought to portray in more objective terms the artist's response to the social mediocrity created by the bourgeoisie. In part, an extension of the Decadent movement, but more closely aligned with Symbolism and the Latin-American Modernism, it manifested itself with exquisite language, artifice, and mysticism as a protest on behalf of the creative heart that seeks to define the external work by its correspondances. The shift in emphasis had been coming since the publication of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*.

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The works of Mérimée and Régnier reflect the writer's abandonment of a world of cause and effect for one of imagination and transcendence. By juxtaposing the plausible explanation against a possible one, these authors offered alternative solutions to the police and medical reports' conclusions about the deaths of their heroines, Ioulka Iwinska and Mme de Ferlinde. They let the readers decide what happened in the ladies' bedroom and who was responsible. Of course the majority of the readers would probably come to the same conclusions as the narrator, but a few would challenge the suppositions and discuss the outcomings, thus awarding the stories some longevity. Such a technique empowers the work, the author, and the reader and guarantees (to a certain extent) some duration of reception.

According to Kenneth Burke, "Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are *strategic* answers, *stylized* answers. For there is a difference in style or strategy, if one says 'yes' in tonalities that imply "thank God" or in tonalities that imply 'alas!'" (*The Philosophy of Literary Form* 1). His observations reflect one of the central tenets of this study that seeks to trace the evolution of the Beauty and the Beast motif in nineteenth-century French literature. As we have seen, the theme has moved from the beasts of Victor Hugo, for whom it was never a question of winning the heart of their beauties; to Barbey's monstrous priest, who never sought affection from any human being, only revenge; to Mérimée and Régnier's mythical creatures, (a werebear and a

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centaur), whose animal appetites ravage and consume their victims. At the end of the century there is yet another shift in practice as Edmond Rostand and Gaston Leroux transform themselves into conjuring magicians, who recreate mythical or legendary protagonists no more likely to consummate their relationships with their paramours, but who gain affections that they have never known by forming intellectual alliances with their beloved.

The period from 1815 to 1914 revealed itself to be a century of synthesis and conflict. It was a time of progress, a time of expansion on many fronts, including the social, formative, industrial, and critical arenas. The critical opinions and challenges that occurred during the epoch were often conflicting, but always seemed to reiterate what was ideologically and aesthetically at stake. Thus when positivism and its literary expressions of Realism and Naturalism replaced Romanticism, the insistence on diversity continued, but at the cost of being bound to a stable system of conformity. The writers, who did not wish to be tied to a set network of rules and classification, held themselves apart and created their own subcultural lairs of revolt. Some would use the Beauty and the Beast motif to subvert the dominant aesthetic, because the theme permitted them to exploit a deviant world of transgressive behavior, as if this material were one of the last sources of inspiration in an otherwise dull literary system.

I would suggest that the election of the Beauty and the Beast motif as a weapon of choice for subversion and introspection was due to its readability as a fairy tale, fable, classical romance, theatrical spectacle, an action-adventure

novel, or utopian quest. Its flexibility and adaptability made it an enduring theme that effectively translated a writer or reader's refusal to conform to "mundane" social norms. Henry Jenkins has shown that the texts that are carefully constructed to build on multiple genre traditions are the most likely to increase their fandoms (*Textual Poachers* 125). The continued popularity of the Beauty and the Beast theme certainly attests to the accuracy of his observation. When we study appropriated materials, such as those we have reviewed here, it is important that we be attentive to the particularities of critical reception, cultural appropriation, historical context, and lived experience, for these are the elements that clarify the process of reader reception. The use of the Beauty and the Beast motif has illustrated how simple it is for a writer to move the reader from the familiar into the realm of the unknown by building upon the repertoire, gradually modifying the expectations and transforming memories. Such a practice effectively breaks existing forms or undermines social stereotypes supported by them. By using stereotypes and formulae to simplify the experience, writers mobilize stock feelings and provoke the reader into action.

In Chapter Four, we shall examine how the Beauty and the Beast motif has been appropriated in the twentieth century. Of particular import will be the adaptations of the textual appropriations of the theme by Hugo, Rostand, and Leroux as their works have grown in popularity. We shall also explore why these particular works were appropriated again and again by the popular culture during this era. Their popularity is a testament to the provocative power of their

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texts. We shall also investigate how other cultures have adapted the theme to meet their needs for introspection and subversion and how fan poachers have taken it upon themselves to rewrite the works to fit their own desire and quests for fantasy fulfillment.

Journey's End

How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are at the beginning of all peoples, the myths about dragons that at the last moment turn into princesses. Perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave. Perhaps everything terrible is in its deepest being something helpless that wants help from us. -- Rainer Maria Rilke
Letters to a Young Poet

Joris-Karl Huysmans once observed that "the tail end of centuries all look alike" (Cited in *The Decadent Reader* 10). His comment was based on writers' frequent recourse to metaphors of birth and dying when pressed to describe one century's end and another's beginning. Max Nordau, Marcel Proust, Allan Bloom, William Bennett, Susan Sontag, Elaine Showalter, and Asti Hustvedt have all explored the last decades of their respective centuries. Their critical and literary studies suggest that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries share many of the same themes, problems, and concerns. Both periods have been eras of extraordinary progress and material prosperity, whose optimism for the future has been marred by alarm about the degeneration of the family unit, fear of the sexual other and "its" social ramifications, decline of traditional values, and panic about sexual epidemics.

As we have seen, the period from 1815 to 1914 was one of conflict, movement, resistance, revolution, evolution, and restoration, much like the years from 1917 to the present. The issues of authority and paternity have continued to shape the literature of the time as well as its social and political ideology and have served as the constructive and destructive forces of the eras. Within this framework there have emerged historical and literary figures of displacement, transgression, deviance, and instability. Often these figures have been described in animalistic terms as a result of their unique character or physical traits. Because their quests for individuation were more grandiose; their demands more

Because their quests for individuation were more grandiose; their demands more defiant, they came to represent the horrifying other, the wild man, the dark side of humanity.

In ages of conformity figures who challenge the dominant ideology and propose aberrant models of behavior are feared because their defiance threatens to destabilize the social and cultural markers of normalcy. Elaine Showalter (*Sexual Anarchy*) and Asti Hustveldt (*The Decadent Reader*) have argued that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have produced a vast body of literature that examines people, who were "botched" by nature, resulting in disfigured monsters, who face discrimination and hatred because of their singularity. Their tenuous and marginalized positions relegate them to the lower end of the social scale and subject them to prejudices that the average person never experiences. Victor Hugo described them as depositories of emotion: "Dans ce partage de l'humanité et de la création c'est à lui que reviendront les passions, les vices, les crimes; c'est lui qui sera luxueux, rampant, gourmand, avare, perfide, brouillon, hypocrite..." (Préface de *Cromwell* 420).

As a manifestation of the other, the beast is the ideal protagonist for works that challenge authority, question social mores, and pit rational explanations against heavy doses of doubt or suspicion. At times kind and generous, at others cruel and malevolent, this antihero is a creature set apart who manifests himself in a multitude of forms. Hugo considered him a detail of "un grand ensemble qui nous échappe, et qui s'harmonise, non pas avec l'homme, mais avec la création tout entière. Voilà pourquoi il nous présente sans cesse des aspects nouveaux, mais incomplets" (421).

When the literary fairy tale of *Beauty and the Beast* shifted emphasis in the late eighteenth century and moved toward the civilization of the protagonist, it

became a vehicle of conversion instead of subversion and hence unacceptable to the needs of certain writers who wished to use the motif to reveal the flaws of their era. In the early nineteenth century, the romantic novel and the fantastic tale became the popular discourses of revolt because they ran counter to the prevailing neoclassical taste for order, they questioned elitist tradition, and they challenged the goals of the Restoration. The heroes of these works distinguished themselves from the stock characters of the elite by reason of their individualism and imperfections. Some Romantic protagonists were deeply flawed, deformed, and haunted by their uniqueness. Misunderstood and unloved, they became like the beasts of the forest, snarling, vindictive masses of heaving flesh and tortured souls until the day they were touched by the beauty and pity of a young woman.

The young lions of the French Romanticism perceived themselves much in the same way. They were the disenfranchised and the disempowered social pariahs of their generation. Prohibited by law to participate in government because of their youth and lack of property, the Romantics used literature and art to present their competing views of the world and society. Led by the charismatic Victor Hugo, *la jeune France* employed the arts to call attention to major social issues of the time. Free of the tether of political alliances and deals, they could react to contemporary situations, agitate, and issue manifestoes. Their reactions to the prevailing norms of aesthetic theory ultimately proved ruinous to that theory, thereby supplanting it for a time with a new system of thought. In time, however, this movement would also be reduced or modified as it was distracted from its original function and context.

How motifs or themes emerged from these transformations and evolutions was the principal topic of the preceding study that sought to explore the "Beauties and Beasts of Nineteenth-Century French Fiction." I began by

investigating the origin of the Beauty and the Beast motif from its oral roots prior to the second century up to its literary retellings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While the fairy tale versions continued into the succeeding centuries, I chose to explore how the writers and artists of the nineteenth century appropriated the theme to advance their own agenda. As we have seen, the ability of this theme to adapt to new media bears witness to the motif's evocative power and its inner resistance to change. That is not to say, however, that the theme has stagnated or failed to evolve. On the contrary there is ample evidence that the motif was adapted and transformed like its mythical beast into alternative visions of power, authority and revolt. Writers, who chose to recount tales of *la belle and la bête*, found ways to create original narratives that developed their own case histories and shaped their own visions of a couple, who strays from convention. Their creative reworkings disclose new insights into power of love and hate to stimulate, enrage, and engender.

Marina Warner has suggested that "the fairy tale is a metacommentary, explicit or implicit, witting or unwitting, on the major social contexts (wars, revolutions, scandals, institutional changes)" (*From Beast to Blonde* 16). While this is certainly true, I would suggest that the motifs that form the tales are far more integral to the critical review of how a period defines itself in terms of gender, race, class, culture, etc. It is the fairy tale's subjects that comment upon society's contexts, not the tale itself, but the elements that compose the tale.

After the French Revolution and the debacle of the First Empire, there resulted a general malaise and fear of regression and degeneration. The elite sought to counter the insecurity of the nation with the restoration of classical tradition. It was they who established strict definitions of nature versus nurture, savage versus civilized, and it was they who sought to control every aspect of

society. As more and more Europeans discovered the delights and horrors of the New World, there emerged a vague anxiety about the proximity of primitive creatures. These fears were compounded by the gruesome Reign of Terror that turned ordinary people into devouring monsters, who preyed upon those they sought to govern. When Louis XVI and his family were executed, there were few who questioned man's proximity to the beast. This kinship became permanently emblazoned in the public's mind as war, rebellion, and revolution wreaked havoc and destruction across the world in every generation to come.

As we have seen, Victor Hugo's early works capitalized upon the public's awareness of what constituted a monster and played with these notions to challenge the dominant ideology's right to construct models of good and evil solely on the basis of appearance, race, or class. In "Bug-Jargal" Hugo studied Western notions of nobility and honor, setting them against a slave revolt in Santo Domingo. The black hero Pierrot sacrifices everything for love and duty, exchanging his life for that of his rival, Léopold d'Auverney. Set in the exotic locale of the New World, "Bug-Jargal" tells the tragic story of "un homme naturel" who was born a prince, bought and sold in the Americas as a slave, elected a leader of the slave uprising, and elevated to martyr because of his strong sense of honor. His love for the beautiful Marie, the daughter of a wealthy white plantation owner, puts him at odds not only with his own people, but with society as a whole — a fact he acknowledges frequently in his monologues about duty and fate. While racial equality is not the principal *cause célèbre* of this hugolian work, Pierrot's courage, strength, and valor do lead the narrator to measure the African slave's virtues against that of his white rival. According to Thadée, Léopold's comrade-in-arms, Pierrot "c'était le premier brave de la terre, après vous. . . mon capitaine [d'Auverney]" (I, 904). By using race as a subtext

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for the comparison, Hugo explored issues of good and evil, bravery and cowardice, love and hate. The pairings represent the grotesque and sublime constructions that Hugo would later advocate in his "Preface" to *Cromwell*. In order to downplay the role of race upon the outcome of the novel, Hugo was careful to include examples of the contrasting pairs from both racial groups; although the majority of his case is built upon the juxtaposition of Pierrot and Habibrah, perhaps because both are men of color, who are slaves when the novel opens, but share little else in common. As evil as one may be, the other is noble, good, and true. The two characters are counterpoints to one another. For every noble act executed by the Bug-Jargal, we find a horrible crime perpetrated by the obi dwarf. The nineteenth-century reader is expected to be amazed by the startling contrasts and recognize the imperfections of human beings. By contrasting Bug-Jargal's generosity with Habibrah's treachery and Biassou's cruelty; the colonialists' cowardice with Léopold's bravery or Pierrot's noble heroics, Hugo exposes the limitations of humanity as he explores the role of desire in the collapse of the classical model of a hero. Gone are the purely good, purely evil models of the hero and villain so dear to Antiquity. At the center of these contrasting portraits stands the Slave Rebellion, which preyed upon the readers' recent memories of their own Revolution. It is through conflict that man reveals his true nature. Hugo's message is at once ideological and aesthetic. The author is calling upon the readers to act and is illustrating the first tenets of his Romantic aesthetic.

Han d'Islande also contains early components of Victor Hugo's developing notions of the grotesque and the sublime. This narrative is a fantastic tale that carries the reader into the alien climes of Scandanavia. We find the author preoccupied with the power of contrasting elements; herein represented by the

monster Han, who perfectly illustrates the "other." Portrayed as a terrifying beast, who shows a total disregard for society, he is a sadistic monster who stands alone against the world. His inhumanity is thrust upon the reader in ever more violent acts of bloodletting and destruction. Han is evil incarnate, the ideal foil to civilized man, and thus one of the few hugolian characters to emerge without a single redeeming trait. While it may be true that his wickedness is attributable to society's rejection of him, he offers no hint that he wants to turn away from his destructive nature. In many of the literary works of the early nineteenth century, we find men who forget their humanity to embrace their animal natures for a time because they are pressed into a savage situation where civilized behavior is unknown. Han d'Islande is not one of these men. He is pure beast and as such is a reincarnation of the monsters of the French Revolution, a creature of terror created "by the station in which he was born, and the consequent homage, that benumbed his faculties like the torpedo's torch" (Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Man" 243).

It is only with the appearance of Quasimodo in *Notre-Dame de Paris* that Victor Hugo begins to examine the Beast, whose exterior physiomy is not a reflection of his state-of-grace. The hunchback is a new hugolian character, who is not an example of arrested humanity like his predecessors Habibrah and Han, but a misunderstood and deformed human being, capable of astonishing emotional depth. He is a remarkable creature who possesses nobility of soul in spite of all the derision heaped upon him. Deemed a grotesque monster and named "le pape de fous" by the Parisian populace, the hunchback quickly reveals that he is not an abominable, unfeeling beast, but a manchild who has suffered greatly, a victim of hate who radiates to the outside world the only sentiments that he has known. When he finally tastes a new emotion, pity,

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proffered to him by la Esmeralda, Quasimodo learns the importance of love and kindness. Unfortunately, la Esmeralda cannot reciprocate his feelings for she has chosen to love the rake, Phoebus. By unwittingly toying with the affections of the three principal male leads of the narrative — Quasimodo, Frollo, and Phoebus — the gypsy sets into motion their dysphoric ending which results in her death on the gallows, the murder of the archdeacon, and the eternal suicidal embrace of the hunchback.

Exemplifying talent and merit, la Esmeralda first appears in Hugo's novel at some height above the masses to the sound of music. She is adulated by the crowd with whom she shares the virtues of simplicity and spontaneity. The height and music are important elements in the initial portrait of the gypsy girl, for, as Julia Kristeva has observed, one of the only ways for women to reject paternal authority has historically been through oral forms (music, rhythm, and prosody) which allow women to reunite with the mother's body (*Powers of Horror* 24). Unfortunately for la Esmeralda, the festival that opens *Notre-Dame de Paris* is one of the last times that she receives praise from onlookers. After her initial appearance in the novel, her presence degenerates into conflicts, schemes, and murderous plots. The rapid decline of la Esmeralda's position in the hearts and minds of the masses reinforces the popular nineteenth-century notions of degeneration, which closely associated political, physical, and moral factors, and which typically perceived women as the cause of society's ills. The tragic conclusion of Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre-Dame* may be read as a testament to the triumph of the patriarchy as the gypsy girl is dropped from the gallows and silenced forever, while the grotesque Quasimodo is elevated to the status of hero as he vanquishes the absolute power of the church by killing the archdeacon Claude Frollo and figuratively puts an end to the ecclesiastical domination of the

word. (In Appendix One can be found illustrations created for the various nineteenth-century editions of *Notre-Dame de Paris*. The artistic interpretations of the text illustrate distinct visions of a masterpiece).

Although Victor Hugo created two other works (*L'Homme qui rit* and *Le Roi s'amuse*) in which he juxtaposed the images of the Beauty and the Beast, *Notre-Dame de Paris* remains his most enduring and powerful appropriation of the theme. The twentieth century has parlayed Hugo's novel into multiple screen versions (nine to-date), a full-length animated classic film, two new musical comedies, and a ballet. The first film adaptation of Hugo's classic was released by Universal Studios in 1923 as a vehicle for their versatile character actor, Lon Chaney. There have been subsequent productions filmed for the small and widescreen in 1939, 1957, and 1998. Disney's animated classic was released in 1996, with a total rewrite of Hugo's conclusion. In 1998, Luc Plamondon premiered his blockbuster production of *Notre-Dame de Paris* to sold-out audiences in Paris, Lyon, Strasbourg, Brussels, Montreal, and Quebec. In June, 1999, Disney Theatrical Productions and Stella Musicals opened their joint stage adaptation of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* in Berlin, Germany to rave reviews and packed houses. To sustain the audience's attention and justify ticket prices Stella management rewrote Disney's screenplay to align it more closely to Hugo's text.

The number and breadth of the adaptations of *Notre-Dame de Paris* attest to the continuing power of Hugo's tale to generate the tension between the grotesque and the sublime and to hurl it beyond the realm of the fairy tale into the familiar world. By fusing the contrasting realms of nature and civilization, Hugo succeeds in admitting to the literary world the coexistence of beautiful, bizarre, ghastly and repulsive elements that merge into a turbulent, but more

complete vision of the Absolute. The attractiveness of the couplings insures that the Beauty and the Beast motif will survive into the next millenium in spite of Gringoire's admonition in Plamondon's 1998 version of *Notre-Dame* that:

Il est foutu le temps des cathédrales
La foule des barbares
Est aux portes de la ville
Laissez entrer ces païens, ces vandales
La fin de ce monde
Est prévue pour l'an deux mille
("Le Temps des cathédrales," Prologue, 1.1).

Of course not every work that applied the Beauty and the Beast theme to their texts met with phenomenal success like Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. In fact most of the works examined here received disappointing public recognition and acclaim, although they did achieve a modicum of critical approval within the narrow confines of their circle of "fans." Despite their poor reception these publications also merit attention because they attest to the often ephemeral quality of works of art, whose popularity wanes as the audience's tastes alter. In the study of fiction that uses the Beauty and the Beast motif, it is important to identify why such texts do not provoke the same reactions as other works that devise plots around similar elements.

Prosper Mérimée perhaps best explained why some stories and his tale, "Lokis" in particular, do not merit the title of masterpiece. According to him, "Lokis" failed because it emulated the paltry romances being read at Louis-Napoleon's Court and although the published form proved more appealing to him personally, it was not on par with his more intricately woven short stories like "Vénus d'Ille" or "Mateo Falcone." By imitating mediocrity, he produced

mediocrity.

Similarly Henri de Régnier admitted that he wrote his *La Canne de Jaspe* as an diversion for the public, who were clamoring for works that amused and bemused. “La Mort de M. de Nouâtre et Mme de Ferlinde” was little more than an evening’s entertainment to be recounted to a party of whist players or a clever *mise au point* to shock the ladies of a certain social milieu. Nestled within a frame tale that recounts the youthful adventures of M. d’Amercoeur the narrator, “La Mort de M. de Nouâtre et Mme de Ferlinde” is very much the parlor story repeated again and again to delight guests.

“Lokis” and “La Mort de M. de Nouâtre et Mme de Ferlinde” reaped the same kind of success that many popular romances find today. They were pleasant light reading, but lacked the provocative power to engender strong reader response. For the most part they served as brief interludes from an otherwise hectic and unfulfilling existence. As Janice Radway has demonstrated, successful romances are those that lead the reader to believe that if a heroine learns to read male behavior successfully, she will find her needs for protection and passionate adult love satisfied (*Reading the Romance* 149). Based on this observation one might conclude that a failed romance would be the converse of this situation and present a heroine who misreads the male’s intentions and dies. Unfortunately, such an explanation is too elementary and fails to take into account other important factors, for there exists a number of literary works whose dysphoric endings have not eliminated their ascent to canonical status. What does appear to affect the fame and marketability of a text is the progression of the narrative. If the woman is involved in an ongoing relationship with more than one man and the reader has trouble identifying the hero, then the plot is deemed too complicated to meet the readers’ needs for diversion and

light entertainment. The story may also be weakened by narrative digressions that detract from or retard the development of the emotional connection between a single pair of lovers.¹ Thus works like "Bug-Jargal," "Han d'Islande," "Lokis," and "La Mort de M. de Nouâtre et Mme de Ferlinde" are more apt to frustrate the audience because they do not promote the emotional bonding and happy ending that readers have come to expect in pieces of romantic fiction.

According to Terry Eagleton, texts "do" things to the people who read them. "What they bring about is not something that happens after we have finished reading them, like joining a picket line or being kinder to one's children, but is effected (if at all) by and in the reading" (*Social Text* 66). However, as Henry Jenkins has shown, readers operate from a position of social weakness. They do not have direct access to commercial cultural production and possess very limited resources with which to influence industry decisions. Nevertheless, they can become a particularly active and vocal community of consumers when they join forces (*Textual Poachers* 26-27). During the nineteenth century, consumers who found themselves in such positions sought the means to assert their opinions. Their call for some voice over published and performed material manifested itself in a variety of ways. During theatrical performances the audience would jeer, whistle, or clamor for immediate changes in the play. Fans began to seek the authority to make plot development suggestions for serialized novels by withholding their purchasing power from the publishing houses that did not heed their wishes. These groups were the first to try to appropriate and mold texts to meet their specific needs and desires.

At the end of the nineteenth century, success in any literary endeavor

¹To find a more complete analysis of what constitutes a failed romance for female readers, see Janice Radway's discussion of the characteristics of failed romances in *Reading Romance*, pp. 160-185.

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depended upon sensitivity to changing pulse of society and fandom. To achieve critical acclaim and financial success, a work had to appeal to a cross-section of upper, middle and lower class taste. Two authors, who seemed to muster sufficient support from all these camps, were Edmond Rostand and Gaston Leroux. Both men created works that tantalized the critics and delighted the masses.

Cyrano de Bergerac was, of course, a popular success from its opening in December, 1897, at Le Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. What a wonderful surprise for the production team that had been warned repeatedly that the play was doomed to failure. Critics have attributed its success to the freshness of the script and the provocative power of Rostand's verse, coupled with the creation of a new type of hero. As Max Beerbohm has observed: "It is silly to insist, as one or two critics have insisted, that Cyrano was a fool and a blackguard, in that he entrapped the lady of his heart into marriage with a vapid impostor. The important and obvious point is that Cyrano, as created by M. Rostand, is a splendid hero of romance" (*Saturday Review*, July 9, 1898). France and the rest of the western world now had a character whose ugliness belied a glorious and beautiful spirit. Here was a figure from whose mouth tripped and thundered some of the finest dialogue ever produced for the stage. *De rigueur* the role of Cyrano was to become one of the most coveted parts of his generation and the generations to come. However, for contemporary audiences who had been humiliated by the defeat of 1870, Cyrano was more than a "dream role" in a play, he was a legendary warrior whose Gascon roots and aristocratic family name elevated him from his status as an obscure Baroque poet to divine hero. In light of the devastating defeat that France had suffered in the Franco-Prussian War and the less favorable growth of the French economy vis-à-vis the rest of

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Europe, France needed a hero, who represented the qualities that had come to epitomize the French mythical hero: courage, boldness, wit, and panache. A historical figure recreated on stage, Cyrano de Bergerac was perceived as the poet musketeer who avenged the debacle of the Franco-Prussian War. One was proud to be French again.

Although Cyrano adequately addressed France's need for men of courage and self-determination, Roxane sadly embodied the harmful social ramifications of the educated *femme nouvelle*, who failed to cultivate her role as wife and mother, having opted for an inappropriate quest for knowledge. Roxane may have lived in the seventeenth century, but her interests and pursuits were clear reminders of the late nineteenth-century woman's rejection of her subordinate position to man as she strove for extended access to education and sought equal pay and the right to vote.

Rostand's transformation of la précieuse Roxane into a warrior in Act IV hints of the dramatist's concern with women leaving their traditional domestic havens to pursue adventure. Such actions turn women into *hommes*, who leave behind all feminine coquettishness for more rigid models of combativeness. Roxane's bold initiatives result in the death of her husband Christian, the silencing of her secret lover, Cyrano, and her self-internment in a convent for the remainder of her natural life.

Edmond Rostand's portrayal of the heroine is not flattering and reflects the patriarchy's alarm over France's inability to reproduce. The decline in the birthrate and the relative stagnation of the French population at the end of the nineteenth century had many officials (male, of course) dismayed as Germany experienced a baby boom and France witnessed near zero population growth. Dr. Jacques Bertillon, who founded the *Alliance nationale pour l'accroissement de la*

population française in 1896 warned that in fourteen years Germany would have twice as many conscripts as France, which meant that "this people filled with hate for us will devour us. The Germans say it, print it, and they will do it" (Quoted in Mandel, *Paris 1900* 145). Unfortunately his predictions came to fruition when the German war machine advanced on France in 1914 to claim the lives of 1.25 million Frenchman in the First World War.

As the average man rejoiced in complacency between 1885 and 1914, there was an elite group of thinkers, writers and scholars, who kept a wary eye on the New Woman and her potential role in the twentieth century. No one was quite sure what to do about her pursuits for equality, but they were certain that if her quest were not thwarted, civilization (as they knew and defined it) was in danger of collapse.

To contend that Rostand was intentionally decrying female activism would be irresponsible, but to suggest that his comedy reflected the concerns and fears of the dominant ideology has merit, because the playwright's text is filled with issues fraught with special political and national significance. The power of a woman to manipulate two sterling examples of manhood is certainly evident within Rostand's heroic comedy, even though by and large Roxane is packaged as a model of patriarchal femininity. She is beautiful, possesses all the social graces, and follows most of the prescribed behaviors for her century. Her one flaw is her pursuit of knowledge, represented by her love of literature and the arts.

At the end of the nineteenth century, many women sought independence and education rather than marriage and life at home. That the Beauty and the Beast motif should be popular in such an age is scarcely surprising since the theme readily displays great interest in a woman's discovery of her sexuality and

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her potential for self-individuation. While most fairy tale versions of *Beauty and the Beast* reinforce the patriarchal desire for a happily ever-after ending of marriage and harmony, the nineteenth-century appropriations of the theme usually end in tragedy, often blaming the woman for the disaster because she rejected her traditional role to pursue other interests or inappropriate mates.

The thought that females might experience pleasure in a sexual encounter still frightened the majority of men, who believed that heightened pleasure for a woman could only lead to nervous disorders like hysteria or nymphomania. Nevertheless, there were some males who did pay closer attention to their wife's pleasures and attempted to meet her needs regularly, which actually and inexplicably led to better relations with their spouses.

We have observed that during the nineteenth century, many believed that women possessed a dual nature, that they partook of good and evil more than their male counterparts. Marked by the curse of Eve, women lived in constant danger of succumbing to sin. Perceived as closer to nature because of their ability to bear children, women had a greater knowledge of life and death and were likened to dormant volcanoes, whom one must warily watch for signs of activity that might unleash their sexual fury. Because of this dual nature, late nineteenth-century artists often portrayed women as feral and virginal, a sphinx enveloped in a serpent. (For illustrations of these images turn to Appendix Four to view some representations of the *Nouvelle Femme*, whose new attitude and demeanor frightened many within the patriarchy.)

It is important to bear in mind that although the works we studied continued to reiterate the patriarchy's view of a woman's role in society as nurturer and civilizer, the Beauties of our texts were not bound to same the same set of rules. In fact, they often remained relatively free human beings who

enjoyed being served by the males. By and large, most of the women were free to say no to male advances, and although they did not enjoy complete autonomy, they were admired and pampered, while their suitors suffered patiently, waiting for them to accept their offers of marriage and happiness — the tried and true symbols of conformity to middle-class morality. However, if the heroines were unwilling to mold themselves into the image of femininity prescribed by the dominant culture, they would suffer the consequences. Refusal to submit to patriarchal constructs could be fatal as we have seen throughout this study.

Christine Daaé might be considered a prime example of the New Woman, because she rejected her prescribed role and juggled the sexual appetites of two suitors, Erik the Opera Ghost and the Vicomte Raoul de Chagny. From a phallogocentric point of view, this opera singer was scarcely a victim. She might be better described as a conniving female, who used men to advance her career. Although she could never hope to gain complete autonomy in Paris, she might find some satisfaction and wish fulfillment in the footlights of the Opera House. Her repeated refusal to accept Raoul's proposal of marriage confounds the viscount, who does not understand Christine's devotion to her Angel of Music nor the reason for her frequent visits to the lair of this dark inferior. Of course, Christine's devotion is related to her superstitious belief in legends. Her father always spoke to her of the Angel of Music, and for Christine, Erik is clearly he. The discovery that the Phantom is also a mortal, lustful creature hurls her triangulated relationship into a downward spiral that can only end in death for one or all of the principal characters. Of course the patriarchy would like readers to believe that Christine Daaé is responsible for the tragic ending because she decided to choose a mate on her own terms and dallied with the affections of others.

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While it is true that nineteenth-century French novelists tended to glorify rebelliousness, turning their protagonists into models of political or social subversion, by and large such characters were male. There remained an enormous differentiation in gender-appropriate conduct. Men, who set themselves apart from society were ennobled; women, who attempted to initiate such behaviors were condemned as inverted creatures, who had redirected their passions from spiritual to sexual channels. Such a misdirection produced fatal women who no longer represented the best of the feminine nature but posed a formidable threat to contemporary civilization. The socio-sexual conflicts that resulted from the presence of such females challenged the patriarchy to re-evaluate their codes of behavior. Something had to be done to curb the rapidly growing power of women.

Leroux's *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* was a startling departure from the standard popular literature of the era. Here was a novel that promoted fear and delight. Although the narrative did not find immediate popular success until it was adapted to the silver screen in 1925 by Carl Laemmle, it has since recouped its initial losses and has proven to be an enduring vehicle of provocation for seventy-five years. Popular imagination's love affair with Erik and Christine was perhaps slow to develop, but has since spawned a dozen adaptations for the big screen, two television productions, a mini-series, and three musicals.

Why this Victorian melodrama has captured such attention is not easily explained. John L. Flynn in his study of *The Phantoms of the Opera*, has suggested a number of plausible explanations for the work's appeal: its universal message that "beauty or darkness of the human soul should not be measured by outward appearance or deformities;" its origin in legend and folktales; or the public's "love of creative individualists who, though they are often portrayed as villains,

reflect one's inner desire to rebel against conformity" (4). While Flynn's deductions hold merit, they largely ignore the role of fans in the popular consumption of fiction. In the twentieth century, this group has proven to be a force with which to contend as they join in amorphous but still identifiable collectives of enthusiasts, who respond to specific historical conditions as they struggle to define themselves within the context of their eras. Henry Jenkins considers them textual poachers because they do not restrict their entertainment pleasures to "a single text or even a single genre." They are nomads who seek satisfaction in bodies of work that present the essential themes that have enticed them into becoming "fans." They then erect boundaries that exclude other types of texts from their repertoire. While it is acceptable to alter the motifs slightly, these changes must fall within an acceptable range of variance as determined by the community who has appropriated these materials for its own. If there is a progression in the storyline, the progression must move in accordance with the perceived desires of the avid readers or spectators or the creators risk alienating them (*Textual Poachers* 1).

Reader-response studies have shown that reception and appropriation of material are sensitive to the particularities of the fans' concrete social and cultural circumstances as well as their lived experience. Therefore it is not easy to predict what amalgamation of elements, themes, and characters will attract an audience of enthusiasts, although it appears that the most provocative and therefore the most attractive works are those that are not limited to one genre. This is one explanation for the continued popularity of the Beauty and the Beast motif, which has proven itself so readily adaptable to multiple genre reconstructions: fairy tale, romance, action-adventure, film, theater.

During the twentieth century the retellings of *Beauty and the Beast* have

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basically fluctuated between two settings: magical reality and the modern or contemporary world. The most critically acclaimed reworking of this fairy tale has been Cocteau's 1946 film, *La Belle et la bête*, which is set in a remote but undetermined past. Cocteau's magical realism dwells upon the opulence of the Beast's palace as it visually depicts the protagonist's transformation from a beastly monster to princely charmer. Cocteau's appropriation of the motif and arrangement of it have much to do with his lifelong attraction to fables and myths, blended with his own complex personal issues related to artistic freedom, sexuality, creative license, and man's dual nature. In the film's prologue, Cocteau invites us to suspend our belief and open ourselves to the magical world of childhood, of "Once upon a time." The following proviso appears on a chalkboard just as the film opens:

L'enfance *croit* ce qu'on lui raconte et ne le met pas en doute.

Elle *croit* qu'une rose qu'on cueille peut attirer des drames dans une famille.

Elle *croit* que les mains d'une bête humaine qui tue se mettent à fumer et que cette bête en a honte lorsqu'une jeune fille habite sa maison. Elle *croit* mille autres choses bien naïves. C'est un peu de cette naïveté que je vous demande et pour nous porter chance à tous, laissez-moi vous dire quatre mots magiques, véritable "sesamé ouvre-toi" d'enfance!

Il était une fois..... (Prologue de *La Belle et la Bête* 5).

Thus Cocteau proposes that to change perceptions, all that is needed is faith, faith in the magical power of love to transform, sometimes for the best, sometimes for the worst. At the end of the film, the newly transfigured Prince Ardent confirms this as he admits: "L'amour peut faire qu'un homme devienne

bête. L'amour peut faire aussi qu'un homme laid devienne beau" (375).

The apparent simplicity that belies the true complexity of this cinematic masterpiece has prompted a great deal of critical and academic attention, which need not be reviewed here, except to point out one or two alterations that tend to concretize the film's precise historical context and the specifics of Cocteau's lived experience as they relate to artistic creation.

Much has been made of the working conditions for the film's production: the poverty of resources in post-war France, sick actors, old equipment, and bad weather. However these horrible conditions actually contributed to the texture and vision of the motion picture, providing it with a gritty feel of realism and ionizing the resolve of the cast and the crew to complete the project no matter the cost. As the film moves from the opening sequences at Belle's country home, the poverty represented here is a clear metaphor for post-war France's struggle to reconstruct itself after years of war and neglect. In Cocteau's vision the problems presented via these images disappear into a bank of dense fog as Beauty moves from the provincial house into the Beast's palace. It is here that Beauty discovers a magical world where living arms light the way to hearth and food, where candelabrum serve wine, where all things are animate. The castle is inhabited by fantastic creatures, who carefully survey the guests. From the statuary to the caryatids with smoking eyes, visitors are surrounded by otherness. Toward the end of the picture, we have a sense that this otherness can be extended from the magical realm of the Beast's castle to Beauty's provincial home. When la Belle passes through the wall into her father's bedroom, the magic follows her. A related scene at the house suggests a similar metamorphosis when the gorgons on either side of the merchant's fireplace suddenly come to life as Avenant comments to Ludovic "La seule chose qui m'amuse, c'est la tête que feront tes

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soeurs" (187). The progression of these scenes hints that with faith and effort, problems with otherness can be overcome and bring about a better world.

The other element of note in Cocteau's tale is the astonishing ending, in which the Beast is transformed into the mirror image of Belle's rejected suitor, Avenant, as the latter falls to his death, trying to transgress Diana's sacred pavilion and steal the goddess's treasures. The finale has prompted much speculation as to why Cocteau envisioned the exchange of Avenant's face with that of the dying Beast. After all it is Avenant who has exhibited belligerence and reckless disregard throughout the film. It is he who grabbed la Belle in the opening scene and insisted that she marry him: "Epousez-moi!" (35). It is he who violently transgresses Diana's pavilion. These scenes stand in stark contrast to the Beast's treatment of Beauty. Always respectful of her and ever sensitive to her repulsion of his appearance, he tries not to impose himself as witnessed by his nightly requests for her hand: "La Belle, voulez-vous être ma femme?" (157) and his swift departure when she refuses. These images coupled with the dialogue suggest that, of the two suitors, Avenant is the more feral creature, revealing himself capable of anything as he pivots between conflicting emotions of love and hate and exhibits his propensities for theft, murder, and rape. The Beast has but one nature in evidence throughout most of the film. His bestiality is concealed or controlled beyond the sight of la Belle, except when she acts as a voyeur and spies upon the Beast in his hunting frenzy. Her transgression of the boundaries established between her and la Bête gives the audience the only real glimpse into the Beast's savagery. In a touching scene as Beauty tries to cajole the Beast into living, the Beast isolates himself from his male brethren: "...si j'étais homme, sans doute je ferais les choses que vous me dites. Mais les pauvres bêtes qui veulent prouver leur amour ne savent que se coucher par terre pour mourir"

(357). Of course the spectators know that the Beast is a man, and therefore, like all men, capable of noble or murderous acts. His enchanted form conceals his true self, but this self may be revealed if Belle will but grant him a single loving glance. When Belle finally looks upon her Beast lovingly, he is transformed into a prince, who claims that he will faithfully attend to her every desire. "Je suis Prince pour vous adorer et pour vous servir" (373). Needless to say, Beauty is not quite prepared to believe all that she hears from the stranger who stands before her, but she is willingly to give him a chance to prove himself. As she says: "J'aime avoir peur. . . avec vous" (361).

In his *Diary of a Film*, Cocteau hints that *La Belle et la bête* was more than a film project. It was a poetic mission that sought to restore vitality to a nation that had been crushed by years of oppression. Given the terrible price that he and his nation had paid for their loss of freedom during the war years, it was time for retribution and renewal.

We are paying now for five terrible years. "To make bad blood" isn't a mere figure of speech. For that is precisely what we all made, and it's this bad blood which now disintegrates in us. Five years of hate, fear, a waking nightmare. Five years of shame and slime. We were shattered and smeared with it even to our very souls. We had to survive Wait. It is this nervous waiting that we are paying for dearly. In spite of all difficulties, we must catch up. Whatever the cost, France must shine again (57).

Cocteau's vision of *Beauty and the Beast* is unlike any other and sets a standard for the late twentieth-century adaptations to come.

Two interesting reworkings of the fairy tale are in themselves unique and are clearly products of a specific historical moment, imbued with social and

cultural circumstances that have much to do with their critical reception, cultural appropriation, and popular pleasure. I speak of the adaptations of *Beauty and the Beast* for television by Ron Koslow (1987-1990) and Walt Disney Studio's animated release by the same title (1991). Both of these retellings of the classic fairy tale attempt to add to the public's horizon of expectations, as they build upon the audience's repertoire. Both address socio-sexual concerns and explore the gender-related struggles of Western tradition.

In 1987 Ron Koslow, in association with Witt/Thomas Productions and CBS television premiered a new drama entitled "Beauty and the Beast/The Series," featuring a poetic Beast Man, who was mysteriously abandoned as a baby and reared in an Utopian world far below the streets of New York. He is enamored of an intelligent "spunky" heroine, who rejects her upper middle-class existence to fight crime. The protagonists seemingly have nothing in common, but are empathically bound to one another. Catherine Chandler, the Beauty, is a New York socialite, whose life is a whirl of parties and openings, until she is mistakenly kidnapped, slashed and dumped in Central Park one Fall evening. Vincent, the Beast, on a nightly stroll above ground, finds her badly beaten and bleeding. He takes her to his Tunnel World, where he restores her to mental and physical health by reading to her, sitting, and listening. When Catherine returns to the world above, she is a changed woman. She quits her responsibility-free job at her father's law firm and becomes an assistant to a deputy district attorney. Her new post often puts her at risk, but Vincent is there to help, advise, and nurture her through the pain and horror of modern times. Their friendship intensifies, much to the chagrin of Vincent's adoptive Father, into love. Although Catherine and Vincent cannot imagine life without one another, they realize that their happiness must be postponed, because so many others depend upon them.

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There are many Gothic elements evident in the CBS series with the dark, brooding Beast-man, who is in love with a beautiful young woman, just out of reach. Despite their differences and many obstacles, including their social status, parents, and friends, they seem destined for one another and ultimately will be joined. Interestingly enough there are some significant reworkings of the traditional Beauty and the Beast motif offered to the viewers via this vehicle. For one, it is never a question of Vincent being transformed from Beast to handsome prince. His appearance is permanent, probably the result of genetic tampering. Catherine accepts this and loves him more for the challenges that he has had to face. In a remarkable gender reversal, it is Catherine, who assumes the status of the active partner in the relationship. She has a demanding job that leaves her little time to cultivate her relationship with her beast-love. Vincent is a poet, educator, and defender of the weak, whose beastly appearance forces him to hide his face from the world above. Although he possesses superhuman strength and when provoked can rip a man to shreds, these abilities are reserved for self-protection and the preservation of his Utopian society. Portrayed as tender, generous, and compassionate, Vincent may not understand why Catherine is such an ardent crusader for truth, but fully supports her decision to stay above and work for justice. Theirs is a difficult but ennobling relationship that sacrifices personal happiness for a greater good.

From this brief overview of the story development for the weekly episodes, it is clear that the series was designed to address the conservative agendas of the late 1980s as it tackled questions about drug addiction, the "scourge" of AIDS, the degeneration of family values, free love, and crime on the streets. Koslow and his writers introduced the viewers to a selfless couple, whose chaste existences (at least until the end of the second season) were a

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model of faith, trust, and loyalty that spoke volumes to the millions of spectators who tuned in every week to watch Vincent and Catherine share brief moments of intimacy on her moonlit balcony far above the city streets.

Although their saga attracted many female viewers, it never succeeded in tapping the audience that CBS desired for the program, so the series was canceled in 1990. "Beauty and the Beast/The Series" may have disappeared from the airwaves, but the story of Catherine and Vincent is still alive in 1999 in the form of numerous fan clubs and fanzines that seize the opportunity to extend the romance of their protagonists beyond the grave. (Catherine Chandler was murdered in the opening episode of the third season as the newborn child that she had conceived with Vincent was stolen from her. She dies in Vincent's arms, quoting Dylan Thomas's "And Death Shall Have No Dominion." Her last words are a promise of fidelity. Although she may no longer be physically present, she will always be with him. Theirs is a love eternal.

Disney's 1991 animated version of *Beauty and the Beast*, along with its 1994 reworking for the Broadway stage, are much indebted to Cocteau's film and Koslow's television series. Linda Woolverton and her creative team studied the history of the fairy tale and its adaptations to account for the essential elements of the motif, then they updated the story so that it would reflect some cognizance of contemporary sexual politics and the role they play in filmmaking today. The storyline of the Disney productions tackles issues of paternal authority, male and female desire, and the domestication of feminism. It also examines men as monsters.

Usually more conservative in its animated tales, Disney for once gave its audience a spirited heroine who chose love on her terms. Belle's story is to be a journey of discovery — of her own worth, of the worth of her future mate, and

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an exploration of her environment. In one musical number that was cut from the animated tale, we find Belle wondering what life will be like for her in her new surroundings. Her musings lead her to conclude that home is not a place but where the heart dwells. As she sings, she realizes that even in the provincial town that she has just left behind there were problems. Viewed as a strange girl, because of her love of books, she was an outcast, but the familiar is more inviting than her current abode:

What I'd give to return
To the life that I knew lately
But I know that I can't
Solve my problems going back
Is this home? Am I here for a day or forever,
Shut away
From the world until who knows when?
Oh, but then
As my life has been altered once
It can change again
Build higher walls around me,
Change ev'ry lock and key.
Nothing lasts, nothing holds
All of me
My heart's far, far away
Home and free (1.7)!

These musings are important because when viewed from a wider perspective, they reveal that Belle's story is a more complex statement about otherness and social isolation than it first appears.

Howard Ashman, the lyricist and executive producer for *Beauty and the Beast*, was under much duress to complete this project because he was dying of AIDS. Two songs withheld from the animated film but included in the stage version of the fairy tale — “Is This Home?” and “No Beauty Can Move Me” — strongly suggest Ashman’s concerns about sexuality, life, and death. Both songs reflect the lyricist’s anxiety about the future, his own mortality and the physical metamorphosis that he was undergoing due to the disease. Surprising enough there was also contained within a warning about reckless or careless behavior.² When viewed against the producer’s personal history, Belle and the Beast’s musings about home, love, and acceptance gain greater depth and poignancy. Ashman’s final triumph lies within the layering of text and image to illustrate his personal dilemma via the characters of his production.

It is interesting to explore the traits that constitute maleness in Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*, for these too are marked with gender biases. As in Cocteau’s film, there are rival suitors for Belle’s hand. Both characters are viewed as monsters. Gaston, the manifest human being, is a brutish mass of muscle and ego who rapes and pillages nature in the name of sport. He is more “bête” than wise, a caveman, who believes that women should be ignorant and pregnant. The Beast is a cursed young prince, whose selfishness and ill-temper have cost him his once handsome shape and figure. Like Gaston, he is hunter, but his quest is for a woman, who will learn to love him (in spite of his appearance) before the last petal of a fatal rose falls. Both suitors are phallicly centered. Their torsos are

²There is a transitional bridge in the Beast’s lament, “No Beauty Can Move Me” that is particularly striking as the Beast sings: “Long ago I should have seen/All the things I could have been/Careless and unthinking I moved onward. . . Now. . . No pain could be deeper/No life could be cheaper/No point anymore if I can’t love her/No spirit could win me/No hope left within me/Hope I could have loved her and that she’d set me free/But it’s not to be/If I can’t love her/Let the world be done with me (1.13).

massive and covered with hair. When angered or aroused they puff to greater size. Gaston is handsome, but a natural-born killer who preys upon the weak with no regard for any living thing, save himself. His pursuit of Belle is not founded on love, but a perceived need to "breed." She is the prettiest girl in town; he the most handsome man so their offspring will be the best and he always pursues the best. His counterpart, the Beast, when first encountered is savage, violent, and mean-spirited. However, it becomes quickly apparent that he can be redeemed with the nurturing good will of an understanding woman, who does not shrink away when he bellows or roars.

By splitting the male monsters of the tale into a good beast and a bad beast, Disney separates the dual nature of man and isolates the parts for clearer distinction. Of course the climatic struggle between the rivals is inevitable and predictable, for good must triumph over evil and send the bad into a bottomless pit, herein depicted by Gaston's fall from a high crag to the rocks below the castle. The Beast is transformed into a handsome prince when Belle avows her love and they are united in the traditional comic ending of happily ever after.

Because this animated classic surpassed all commercial expectations, the tale of Belle and her prince has enjoyed a serialized afterlife. Disney Productions have released two additional videos that recount lost moments from *Beauty and the Beast's* initial struggles to get to know one another. The Studios have also capitalized on books and interactive games about the adventures of the hero and heroine.

Although touted as a significant shift in standard Disney fare, *Beauty and the Beast* actually does very little to advance the romance narrative from a feminist perspective, because it focuses on courtship and marriage as dénouement, and ultimately is less the story of Belle's journey of discovery, and more

the Beast's story of transformation. Although the comic outcome rests upon Belle's falling in love with the Beast, it is the Beast, who must gain her affection by actively wooing her. When all is said and done, our heroine remains an object of desire, not an active subject. As June Cummins has pointed out: [Belle's] traditionally unfeminine traits lose importance as the film progresses. While Belle initially appears spunky, independent, and curious, her surrender to the seduction of sexual difference, like the plot's surrender to romantic closure, denies her that independence and forces her into subjugation ("Romancing the Plot" 26). Belle's acceptance of the Beast, her admitted love of him, and their union reinforce the patriarchal model of happiness, disempowering the female and embellishing the male myth of prowess and seduction.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, there has been another populist attempt to recreate the magical space of the Beauty and the Beast motif — this time with a distinctively French-Canadian perspective in the guise of a spectacular musical adaptation of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Like *The Phantom of the Opera* and Disney's stage adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast*, critics have panned this musical comedy for its sentimentality and its reliance on special effects. Martha S. LoMonaco has labeled such productions "Cliff Notes musicals" because they give "the gist of the story, but exorcise the troubling complexities and ambiguities found within the original works" to make the adaptations more palatable for middle-class audiences. ("Bombast over Broadway in Today's Populist Musicals" B10). While it is true that a great number of current theatrical productions rely on sentimental themes and pyrotechnical spectacles to pack the houses, I would disagree with LoMonaco's assessment of the shallowness of the texts in question. The lyrics of many of the songs composed for these musicals are steeped in the evocative power of the

original works and conjure impressions of their source material. Although romance and special effects may bring spectators to the theater the first time, they are not sufficient to account for the return trade, (which is formidable), nor to explain why vast fandoms of devotees have sprung up to perpetuate their experiences with these adaptations of prominent nineteenth-century fiction. There must be more to these productions than cliché endings and dazzling sets.

One possible explanation may rest in the expectations that the audience brings to the theater. These expectations are based on its collective familiarity with other works that employ the same motif and recount the same narrative. As we have observed throughout this study, the reception of a text is historically sensitive. It is shaped by the public's horizon of expectations and its current repertoire. Late twentieth-century expectations are in many ways reminiscent of those in evidence in nineteenth-century *fin-de-siècle* France. There are concerns about social, moral, and metaphysical shifts (true or perceived) in the *status quo*. There is fear of the Other, anxiety about the future course of mankind and how the degeneration of family values has produced a growing segment of disenfranchised young men and women. These issues beg for forms of interior monologue, and invite the audience (reader or spectator) to re-examine utopias lost and to revisit nostalgic realms of yesteryear. Such perspectives (or retrospectives) confer great value on aspiration, encouraging individuals to dream of what they might (have) become. Because the *Beauty and the Beast* motif frequently embraces interior monologue and often fluctuates between utopian and nostalgic worlds of (re)discovery, it provides excellent material for introspection and subversion, as our study of nineteenth-century French fiction has illustrated. Within the texts we have studied, there can be found answers to tough questions about sexuality, violence, and gender-appropriate roles. The

answers ultimately may do little to champion women's causes (in fact most do not), but they do illustrate a process of confronting the problems, studying solutions, and offering suggestions for consideration. The twentieth century, an era also in quest of answers to tough questions of a similar genre, has turned to the past to see how previous periods dealt with these issues.

Luc Plamondon, who adapted *Notre-Dame de Paris* for the stage, freely admits:

Il n'y a pas beaucoup de bonnes histoires. Le dix-neuvième siècle en a fourni plusieurs. Ces personnages font partie de l'imaginaire, même celui des gens qui ne lisent pas. [...] Les romans de cette époque étaient très cinématographiques. De Dostoïevski à Stendhal, les écrivains racontaient des histoires passionnelles dans des climats épiques (Interview avec Christine Rioux, *Le Devoir*, 19 septembre 1998).

In other words, there seems to have been a provocative force at work in some nineteenth-century texts that corresponds to the epic quests of the twentieth century. This force is attractive and compelling for today's audiences, because it responds to the public's pursuit of passion and its struggle for individuation. Although there may never again be a happily-ever-after, there must be an attempt to find closure or mankind is lost.

Plamondon's *Notre-Dame de Paris* is but the latest colossal hit in a series of adaptations of nineteenth-century French masterpieces. To-date the production has sold more than three million tickets, established a second permanent company in Canada, and is scheduled to mount the English version of the play in London in the Spring of 2000. *Notre-Dame* may just be another Cliff Notes musical by some critical standards but it possesses enormous provocative power.

Night after night a staggering number of spectators come to the theater to relive the emotionally charged story of *la Esmeralda*, *Claude Frollo*, and *Quasimodo*, because there is something within the text that stirs up new experiences and feelings within them and these experiences are different from those that they might get from viewing one of the film versions of Hugo's work.

Plamondon, like Lloyd Webber, seems to have tapped some subterranean source within the collective subconscious of society and resurrected elements from there that embody and address contemporary concerns. The result is a libretto that blends Gothic sets with contemporary rhythms, classical references with modern iconography, and a tragic romance with musical comedy played out before packed houses on two continents. Nick LeQuesne in his review of the hit French musical has called the production: "a deft counterplay of unexpected oppositions. [...] The staging is spectacular: director Gilles Maheu weaves the action from stark medieval interiors to S&M inquisitions in a blatant blend of Freudian psycho-sexuality. All in all, it's a shameless tearjerker with haute monde aspirations" ("*Quasimodo Comeback*," *Time International*, March 8, 1999, v. 153 58). Pulsating between rock idioms and grand melodies, this reworking of *Notre-Dame de Paris* captures the essential elements of Victor Hugo's masterpiece and makes it live again in a coalition of drama, rock opera, and special effects.

Plamondon attributes some of the success of his musical to the fact that the audience is familiar with his narrative. The public knows Hugo's novel. The challenge for him has been to update the material for the contemporary "readers." Speaking of the task, he has said:

Si le livre avait été en vers, j'aurais eu du mal. Mais les dialogues du roman sont minimalistes. Ça crée de beaux sujets de mono-

logues intérieurs, qui font de belles chansons. Mon rôle était de mettre tout ça à la première personne. Dans le roman, Quasimodo ne parle pas de sa laideur. Frolo ne dit pas son refoulement sexuel. [...] Avec Victor Hugo, au moins, on ne me demande pas de quoi ça parle! (Interview avec Christian Rioux, *Le Devoir*, le 19 septembre 1998).

Plamondon's statement once again points out the media industry's interest in formulaic source material. Nowadays directors, producers, and authors must be able to assure their backers that they have created a property that will generate sufficient interest to recoup the investors' financial support. To do so, productions must attract widely differentiated demographic groups of disparate cultural interests, and unite them for a limited time in a provocative experience. If this first hurdle is cleared, then there is a good chance that the book, show, or series will be rewarded with commercial success. However, once a narrative moves from blockbuster to cult status, there is little that one can do to control how the material is appropriated by the fans. As Henry Jenkins has demonstrated, fandom challenges the media industry's claims to hold copyrights to popular narratives, by poaching the material for its own use³ (*Textual Poachers* 279).

While one might be tempted to believe that textual poaching of material is a twentieth-century manifestation, the history of a few works of the late nineteenth century reveal that even then, there were readers and spectators, who challenged the media industry's power to decide what happened to their favorite

³A case in point is the history of *Beauty and the Beast/The Series*. By the time that CBS premiered the second season of the show, there were some ninety fanzines devoted to the series and fifty major fan organizations with combined memberships of 350,000. When CBS announced that its plan to cancel the series, the fans barraged the network with letters, faxes, and e-mails. The show was put on temporary hiatus and opened its third season in January, 1989.

characters. They did so by proffering suggestions for the outcome of serialized novels or clamoring for the return of a popular soubrette from the front of the stage. Arthur Conan Doyle had to resurrect Sherlock Holmes from the dead because the public outcry for the return of their beloved sleuth was so formidable.

During the twentieth century the trend has become more common and more organized, as fandom has united in loosely knit pockets of resistance and subversion across the world. The internet has proven to be the most effective campaign tool of the era, guaranteeing that if a battle with a network or publisher is lost, there can be continued life for favorite narratives on the worldwide web. (In Appendix Four there can be found some remarkable fan appropriations of the Beauty and the Beast motif, which digress significantly from the scripted visions of the authors and creators of the works in question).

What is remarkable about the Beauty and the Beast motif is its resiliency and durability in such a tumultuous environment. Of course the theme's popularity has much to do with its familiar patterns of development that remain unchanged, except in incidentals mandated by place, period, and contemporary values. As we have observed, as the elements are renewed, they are reassembled in new ways to meet the expectations of readers. Because the Beauty and the Beast motif has proven again and again its power to disturb the "existing order" by undermining social stereotypes and upsetting the *status quo*, it continues to enjoy popular acclamation and appropriation. Nevertheless, this theme is also sensitive to historical transitions and subject to losses and gains in the public arena of "good" taste. For the moment, Beauty and the Beast is enjoying a revival of interest, attested to by the popularity of four longrunning musical comedies and several animated versions of the tale, but the motif is certain to retreat into

disfavor again once it no longer addresses the needs of its audiences. As Jenkins has pointed out, readers are cultural nomads. They will find new materials for their consumption and distribution.

It is a shame that the focus of this study did not include the twentieth-century use of the Beauty and the Beast motif because it appears to offer potentially stimulating areas of research. As must be clear from the cursory attention that a few of the adaptations have received in this investigation, they merit more careful considerations. While there have been a number of psychoanalytic, feminist, and archetypal studies devoted to the fairy tale theme, ethnographic explorations have been limited to Henry Jenkins's work on the CBS's popular television series *Beauty and the Beast*, Betsy Hearne's survey of Beauties and Beasts, and Marina Warner's *From Beasts to Blonde*. With this fin-de-siècle's exponential interest in the motif, it seems that more research is warranted, especially as it relates to theatrical, cinemographic, and fine arts appropriations of the theme. Such critical study could determine which images and elements are responsible for creating and congealing amorphous groups of individuals into subcultural enclaves of consumers, who feel empowered to alter, transgress, and trespass what the creators have directed at them in order to construct meanings of their own. According to Julia Kristeva, the literary text has become "une pratique que l'on pourrait comparer à celle de la révolution politique: l'une opère pour le sujet ce que l'autre introduit dans la société (*La révolution du langage poétique* 14).

This study has argued that ethnography, as a critical method of research, is a valuable tool to explore the works of certain nineteenth-century authors, who used the Beauty and the Beast motif to empower their texts with social, historical, and political resonances. We have discovered that sometimes their

texts successfully subverted the dominant ideology, but usually did little to advance women's causes because they often reinforced patriarchal definitions and images of femininity. We have also observed that when men adopt the Beauty and the Beast material, they are pleading on their own behalf, seeking understanding and acknowledgment of their personal visions of desire, sexuality, and gender-appropriate behaviors.

To gain a better comprehension of the texts in question, we have examined the works in relationship to their cultural reality and in terms of their author's views of erotic impulses. We have explored male versus female desire, the role of the other in nineteenth-century fiction, and men as monsters. The readings and analyses of the present study have demonstrated that the Beauty and the Beast motif was (and still is) a provocative force that at its height of influence will promote subversion and introspection. We have also observed that the structuring, reassembly, and interpretation of these elements fall within the purview of the readers or spectators, who claim the works for their own, thus leaving no one true version of the text but multiple versions that become new variants of the motif employed. How a work is received ultimately depends on the repertoire and interests of the readers. Aesthetic readers will attempt to explore a work on its own terms, subjugating themselves to the aesthetic discipline presented in an attempt to enrich a body of knowledge. Popular readers view text as a repository of fundamental cultural beliefs and collective aspirations. They are less concerned with the final unity of the text than with the pleasures and meanings that its elements can provoke. Michel de Certeau claims that the text might be likened to a supermarket from which readers buy what they need, take the items home to be combined with other ingredients to make a new meal (or a new reading) based on their own needs, creativities, and taste

(The Practice of Everyday Life).

For centuries now the Beauty and the Beast motif has been a popular ingredient in the creation of a sumptuous repast for the aesthetic and popular reader. Its long and enduring history suggests that the motif possesses sufficient provocative power to continue to excite and incite authors and readers for centuries to come.

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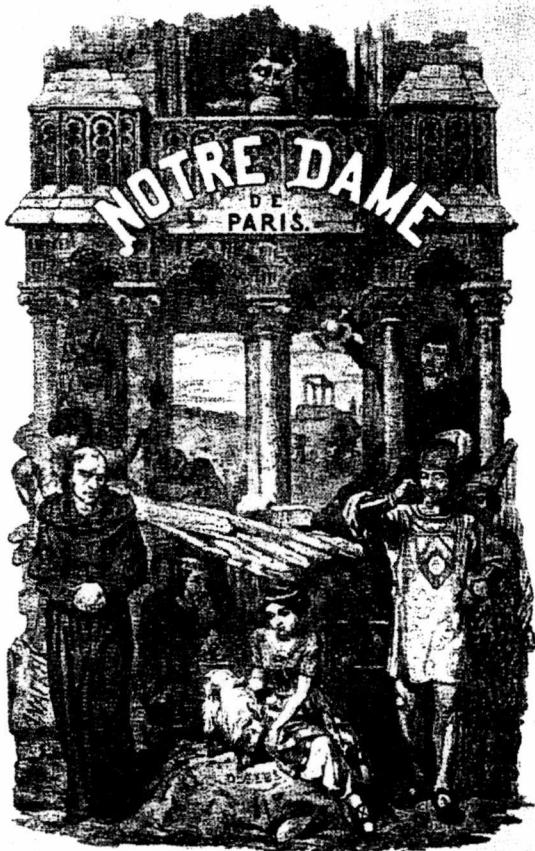
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Appendices

Artistic Interpretations of the Early Works of Victor Hugo

Victor Hugo's work offered fertile ground for artistic interpretation because of the wide scope of his themes. He himself was an artist who frequently drew sketches of characters and landscapes as he worked on a text. His drawings were rarely shown outside of his inner sanctum of friends but were intricate parts of his creative vision. Speaking to Jules Laurens in 1855, the author of *Notre-Dame de Paris* commented: "Ah! Vous connaissez mes barbouillages? Qui ne sortent du reste pas trop présomptueusement de mon principal métier, car je les fabrique avec les deux bouts de mon même outil, c'est-à-dire dessinant avec le bec d'une plume d'oie et peignant avec ses poils de barbes" ("Témoignages et documents," *Victor Hugo: et s'il n'en reste qu'un* 142).



Here we find Aimé de Lemud's front jacket cover for the 1844 edition of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, published by Perrotin. It is currently housed in the Victor Hugo Museum, Paris.

In the drawing we have all the principal characters of the text. Djali is seen spelling out the name of Phoebus; Frollo is glancing at the object of his desire; Quasimodo is dreamily staring at the world below while the randy Phoebus twirls his mustache and hungrily leers at a sweet morsel of flesh. In the background loom the gallows where la Esmeralda will die.

Boudoir tableau ordered by Mme la Marquise de K**



In the legend of this lithograph is written: "Han d'Islande, après la révolte des moeurs, sourit appuyé sur sa hâche de pierre. Il vient de déchirer de ses griffes dégoulinantes de sang plusieurs corps étendus à ses pieds, quelques vautours. Corbeaux, loups, chiens sauvages et l'ours favoir accourent prendre part au festin" ("Témoignages et documents" 150). The drawing depicts the wild man image of Han, who is clothed in the skins of his human and animal foes. It is important to note how he stands over all creatures in a sort of noble majesty, unvanquished by all. His eyes hypnotically stare at those who dare to look upon him.

This lithograph is a part of the permanent collection housed in the Victor Hugo Museum, Paris.

Images of Quasimodo and la Esmeralda

There have been numerous attempts to create portraits of Quasimodo and la Esmeralda. Two of the most interesting images were painted by Antoine Wiertz in 1839. The oils portray both characters in human terms. Quasimodo is depicted as an older man with flowing red mane, large hairy hands, and heavily bearded. He is neither monstrous nor frightening. La Esmeralda is scantily clothed suggesting the stereotypical wantonness of gypsy women; however, her face is drawn with careful attention to her innocence and naivete. It is interesting to note that Wiertz has also portrayed la Esmeralda with a slight curvature of the spine, as if to indicate that she too is marked by her marginality.



The paintings are currently housed in the Royal Belgian Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels.

Quasimodo and la Esmeralda

In the nineteenth-century illustrations in which Quasimodo appears with la Esmeralda, she is almost always dressed in white, a visual testament to her virginal nature and the purity of her motives. In this illustration created by Luc-Olivier Merson, we find the artist's rendition of "Une larme pour une goutte d'eau." As the crowd below the pillory hoots and jeers, la Esmeralda offers the hunchback a drop of water to quench his thirst.



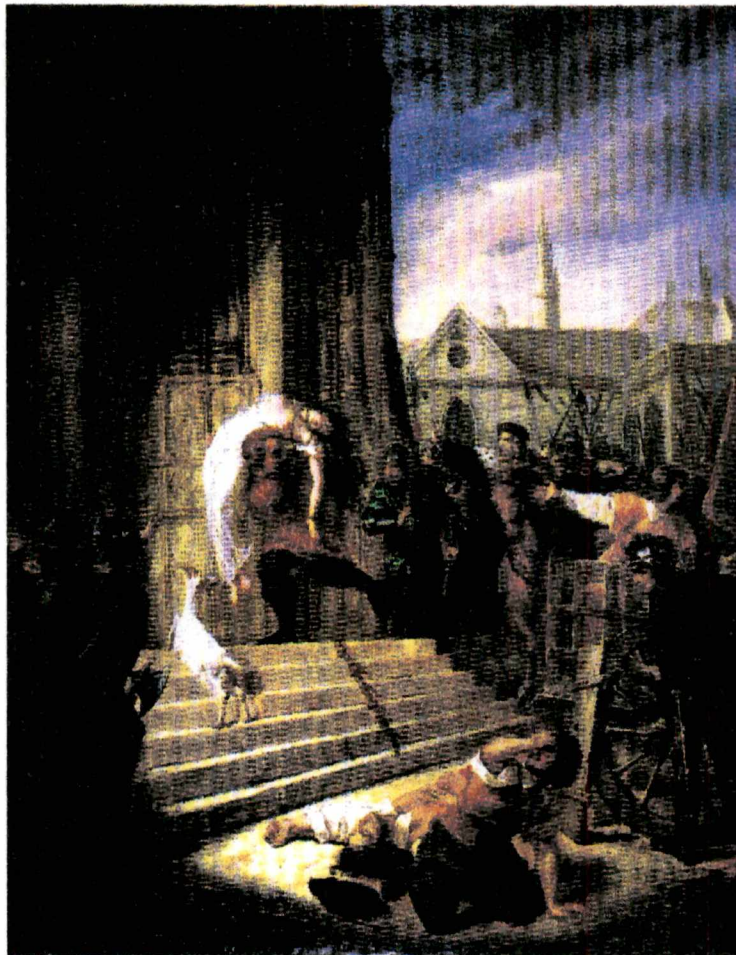
The scene calls to mind Hugo's text: "C'eût été partout un spectacle touchant que cette belle fille, fraîche, pure, charmante, et si faible en même temps, ainsi pieusement accourue au secours de tant de misère, de difformité et de méchanceté. Sur un pilori, ce spectacle était sublime" (*Notre-Dame de Paris* 254).

Merson has effectively captured the ignorance and prejudices of the crowd scene and juxtaposed them against the charity of the Beauty for a Beast. As the masses turn their eyes away, the protagonists look at each other. La Esmeralda is shy in her demeanor.

Merson's work is a part of the permanent collection housed in the Victor Hugo Museum, Paris.

Quasimodo and la Esmeralda

In this illustration, we once more find la Esmeralda all dressed in white. Mlle Henry, the painter who created this image, once more illustrates the marginal characters in ascendancy above the masses. There is confusion and consternation all around the protagonists as they escape into the sanctuary of hallowed ground.



This oil recalls Hugo's text as well: "Cependant après quelques minutes de triomphe, Quasimodo s'était brusquement enfoncé dans l'église avec son fardeau. Le peuple, amoureux de toute prouesse, le cherchait des yeux sous le sombre nef, regrettant qu'il se fût si vite dérobé à ses acclamations" (367). Note that Quasimodo's popularity also has reached a new height as the masses proclaim his daring act of unexpected heroism.

Quasimodo

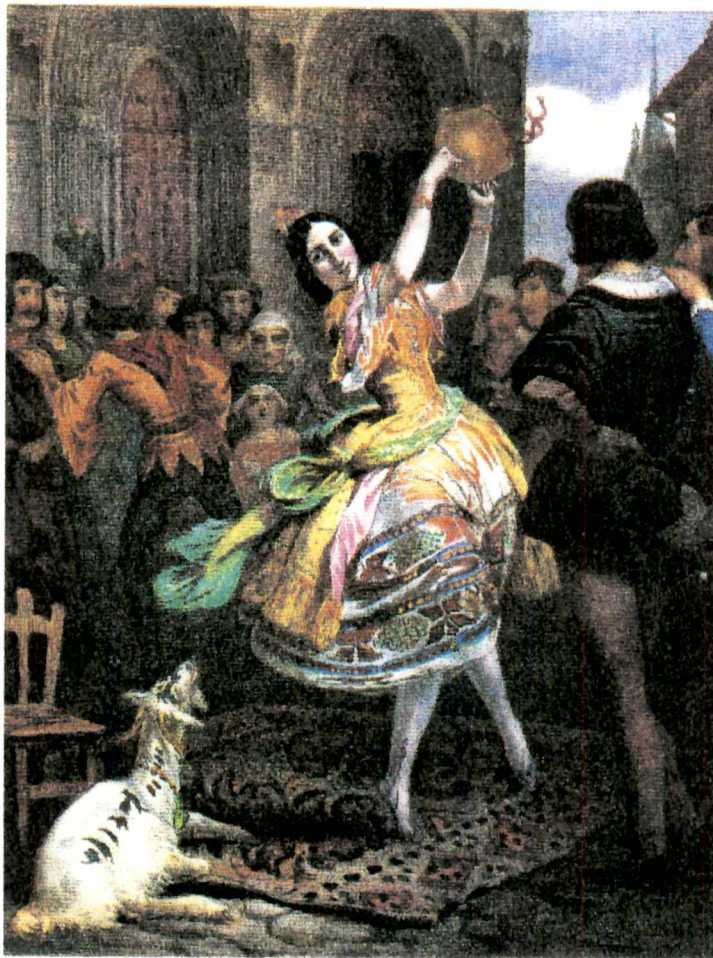
As we have seen, artists' interpretations of the hunchback vary greatly. Louis Steinheil (1814-1185) who created the jacket cover of Book IV of Perrotin's 1844 edition is more attentive to the immaturity of Quasimodo than Wiertz. While Wiertz emphasized the great size and physicality of the beast, Steinheil plays with the youthful exuberance of the bellringer as he mounts Marie and swings joyfully from the towers of Notre-Dame.



This jacket cover is a part of the permanent collection housed in the Victor Hugo Museum, Paris.

La Esmeralda

Portraits of la Esmeralda during the nineteenth century often stressed the beauty and grace of Hugo's naïve heroine. In Nicolas-Eustache Maurin's (1799-1850) pastels we find documented the gypsy costumes of the period. Note how the bright colors of "Egypt" contrast with the more earthen tones of medieval France. Our heroine's comb also suggests more western heritage than that of northern Africa. Keeping with Victor Hugo's textual description, la Esmeralda has been depicted with raven hair but of fairer skin than her sister gypsies.



This illustration for *Notre-Dame de Paris* is entitled *Esméralda et sa chèvre*. It depicts one of the opening scenes in front of the cathedral in which la Esmeralda receives adulation from the crowd of onlookers.

La Esmeralda

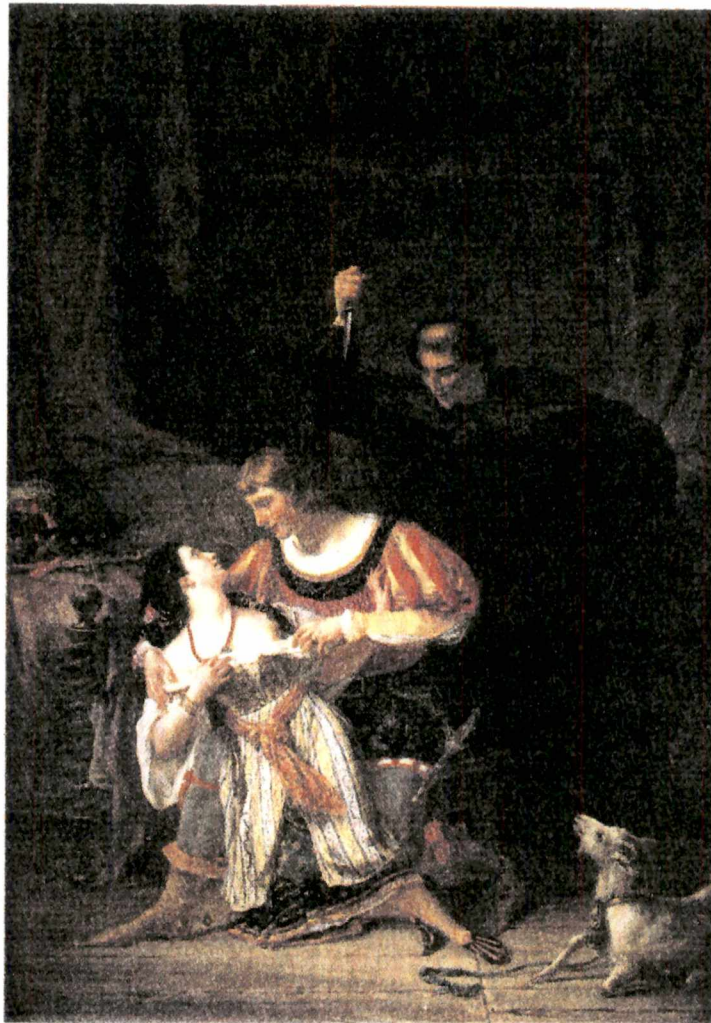
Nicolas-Eustache Maurin's *La chambre* depicts la Esmeralda being studied by her husband, Gringoire. The room that surrounds them hints more at nineteenth-century life than that of the Middle Ages with the service utensils, cupboards, and furnishings. On the stone floor can be seen the famous game pieces used to spell out the name of Phoebus.



This illustration is a part of the permanent collection housed in the Victor Hugo Museum, Paris.

La Esmeralda and Frollo

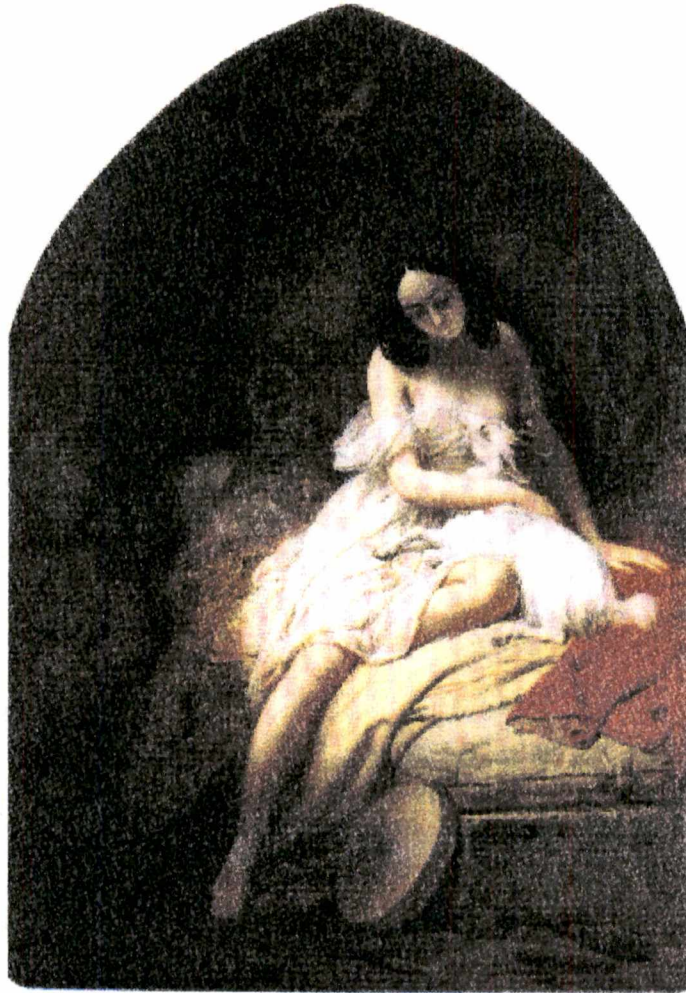
Two of the most dramatic paintings of la Esmeralda that were created during the nineteenth century are found here. The first comes from Auguste Couder (1796-1873). It is entitled *La Esmeralda et Phoebus surpris par Claude Frollo*. The luxurious colors of the captain's outfit and the heroine's costume contrast radically with their dingy surroundings. The archdeacon stands poised to attack as la Esmeralda is transfixed by the gaze of her lover and the jealousy of her pursuer.



The painting is a part of the permanent collection housed in the Victor Hugo Museum, Paris.

La Esmeralda and Frollo

In this second scene that places the archdeacon near la Esmeralda, the heroine is found in prison awaiting trial. Above her head hovers a devilish gargoyle that watches the scene with wide-eyed interest. Beside her sits an unknown figure. At her breast lies her beloved Djali. La Esmeralda appears all in white, a coat of red nonchalantly tossed on the edge of her pallet.



This painting was created by Charles de Steuben (1788-1856). It is currently housed in the Fine Arts Museum of Nantes, France.

La Esmeralda and Frollo

The following print by an unknown author is set in the same location as Steuben's oil. It is interesting to note the startling differences between the works. In this scene, the dungeon cell has a window. The archdeacon is portrayed as an older man with flowing hair. La Esmeralda is dressed in blue and white. Her upper body has been laid bare by the lecherous priest. Aggressor and victim stare at one another in terror and agony.



“Le prêtre la regardait de l’oeil d’un milan qui a longtemps plané en rond du plus haut du ciel autour d’une pauvre alouette tapie dans les blés, qui a longtemps rétréci en silence les cercles formidables de son vol, et tout à coup s’est abattu sur sa proie comme la flèche de l’éclair, et la tient pantelante dans sa griffe” (*Notre-Dame de Paris* 341).

Quasimodo, la Esmeralda and Frollo

In this detail from a larger lithograph we find Frollo, Quasimodo, and la Esmeralda together. The heroine is wearing blue and supplicating heaven while Frollo stares in disbelief as his "devoted servant" carries the girl into the Cathedral. In Hugo's text, this event never occurred. The archdeacon failed to attend the Egyptian's appointed execution.

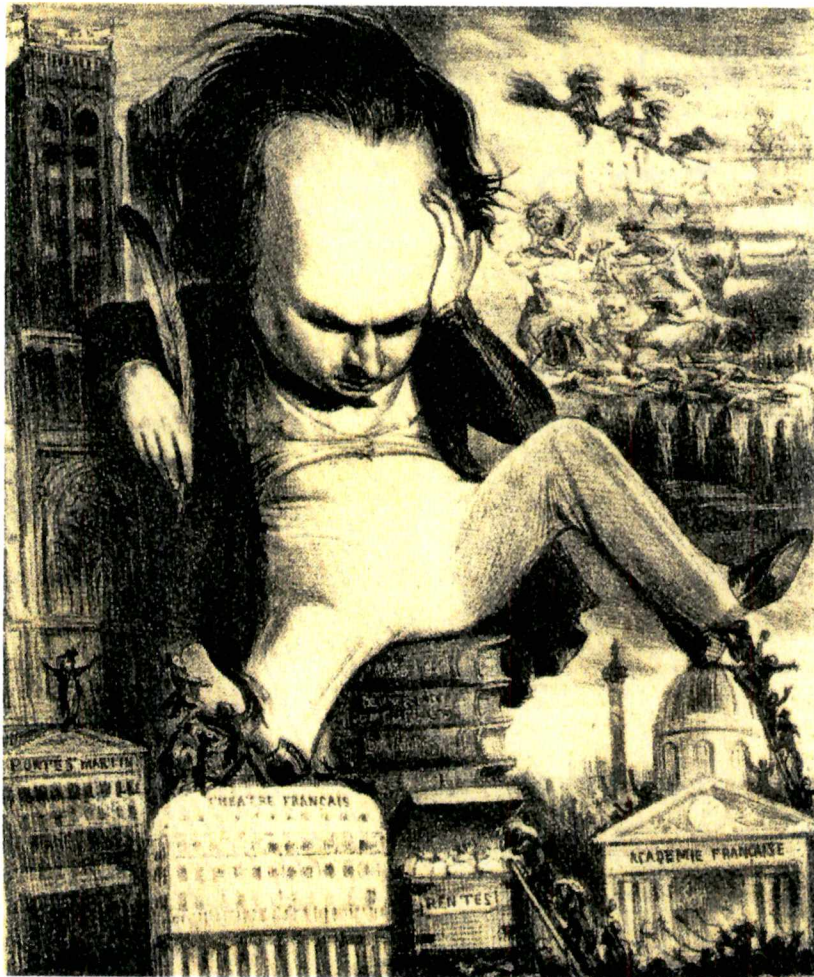


"Quasimodo s'était arrêté sous le grand portail. Ses larges pieds semblaient aussi solides sur le pavé de l'église que les lourds piliers romans. Sa grosse tête chevelue s'enfonçait dans ses épaules comme celle des lions qui eux aussi ont une crinière et pas de cou. Il tenait la jeune fille toute palpitante suspendue à ses mains calleuses comme une draperie blanche. . ." (366).

The full lithograph hangs in the Victor Hugo Museum, Paris.

Victor Hugo

As poet, spokesman, dramatist, and novelist, Victor Hugo by the 1840s occupied a prominent position in the literary and social history of France. His fame and his ego made him ripe for accolades and derision. In this lithograph created by Benjamin Robaud we find the author of *Notre-Dame de Paris* seated on his complete works with one foot resting on le Théâtre-Français and the other on the Académie Française. His dreams are full of the multifarious creatures that he has created as his admirers petition him for favors.



A lithograph by Benjamin Robaud, *Victor Hugo: Le Panthéon charivarique*, December, 1841.

Introspection and Subversion

After the failure of the 1848 Revolution, France's elite rejected romantic notions and embraced realism. With the rise of the middle class, relative stability in the government, and sound economic growth, society gradually evolved into a paradigm directed by bourgeois sensibilities and values. The literature of the time buried the heroes who dreamed of changing their destinies and that of the world in order to search for a more exact image of life. The major writers of the Romantic Movement abandoned their literary circles to concentrate on the world of politics. Although none ever gave up their early penchant for the exotic, the grotesque and the sublime, humanity's progress and the new positivism enraptured most. There were extraordinary efforts to promote synthesis and harmony.



Victor Hugo, who continued to be the century's most prolific writer, cast aside his plans to resuscitate art by making history and concentrated more upon the world of the outcast, the foreigner among his peers. One of his last earthly exiles was Gwynplaine, an example of the modern victim, martyr, hero who would emerge in the subversive literature of the late nineteenth century.

"Jésus! Mon doux sauveur! Ce n'est plus la face d'un homme, mais d'un martyr!" (Victor Hugo, *L'Homme qui rit*).

L'Ensorcelée de Barbey d'Aurevilly

Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly was one of the first post-1848 Revolution writers to reject the positivism of his age and to seek compensation for its "atrocities" in a glorious past. His was an aristocratic pose, a flamboyant reaction to the triumph of bourgeois values. Using the voice of his narrator in *L'Ensorcelée*, Barbey states his position: "Moi qui crois que les sociétés fortes, sinon les plus brillantes, vivent d'imitation, de tradition, des choses reprises à la même place où le temps les interrompt; moi, enfin, qui me sens plus de goût pour le système des castes, malgré sa dureté, que pour le système de développement à fond de train de toutes les facultés humaines . . ." (*L'Ensorcelée* 53).



"Et l'ombre épaisse devint un homme qui entra, enveloppé dans une carapousse portée de manière à lui cacher le bas du visage, comme la visière à moitié levée d'un ancien casque" (139). Here we have Félix Buhot's illustration for the 1913 edition of *L'Ensorcelée* published by A. Lemerre. It is currently housed in the Barbey d'Aurevilly Museum, Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte, France.

Barbey d'Aurevilly's *L'Enfer*

In order to address his concerns for his period's detour from the path of truth, Barbey d'Aurevilly created a hero who would represent "l'esprit de ce temps," who would step forward for a lost generation of noblemen who were left without a voice and say, "C'est bien cela!" (Preface of *L'Enfer* 34). Jean Canu has suggested that Barbey wanted to "ressusciter un monde aboli, [de] donner la sensation d'un pays écarté et d'une société originale" (*Barbery d'Aurevilly* 285) in order to subvert the callous values of his age's middle class morality. The rebel priest is enveloped in a cloak of mystery, his face is marked by visible evidence of what happens to a noble soul that has become disillusioned and abandoned by an uncaring world.

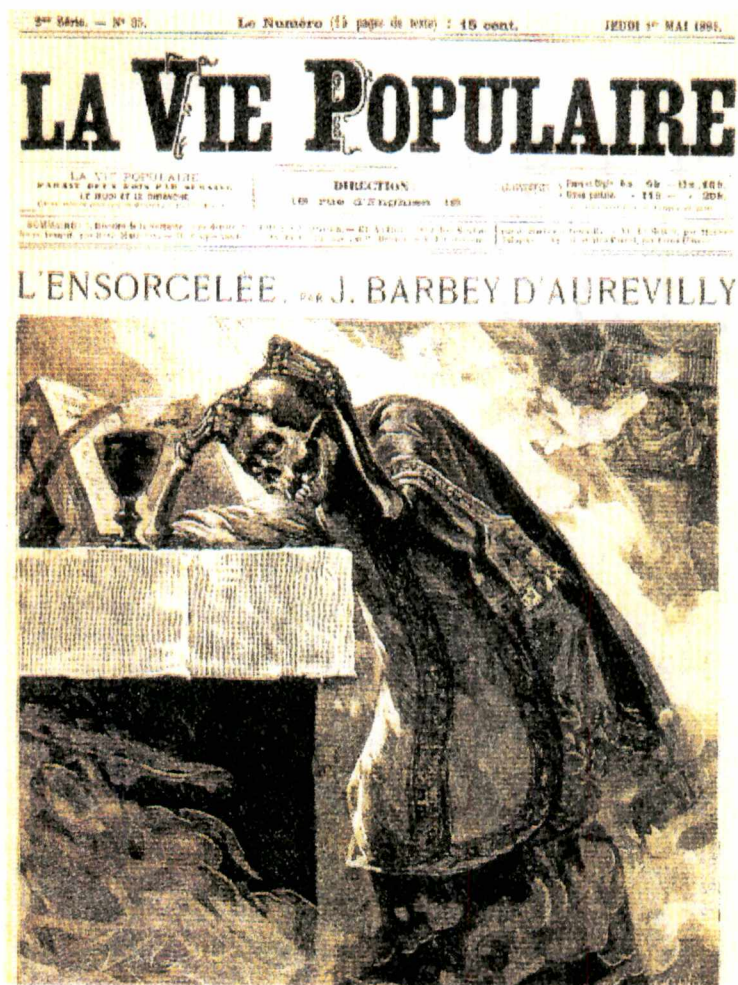


"L'espèce de cha-
peron qu'il portait
tomba, et sa tête
gorgonienne appa-
rut avec ses larges
tempes, que d'inex-
primables douleurs
avaient trépanées.
C'était magnifique
et c'était affreux!"
(*L'Enfer* 140).

In this charcoal drawing created by Georges Leduc we find the rebel monk glaring defiantly at all, who dare to gaze upon him. The most human feature portrayed is his eyes.

Barbey d'Aurevilly's *L'Ensorcelée*

De la Croix-Jugan is not destined to restore the aristocracy to its rightful place in the world. As he begins the consecration, he is felled by an assassin's bullet. Legend has it that each night at the stroke of midnight, the rebel priest returns to the altar and tries to finish the Mass that he had begun, but he cannot. A number of witnesses have reported their horror at having come inadvertently upon this macabre scene.



"Il prit sa tête de mort dans ses mains d'*esquelette*, comme un homme perdu qui cherche à se rappeler une chose qui peut le sauver et qui ne se la rappelle pas! Une espèce de *courroux* lui creva dans la poitrine..." (248). Here we have an illustration for the 1884 serialized reprint of *L'Ensorcelée* by "La Vie populaire."

Introspection versus Dissection

As we have noted, Barbey d'Aureville, Mérimée, Régnier, Rostand, and Leroux did not participate in the mainstream of literary practice during the last half of the nineteenth century. Their texts tended to pit fantastic elements against the realism and positivism of the age. While their works' fantastic elements could be explained in scientific or psychoanalytic terms, there always remained an alternative explanation that bordered on the occult or supernatural. As the century moved to a close, more of the elite turned their back on popular literature and began to explore the zones of fearful asymmetry. Caricaturists poked fun at authors who dissected and inspected every aspect of relationships.



Lemot's *Flaubert Dissecting Emma Bovary*, was published in *La Parodie* (1869) and is currently housed in Princeton University Library.

Introspection versus Dissection

From the comfort of the late twentieth century, it is hard to imagine parlor art that depicted dissection or drowning; however at the end of the nineteenth century such drawings and paintings were collected and displayed in some bourgeois homes, attesting to the popularity and fascination with the female body and the psyche of the New Woman.



One of the best known paintings of this genre depicts the German anatomist J. C. G. Lucae dissecting the corpse of a drowned woman. Of note is the way the examining physician is lifting a sheet of skin as if he is removing a veil from the young victim's body to reveal unknown secrets. The painting was created by J. H. Hasselhorst in 1864 and is entitled: *J. C. G. Lucae and His Assistants Dissecting a Female Cadaver*.

Introspection versus Dissection

Fascination with the female psyche and its hysterical manifestations was not limited to France and its neighbor Germany. In England the pre-Raphaelites were exploring the haunting beauty of women, who lose themselves in self-absorption and madness. One of the best known illustrations of the movement is portrayed in Millais's *Ophelia Drowning*.



In this remarkable oil we find the young heroine floating face-up. Her hands and arms are stretched out slightly in supplication. Their positioning recall the outstretched arms of the crucified Christ, although they are not fully extended and therefore are more reductive in tone and presentation.

Introspection versus Dissection

Gustav Klimt was also touched by the *fin-de-siècle* attraction to the workings of the female psyche and its expression via the symbols of water and death. The New Woman seemed to float in a nebulous sphere, surrounded by temptations and traditional duties. In Klimt's murals for the Vienna School of Medicine, we find some striking examples of this popular theme.



Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*

Marina Warner has stated that "the stage drama when it is meant to do more than entertain is a metacommentary, explicit or implicit, witting or unwitting of its social context (wars, revolutions, scandals, institutional changes)" (*From Beast to Blonde* 16). Given these parameters, one might read Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* in a new light. Written to display the comedic (and tiradic) gifts of Constant Coquelin, the play preys upon the growing patriotism of the public who craved a departure from the ponderous works of Chekov and Strindberg.



C'est à l'âme de Cyrano que je voudrais dédier ce poème.
Mais puisqu'elle a passé en vous,
Coquelin, c'est à vous que je le dédie.
(Edmond Rostand, Dedication, *Cyrano de Bergerac*)

Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*

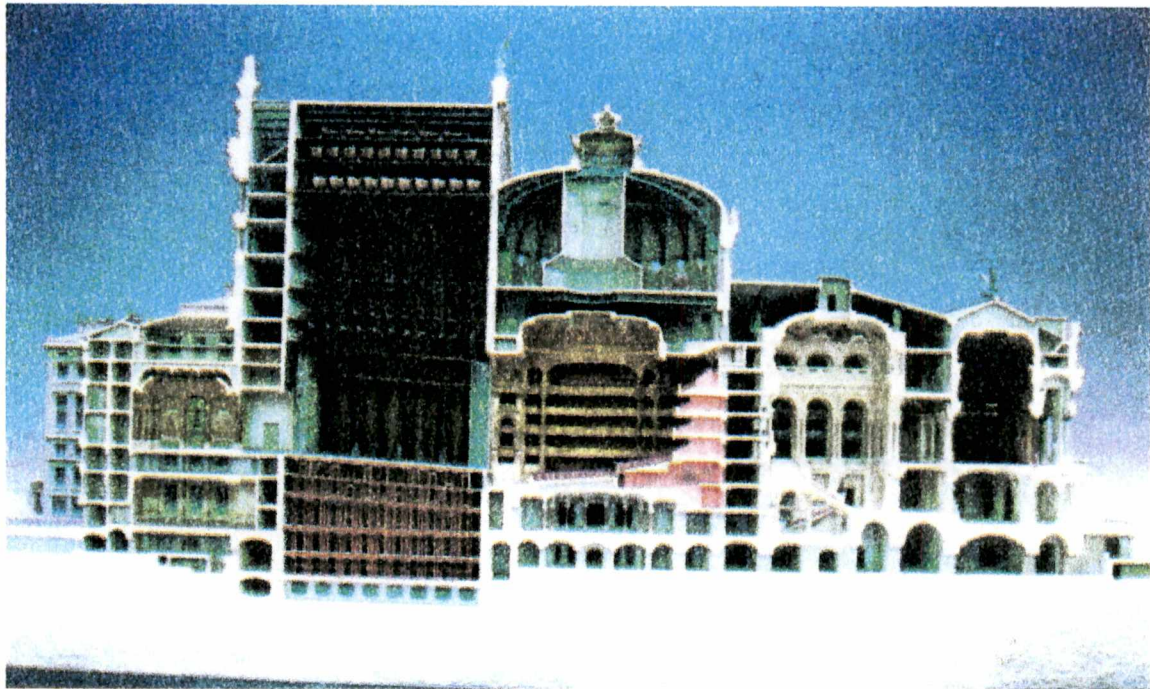
Rostand's portrait of a hero who is marked by his suffering and inferiority complexes attracted the accolades of a public who found in this character a symbol of the lover and warrior they sought to defend their nation confronted by a formidable enemy like Germany. A growing sense of insecurity stimulated public opinion to seek new heroes who might represent them on the playing fields as well as the battlefields.



CYRANO: Réfléchis, voyons. Il m'interdit
Le rêve d'être aimé même par une laide,
Ce nez que d'un quart d'heure en tous lieux, me précède;
Alors, moi, j'aime qui? . . . Mais cela va de soi!
J'aime. . . mais c'est forcé! . . . la plus belle qui soit!
(Act I, Scene 5 82).

Private Spaces in Public Places

According to Littré, the term “vie privée” was coined in the 1830s by Talleyrand, Royer-Collard or Stendhal to indicate an area in a home or society where life could be lived behind walls. In the 1880s, the dominant classes made sure that they could extend their privacy to public places; hence the establishment of theater loges, private cabins, first-class compartments, etc. Such new private spaces in public places assured that there would be no indiscriminate mingling of people from different classes and backgrounds. The organization and design of Garnier’s Académie de Musique witness French society’s penchant for honeycombs of privacy and secrecy.



A model of Charles Garnier’s Opera House currently displayed in the Orsay Museum, Paris demonstrates the extraordinary ability of an architect to create public and private spaces throughout the building. The layout of this building explains why Christine Daaé’s tour of her empire with Raoul was so extraordinary for these two young people in love. “Elle le promène ainsi dans tout son empire, qui était factice, mais immense, s’étendant sur dix-sept étages du rez-de chaussée jusqu’au faite et habité par une armée de sujets. Elle passait au milieu d’eux comme une reine populaire . . .” (213).

Gaston Leroux's Phantom of the Opera

In spite of his apparently humble birth (he was the son of a mason), Erik the Opera Ghost acquired sufficient fortune to create a comfortable cavern well below the city streets which he filled with middle-class necessities. His attire was *de rigueur* what all the fashionable men wore to the Opera or on the town. André Castaigne captured his essence in his original watercolors for the 1910 edition of Leroux's *Fantôme de l'Opéra*.



The book jacket for Gaston Leroux's 1910 edition of *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* created by André Castaigne.

Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera*

André Castaigne's watercolors give us a good idea of the public's sense of style during France's Belle Epoque. His textures and colors coupled with the detail reveal how the fashionable people dressed, what items they held dear, and the decors with which they surrounded themselves.



This image reminds us of the last scenes between Christine Daaé and Erik as the phantom awaits her life or death decision. "Il délire et il a arraché son masque et ses yeux d'or lancent des flammes! Et il ne fait que rire! . . . Il m'a dit en riant, comme un démon ivre: 'Cinq minutes! Je te laisse seule à cause de ta pudeur bien connue! . . .'" (*Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* 458). The illustration comes from the University of Virginia's e-text archives.

Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera*

Gaston Leroux's 1910 edition was conceived as a popular tale of mystery and romance. Leroux, a journalist for the *Matin*, was one of the last great serial writers of the nineteenth century. His casual style delighted the city dweller and captured the imagination of his readers, who could not wait to see what would happen next to their favorite heroes and villains. The world of Leroux is populated with real and fantastic figures, who are presented side by side and played off one another in fugues of passion, treachery, and conceit.



André Castaigne's *Bal masqué* presents a stirring view of the society of the Belle Epoque that sought its entertainment in opulent surroundings like Garnier's Opera House. One can sense the surprise and wonder of the guests as they watch the Mask of Red Death pass through their midst: "L'homme à la tête de mort, au chapeau à plumes et au vêtement écarlate traînait derrière lui un immense manteau au velours rouge dont la flamme s'allongeait royalement sur le parquet . . ." (181).

Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera*

One of Castaigne's most interesting artistic interpretations of Leroux's text is found in this watercolor that depicts the polarity of Christine Daaé two suitors. The painting expresses ambiguity and ambivalence as it evokes the violent passions of the love triangle. One can sense the dissonance between the opposites as one examines the point of view (above and below, male and female, culture and nature). The ambivalence comes from the presence of depictive elements that endow the image with a duality of symbolic power while the ambiguity is represented by a blurring of edges in what is being expressed.



"L'ombre derrière eux, toujours fidèle à leurs pas, avait surgi, s'aplatissant sur les toits, s'allongeant avec des mouvements d'ailes noires, aux carrefours des ruelles, tournant autour des bassins, contournant, silencieux, les dômes; et les malheureux enfants ne se doutèrent point de sa présence, quand ils s'assirent enfin confiants, sous la haute protection d'Apollon, qui dressait de son geste de bronze, sa prodigieuse lyre, au coeur d'un ciel en feu" (221-22). University of Virginia e-text image.

Twentieth-Century Visions Of Beauty and the Beast

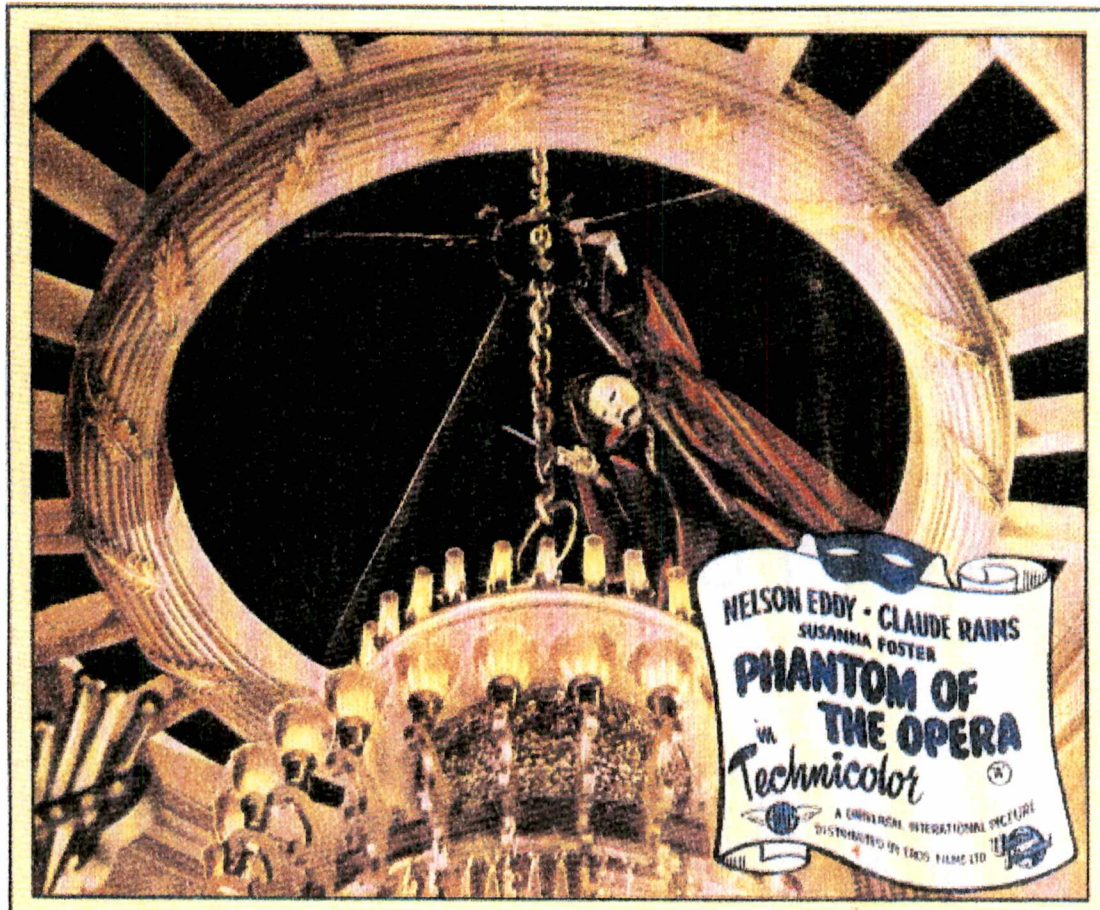
In 1922 Carl Laemmle met Gaston Leroux while on vacation in Europe. The two men shared a great interest in film. Leroux showed him Garnier's Opera House and discussed its potential as a Hollywood set. Sensing Laemmle's interest, the *Matin* journalist gave his American friend a copy of *The Phantom of the Opera*. Three years later Laemmle released his film version of the novel and Gaston Leroux's work became a commercial and popular success, spawning multiple film versions and theatrical productions.



A lobby card for the Universal film version of Leroux's novel starring Lon Chaney in the title role. Many have proclaimed Chaney as the first and greatest phantom.

Twentieth-Century Visions Of Beauty and the Beast

In 1943 Universal decided to release a new version of its silent film classic, *The Phantom of the Opera*, starring Nelson Eddy and Claude Rains. Universal completely rewrote the Leroux story line hoping to update it for the war torn world. Christine Daaé would now have two earthly suitors, Anatole and Raoul and an Opera Ghost, Erique. When the Phantom is killed by a rock fall, Christine returns to the Opera House with Anatole and Raoul. At supper she tells them that she has decided to opt for a career in the theatre over marriage with either of them. The men leave together for a night on the town.



Here Erique is seen cutting the chain over the auditorium and bringing the house down because management has refused to let Christine sing.

The Twentieth-Century Visions Of Beauty and the Beast

Like the twenty-five years after the French Revolution, at the end of the First World War there was a mass analysis of what had occurred, one that asked why the horror of war should once more flood a nation with violence and death and terror. The Beauty and the Beast motif faded into the relics of the past as realism and surrealism lunged the twentieth century forward. Unfortunately, the world was to suffer yet another World War. As this second conflict ended and the French sought to rebuild their nation, Jean Cocteau revisited France's rich fairy tale heritage to author a modern Beauty and the Beast for man to ponder because he believed that it was the artist's duty to "create an organism having a life of its own drawn from life, and not destined to surprise, to please or to displease, but to arouse secret feelings in reaction to certain signs which represent beauty for some, ugliness and deformity for others" (*Démarche d'un poète*).



To his retelling of Beaumont's tale Cocteau adds a handsome suitor, the n'er-do-well Avenant. Ugly and repulsive as the Beast may be, Avenant is comely and attractive, but Beauty is not ready to give herself to any man. She rejects Avenant's proposal of marriage, claiming that her father needs her; however, by the end of the film, Beauty chooses the Beast, who in turn exchanges death and appearances with Avenant.

Twentieth-Century Visions Of Beauty and the Beast

In the late 1980s, Ron Koslow developed a pilot for CBS called *Beauty and the Beast* that he envisioned would attract viewers from all segments of the viewing audience with its blend of romance, fairy tale, action and adventure. In actuality, the program attracted only a solid demographic audience of females who sought affirmation in the coupling of a poetic and gentle beast with a tough New York district attorney. Never was it a question of the Beast transforming into a prince. In his subterranean world he was the heir apparent to a utopian world of peace and harmony, created during the witch hunts of the 1950s.



Vincent and Catherine in a promotional pose for one of the first episodes of the CBS series, 1988.

Twentieth-Century Visions Of Beauty and the Beast

Andrew Lloyd Webber worked for a number of years to develop a musical version of Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera*. Starting with an English translation of the 1910 novel, he captured the essence of Leroux's work while creating a rock idiom for its score. Written to showcase the vocal talents of his wife, Sarah Brightman, the musical's continued success has defied all predictions and made international stars of its players.



In this scene, Christine removes Erik's mask and unleashes the beast:
ERIK (sings): Damn you! You little prying Pandora! You little demon — is this what you wanted to see? Curse you! You little lying Delilah! You little viper! Now you cannot ever be free! (1.6.21).

**Twentieth-Century Visions
Of Beauty and the Beast**

The *Phantom of the Opera's* popular appeal seemed tied to the sentimental music created by Webber and Hart, who articulated and modulated the passions of an age not unlike the creators' fin-de-siècle where the other was feared and admired for his propensity to defy the dominant ideology and exist outside the boundaries of society.



ERIK: I have brought you to the sweet music's throne. . . to this kingdom where all must pay homage to music. . . music. . . You have come here, for one purpose, and one alone. . . Since the moment I first heard you sing, I have needed you with me, to serve me, to sing, for my music. . . my music (1.5.19).

Twentieth-Century Visions Of Beauty and the Beast

In 1991 Walt Disney studios released an animated version of *Beauty and the Beast* that met with immediate international acclaim, garnishing multiple cinemographic awards, including a nomination for the Best Picture of the year. In this retelling of the fairy tale we find a more emancipated female who chooses marriage on her own terms, rejecting Gaston, the local bully/handsome town suitor for a Beast whose acculturation only lacks a female's taming touch.



As a result of her sympathetic tutoring, the Beast is attired and groomed into a more presentable suitor and figure of romantic interest. Once transformed into the prince, the hero is only rendered acceptable to Belle when she finds her Beast locked deep in the prince's eyes.

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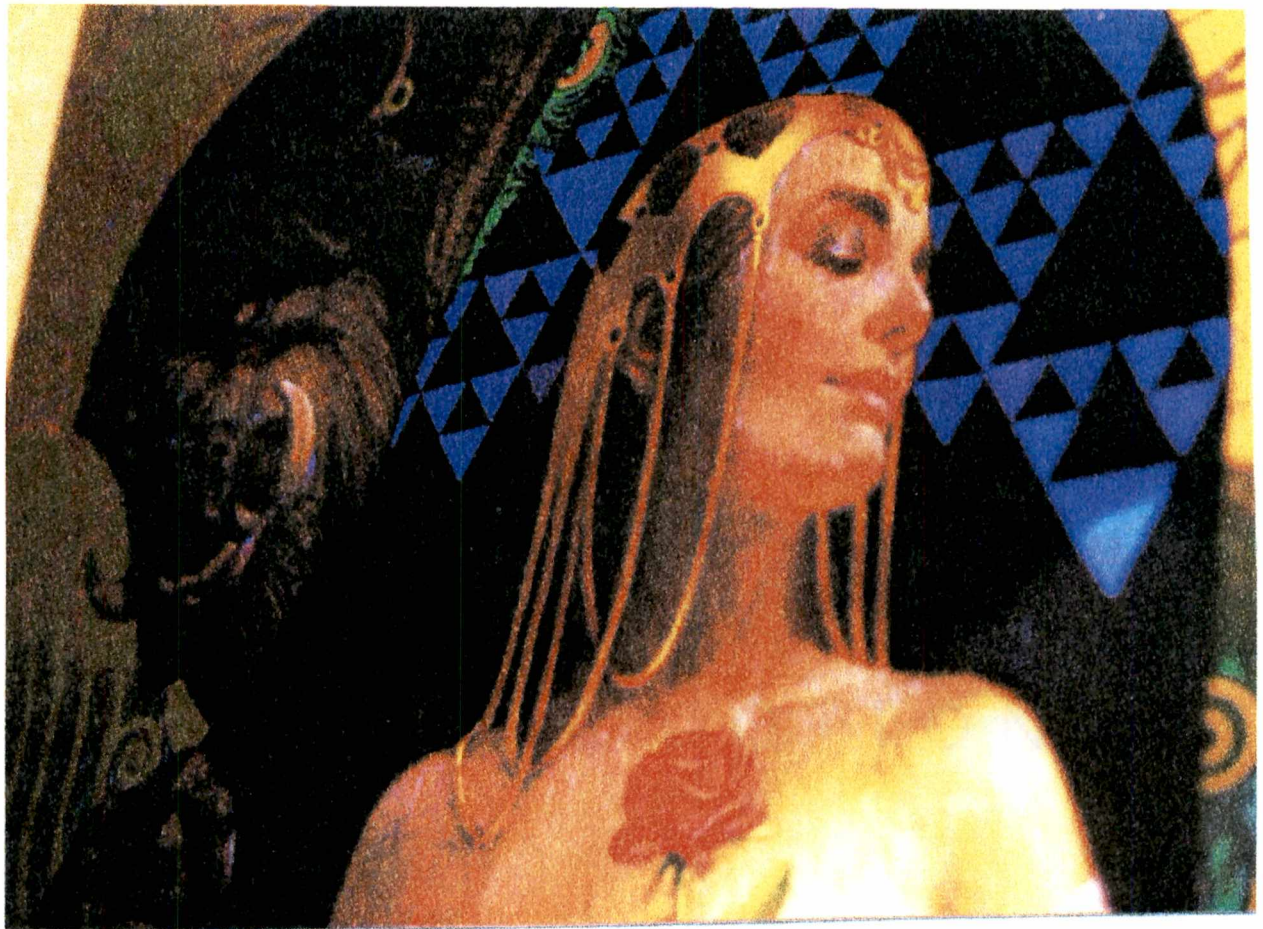
The popular success of their cartoon prompted Disney Studios to adapt their award-winning animated classic to the stage. In 1994, their revamped *Beauty and the Beast* dazzled Broadway with extraordinary costumes and make-up that rendered pen and ink characters into flesh and blood. The play contained songs that were originally cut from the film release. The additional score was intended to add more depth to the characters of Belle and Beast.



As the Beast lies dying in her arms, Belle confesses her love and acceptance of his otherness. The tragic scene is soon transformed to a joyous occasion as the Beast assumes his human form and claims his beloved for princess.

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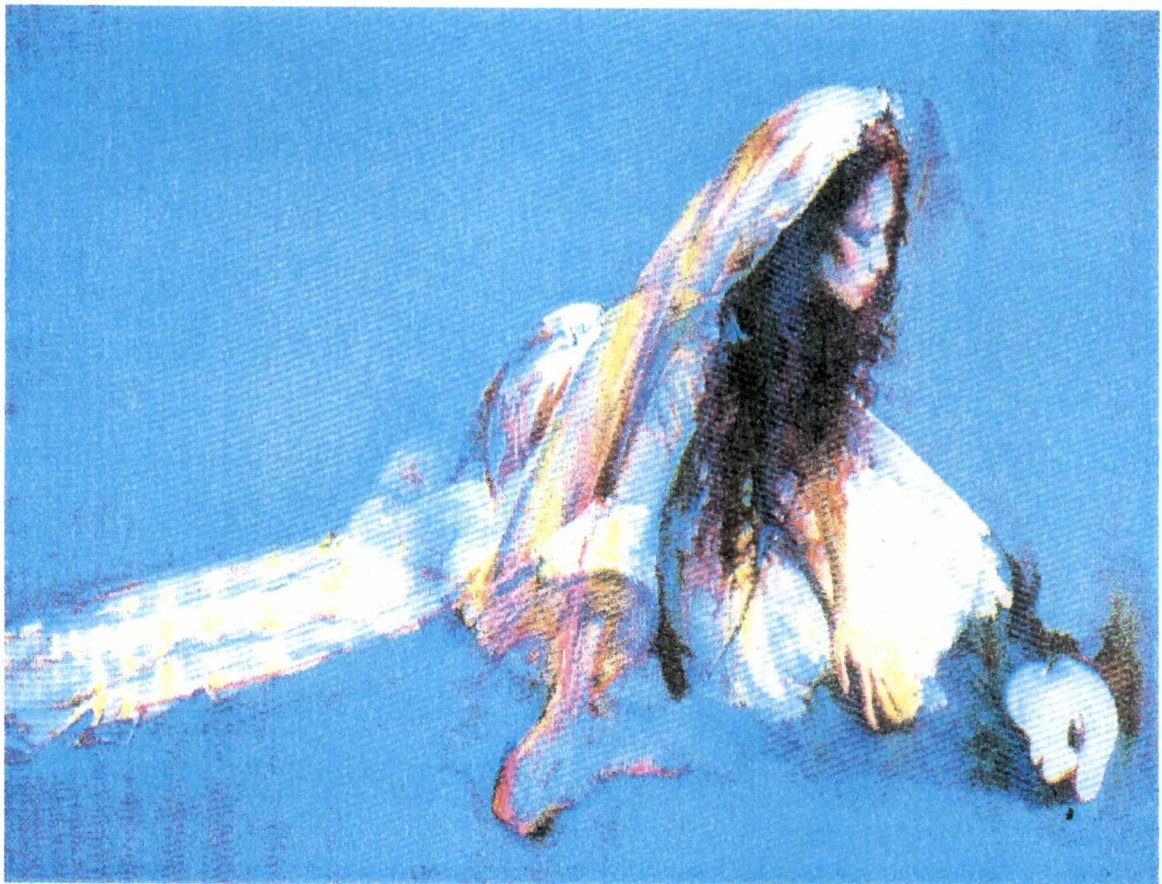
With the popularity of the musical and animated versions of *Beauty and the Beast* and the *Phantom of the Opera* came the desire to capitalize upon the commercial potential of the films and theatrical renditions of the works. Graphic artists of some renown turned their attentions to capturing the essence of the beloved characters. Thomas Blackshear II created a limited edition print that not only presented his *art nouveau* vision of the Beauty and the Beast motif but also illustrated his perceived status as the beast with the beautiful wife.



Reviewing his experiences as an African-American graphic artist, Blackshear portrayed himself as a hulking mass who was civilized by the love and affection of a beautiful woman — his wife — the model for Beauty in this creation.

**Twentieth-Century Visions
Of Beauty and the Beast**

Robert Heindel who has been called “the Degas of our time” was invited by Andrew Lloyd Webber to paint the London production of *The Phantom of the Opera*. To complete the request, Heindel created a behind-the-scenes look at the stage musical in oil, pastel, and conte crayon. The results are an interesting study of movement and perspective.



In this pastel, entitled *The End of Innocence*, Heindel captures the moment when Christine removes the mask of the Phantom and unleashes the mad creature of the cavern. Dressed in the gown that Erik had selected for her, Christine studies the mask that had protected her from the wrath of her suitor.

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The popularity of Heindel's work prompted other graphic artists to bid for the right to capture select scenes from the American production of *The Phantom of the Opera*. Bradley J. Parrish was selected to render his artistic interpretations of the musical comedy, proving to be the more popular master of the theatrical production with some dozen works published and printed for the public.



Bradley Parrish's visions of the Phantom and Christine such as this one entitled "Love's Pursuit" seem to target the more romantic and sentimental moments of their existence together. His subtle lines and shadings in the pastel hint at the couple's tender regard for one another. This scene is imagined; it did not occur within Webber's libretto. It envisions an imaginary rendez-vous between the Phantom and Christine in her dressing room after her triumphant evening at the Opera House.

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In 1996 Walt Disney Studios released their animated version of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. The full-length cartoon proved popular among children and adults in spite of its very liberal rewrite of Victor Hugo's text. The descendants of Hugo were dismayed to discover that Disney did not choose to note anywhere in the credits that their story came from their great-great-grandfather's work, awarding a token nod to the creator by naming two gargoyles, Victor and Hugo.



To keep with their tradition of happily ever after, Disney Studios rewrote Hugo's tragic ending and permitted Quasimodo, Esmeralda, and Phoebus to become close friends and share in further adventures together with their gargoyle friends.

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Inspired by Victor Hugo's novel, Plamondon adopted the text to reflect the social realities of 1998 and the new millennium. The set barely hints of the medieval setting of the play with its iron girders and concrete walls and costuming; however there remain subtle hints of the cathedral depicted in the gigantic gargoyles that appear on stage from time to time.



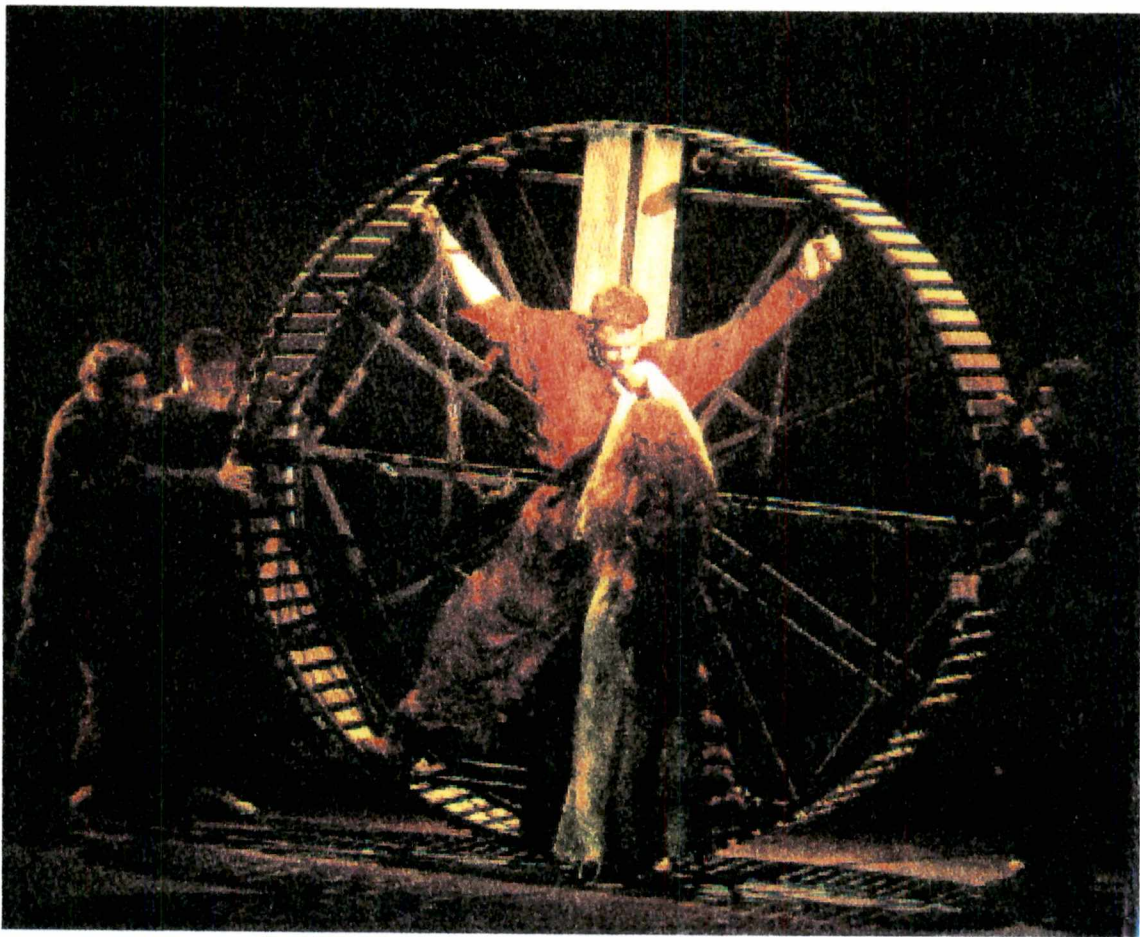
Quasimodo is the spokesperson for the disenfranchised of the world created by Plamondon. He seems to recognize and comprehend the injustice and prejudice that is leveled at the other, the foreigner, the homeless. In "Dieu que le monde est injuste," he laments:

Ma laideur est une insulte
A ta beauté insolente
Une erreur de la nature
Qui ne me fut pas aimante

Dieu que le monde est
injuste
Notre lot n'est pas le leur
Nous n'avons pas de fortune
Mais eux, ont-ils donc un
coeur? (*Notre-Dame de Paris*
2.7).

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The tragedy of an existence as the other has marked all the principal characters and only the humble bellringer seems to be aware of how desperate their plight is. Loyal to the master who saved him from certain death because of his deformities, the hunchback does whatever Frolo asks of him. As a result of his master's bidding, he is sentenced to the pillory.



In "A Boire!" the hunchback calls upon the spectators to help him.

QUASIMODO: Pitié pour le pauvre Quasimodo
Qui porte déjà sur son dos
Tous les malheurs du monde
Et qui ne vous demande
Qu'une goutte d'eau (1.5).

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In the end all of Quasimodo's attempts to save the beautiful gypsy are futile. Frollo delivers her to the executioner because "elle n'a pas voulu de moi." The hunchback throws his master to the stones below then goes to get the body of his beloved so that in eternity their two souls may be joined.



QUASIMODO: Quand les années auront passé
On trouvera sous terre
Nous deux esquelettes enlacés
Pour dire à l'univers
Combien Quasimodo aimait
Esmeralda la zingara . . . (2.9).

Female fans of *Beauty and the Beast: The Series* have made much of the mysterious bond that exists between Catherine and Vincent. Sandy C. Shelton, who created this charcoal image of the couple entitled "No Fear," depicts their communality by portraying the hero and heroine as dualities or extension of one another. It is interesting to note that Vincent is positioned slightly higher than Catherine, reflecting in part his physical superiority but also Shelton's conditioned response to the patriarchy. Nevertheless, the drawing does move the Beauty to the foreground and relegates the Beast to the background.



The positioning of the gazes are also of interest as Catherine stares forward and Vincent's glance is rendered slightly askew, suggesting the deflected male gaze as the couples' minds and spirits meld together in synchronic union. Vincent's facial characteristics, portrayed clearly as animalistic, are softer and less edged than those of Catherine, who appears more hardened, more troubled by what she sees ahead of her. These artistic manifestations suggest that the protagonists lead very different existences and that their worlds can be seen in their faces.

During the twentieth century, fan appropriations of the Beauty and the Beast motif have increased as the theme is reworked for television, film, and the stage. Fan poaching of the motif often goes beyond the script(s) envisioned by the creators of the adaptations to take on a life of its own as is evidenced by this drawing created by Rita Terrell.



In this image, Ms. Terrell clearly rejects the tragic ending of Vincent and Catherine's romance and gives them a life together with their son and newborn twins. By all appearances, Catherine has relinquished her life above ground to live with Vincent in his Utopian world beneath the subway lines of New York. Vincent continues to support Catherine in all things as he provides care to the children and she sleeps.

Patricia A. McCoy was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. She attended public and private schools throughout the Northeast and South as her family moved from hither and yon in pursuit of the American Dream. In 1970 she graduated from Pinecrest High School. In June, 1972, she received her Associate of Arts from Sandhills Community College. In March, 1972, she became the first undergraduate in the state of North Carolina to participate in the Rotary Foundation's Undergraduate Scholarship program. From 1973 to 1974, she studied at the University of Besançon, France. In August, 1974, Ms. McCoy received her Bachelor of Arts from Western Carolina University. After working one year at Sandhills Community College, she began her graduate studies at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, from which she earned a Masters of Arts in May, 1978. Ms. McCoy has pursued other studies at Emory University and University of Paris. In July, 1993, she entered the University of Tennessee to pursue her Doctorate of Philosophy. The doctoral degree was awarded to her in December, 1999.

Dr. McCoy is presently working at the Alabama School of Mathematics and Science in Mobile, Alabama, where she teaches French and Spanish.