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Fictions of Femininity:
Fin-de-Siècle Representations of Hysteria

By
Margaret Ann Simmons

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

FICTIONS OF FEMININITY:
FIN-DE-SIÈCLE REPRESENTATIONS OF HYSTERIA

By

Margaret Ann Simmons

Advisor: Professor Vincent Crapanzano

This dissertation studies works by male authors who were engaged in describing and characterizing female hysteria at the turn of the last century. The dissertation argues that hysteria is a literary and cultural trope for the ways in which culture perceives and characterizes women. The dissertation studies hysteria as a way of understanding how the fin-de-siècle questioned language, representation and feminine sexuality.

The texts include Freud and Breuer's Studies on Hysteria; Klimt's Beethoven Frieze and portraits of upper-class women and working girls; Hofmannsthal's Elektra, and "Charcot's hysterics" in Salpêtrière, with a look at Breton's use of madness in Nadja. The dissertation analyzes two Goncourt brothers' novels, Germinie Lacerteux and La Fille Elisa, and their naturalist depictions of hysteria and sexuality. The "decadent" text of J.-K. Huysmanns' Là-Bas and its relationship to Barbey D'Aurevilly's "La Vengeance d'une Femme" is also studied. The last chapter is a reading of Wedekind's Lulu: Erdgeist und Die Büchse der Pandora.

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I. Introduction

European turn-of-the-century art and literature --both "high" and "low" -- were fascinated with questions of female sexuality. Stereotypes of women's sexually extravagant behavior or cathartic withdrawal excited popular imagination, and they were linked in artistic representations to imagined or real cases of hysteria. Hysteria was portrayed and codified through pictorial images, in theatrical presentations, in literary descriptions and medical discourses that circulated widely within artistic and scientific institutions. The discourses on hysteria were linked to female sexuality by artists at the juncture of two periods, the decadent period of the 1890's, which nostalgically looked back to the nineteenth century quickly drawing to close, and the initiatory moments of the modernist period, with its repudiation of the past. The diversely represented image of the hysteric indicates a preoccupation at the turn-of-the-century with defining and understanding the feminine in terms of sexuality and its pathological effects.

The parallel between the proliferation of texts on hysteria at the turn of the last century and at the end of this one indicates a continued fascination with feminine sexuality. According to one estimation, between the years of 1800 and 1893, more than 37,000 documents were devoted to

hysteria in France alone, and there was a significant number of papers written about the disease in Germany, England and Austria as well.¹ A century later, especially within the last five to ten years, the number of books and monographs about hysteria has multiplied; seminars and lectures, dissertations and papers increasingly take hysteria as a topic.² There is a significant difference in the perspectives of the last century and our own, however. At the end of the nineteenth century, works on hysteria were written primarily by male physicians who scrutinized the female body. Today, the field is dominated by women who take the inquiry of hysteria itself or the hysteric's experience of her illness as their subject.

My understanding of hysteria does not dismiss it as an illness, but I consider hysteria to be a largely nineteenth century invention, which, from our late twentieth century perspective, can be understood as a historical and literary construct. My dissertation investigates how male authors supplemented medical terminology with their own understanding of hysteria and then disseminated this hybrid trope or "figure" of hysteria through their own writings.³ (Thus I do not account for women's experience of hysteria in the dissertation.)

On this account, hysteria is a product of male phantasy as it is implemented within the text. More specifically, my dissertation studies hysteria as a literary occurrence at

the turn of the last century and sees hysteria as a manifestation of modernism's "speech crisis," in which the efficacy of language to signify experience and truth was questioned. Further, because hysteria is a visual theatricalization of symptoms, I emphasize the dialectic between subject and object in both the conceptualization and performance of hysteria. There is a problem contained in the idea of theatricalization and hysteria, however. One view of acting has it that the actress is a medium for the external manifestation and expression of inner qualities and emotions, and she is analogous to the hysteric in just that way. The body is the means for the display of spiritual or non-material ideas. This dualism between an abstract quality separated from the materiality of its existence is similar to the concept of writing taken by the French philosopher Derrida. Derrida takes writing as both metaphor and example of the way in which we separate abstract qualities (the "signifier" of language) from its materiality (the "signified"). This dualism, he claims, underlies our thinking not just about language, but also about reality in general, including the ways in which we categorize and represent women (1976). In both writing and the hysteric as body, the material form is equated with death, and as I show in the following chapters, the hysteric's representation is ultimately that of a materiality extinguished within the texts. The female body and sexuality are yet again equated

with a frightening power which the male narrator tries to control.

These are the major themes and approaches that I consider in the following chapters: in Chapter II, Klimt's "Beethoven Frieze" and some of his female portraits introduce the relationship between hysteria and vision. Hofmannsthal's drama Elektra and its relationship to Anna O. is discussed in Chapter III. With Chapter IV, I turn to Paris and discuss "Charcot's" hysterics in the Paris asylum of la Salpêtrière, and Breton's celebration of them. "La Vengeance d'une femme," a short story by the French decadent Barbey d'Aurevilly, is compared to J.-K. Huysman's Là-Bas in Chapter V. Chapter VI focuses on two novels by the Goncourt brothers, Germinie Lacerteux and La Fille Élisa in their depiction of the working class hysteric and prostitute. With the last chapter, I return to the German-speaking stage with Wedekind's Lulu, a play begun by the writer in Paris and first produced in Vienna.

Although the isolated symptoms of hysteria persist, the trope of hysteria remains a way for us to understand and thematize female sexuality and culture from the late nineteenth century. A renewed engagement with hysteria has come from the feminist investigation into sexuality and literary, psychoanalytic, and cultural representations of the "feminine." Clair Kahane has remarked that the hysteric is a recent trope for the female body, since the hysteric

speaks a truth through her body that language does not sanction (1988). Hysteria represents -- indeed enacts -- cultural conflicts between the body, as material and sexual object, and abstract thinking and knowledge. The hysteric's symptoms attest to the power of an abstract law that has been incorporated into physical reality and to the fact that desire is not allowed conscious expression. The symptoms present the power of repression -- of thought and its effect. The body in question, the female sexualized body, seems opposed to a scientific investigation that believes itself objective. The hysteric does not study herself, rather she offers up her body and her emotions to an examination that strives to remain outside of the symptoms' "contagion" by describing, hypnotizing, and experimenting on the hysteric. A major strategy of feminism is to question the objectivity of any disinterested enquiry and to argue that any investigation (including its own) has some stake in the outcome. This implies that the investigator's position is necessarily subjective and that the truth (about women, for example) is so only from a specific, invested perspective. Feminism is thus particularly sensitive to ways in which dominant cultural practices represent or control women, and to the means with which this representation is masked as natural. Seen in this light, hysteria is both a sign of rebellion against patriarchal structures as well as the effect of their internalization.

Feminism and psychoanalysis are the primary lenses through which I will study hysteria in this dissertation. According to feminist theorist Judith Roof, a feminist psychoanalysis that might inform a critical work is a reading in which a variety of texts are used.

Because they serve so well as symptoms, literary, cinematic, and psychoanalytic texts have provided a primary setting for the feminist psychoanalytic efforts to understand the construction of a gendered subject, to trace the operations of a system of representations which tends to return all to an opposition of presence and lack, [and] to define questions of sexual difference and sexuality, ... (Roof and Feldstein 3).

In the texts that I read, the female body is imagined in ways which generate the narrative, its anxiety and closure. At different points in each text, difference and gender become confused, and it is here that representation becomes problematical within the text.

This problematic of female representation is evidenced further by the fact that Freud himself changed his views on hysteria, and in the course of his theorizing he moved further away from the visual and corporeal aspects of the disease. In Studies on Hysteria, he argues that a predisposition towards conversion is the element necessary for hysteria. For Freud, the female body and its display of

symptoms is theoretically required and most interesting. Later, however, in Dora and other works, such as Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, he argues that hysteria is based more upon the types of identification the hysteric makes, whether or not they manifest themselves in somatic symptoms (Adams 181). As Freud moves away from his interest in conversion symptoms and in the body itself, he becomes more interested in the "phantasies which give rise to the symptoms" (148) -- those phantasies of desire that the hysteric cannot symbolize. In the end, hysteria centers on the woman's sexual identification. What both accounts of hysteria still maintain is a relationship between sexual identity, desire and repression, although in Freud's later accounts the connections among them become increasingly complex.

I. Hysteria and Modernism at Fin-de-Siècle

What the nineteenth and early twentieth century called hysteria no longer exists as a clinical entity. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM IV), hysteria has largely been replaced by "hysterical personality disorder" and "multiple personality disorder."⁴ The physical symptoms, so characteristic of the earlier descriptions of the disease, have been separated into the now distinct categories of somatic disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder; anorexia, a former symptom, is a

disease in its own right. If all the symptoms still exist, how is it possible that the disorder no longer exists?

It may seem contradictory to argue that women really experienced a group of symptoms that was called hysteria and that simultaneously their malady was a construct of culture. The "disappearance" of hysteria results more from our changed perspectives about women and certain deviant behaviors than just a refinement of classifications, as the medical establishment argues. Even during hysteria's heyday -- that is, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries -- its symptoms were grouped together in particular ways in order to "see" hysteria. Freud in Vienna and Hippolyte Bernheim in France, for example, both claimed never to have seen the four stages of hysteria that Charcot believed necessary to categorize the disease.⁵ While women today may suffer symptoms similar to hysteria, I would argue both that their experience and their understanding of those symptoms do not correspond to those of nineteenth century women.⁶ Certainly, the medical establishment and the culture at large no longer perceives women's experience in the same way.

In a similar way, David Halperin has argued in One Hundred Years of Homosexuality that the way in which we perceive homosexuality cannot be easily compared to the ways in which it was understood even a century ago when the term first gained currency. Our modern conception of

homosexuality as a marker of individuality and as a construction of our personalities is a recent "invention" that follows upon the establishment of the scientific inquiry of sexuality, itself an invention (Halperin, 1990). His remarks about sexuality could apply as equally to hysteria as to homosexuality. He argues that "sexuality" implies a

specifically sexual dimension of the human personality, a characterological seat within the individual of sexual acts, desires, and pleasures -- a determinate source from which all sexual expression proceeds. Whether or not such a distinct and unified psychophysical entity actually exists, homosexuality (like heterosexuality, in this respect) necessarily assumes that it does: it posits sexuality as a constitutive principle of the self. Sexuality in this sense is not a purely descriptive term ... Rather, it serves to interpret and to organize human experience, and it performs quite a lot of conceptual work (24-25).

My understanding of hysteria follows much of what Halperin says of homosexuality in particular and sexuality in general. Hysteria in the late nineteenth century was a structure that constituted and articulated women's behavior as a primary effect of their "feminine" sexuality, more than

from any other cause. Hysteria was a way of codifying women's behavior within new categories of sexuality, and offered a frame in which the bourgeois articulated specific sexual and moral conduct and experience. Although most physicians disagreed with Freud's "pan"-sexualization of the etiological origins of neurosis and hysteria, there was always a private knowledge about the sexual "origin" of hysteria.⁷

The "invention" of female sexuality led to disorders based on it, and could swing wildly either way: either a lack of feminine sexual desire (frigidity) or its excessive perversion (nymphomania and prostitution), for example, were seen as "hysterical" disorders. And although the proletarian woman was over-represented in France as the hysteric, it was the Viennese bourgeois and upper-class woman who was generally viewed as hysteric. The feature common to both classes of women was an "innate" female sexuality, a characteristic which class standing either moderated or exacerbated, according to different medical, literary or critical discourses (Gilman, 1985).⁸ The relation between feminine sexuality and hysteria was accepted and promulgated by medical doctors, writers, artists and philosophers. Perhaps because our view of feminine sexuality in relation to other cultural phenomena has changed, we no longer need to see hysteria as the primary category of a deviant feminine sexuality or

behavior.

Other groups were disparaged as hysterics, too, at the turn-of-the-century. Male avant-garde artists were frequently labeled hysterical by cultural conservatives because of their literary perspective, their use of language, style and their concerns with ornamentation. Hysteria was linked to a particular view of femininity (Le Rider 245).⁹ The "feminine" qualities, usually attributed to bourgeois or upper-class women, were considered by many critics of modernism to characterize the male avant-garde artist or dandy. For example, the Viennese literary critic Hans Sittenberger caustically observed that, "Their ideal is the condition of feminine enervation" (23-24). More recently, Rita Felski has convincingly argued that the aristocratic male avant-garde writer was identical to

... traits the dominant ideologies of his day identified with women: passivity, languidness, vanity, hypersensitivity, a love of fashion and ornamentation. Spending much of his time in an interior, private space codified as feminine rather than in the public sphere of work and politics, he devotes himself to the cultivation of style and to the appreciation of life as an aesthetic phenomenon (Felski 1095).

This "feminization" of "high" culture and cultural production included several "symptoms" that coincide with

those of early modernism in general: an aesthetics of narcissism and solipsism; rarified literary language and subject matter; the dandy as exemplar of a new literary and social type; the belief in the actual, pathological degeneration of the artist, woman and working class; the mechanization of every-day experience; the break-down of social and political systems, and so on.

Nietzsche, echoing Paul Bourget's Décadence, explicitly connected hysteria and "decadent" artistic works in The Case of Wagner, where he says of Wagner and his music: "Wagner's art is sick. The problems he presents on the stage -- all of them problems of hysterics -- the convulsive nature of his affects, his overexcited sensibility, his taste that required ever stronger spices, his instability which he dressed up as principles, ... all of this taken together represents a profile of sickness that permits no further doubt. *Wagner est une névrose*" (166).

The rapid and widespread use of the term hysteria belies the fact that it was not always used to describe "degenerate" and feminine traits, nor was it always employed in a negative sense. Although hysteria has been recognized as a curious and incomprehensible medical condition since ancient Greece, where it was considered a disturbance of the woman's uterus ("hyster," hence the term hysteria), it was not until the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that hysteria became a medical entity deemed worthy of lengthy

study. Parallel to the privileging of hysteria, women became the subjects of novels, and some female characters, most famously Emma Bovary from Flaubert's 1857 novel, Emma Bovary, are indisputable depictions of the hysteric. Not only did Flaubert create a literary hysteric, he was himself diagnosed as being one.¹⁰ The modernists' dissatisfaction with bourgeois capitalism and their increasing alienation from "popular" culture finds an echo in their representation of the hysteric, who rebels against restrictive roles and cultivates an excessively florid feminine persona. The artistic community found in the hysteric's perceived sexuality a strategy for resisting the newly consolidating bourgeois mentality, and writers forged a link between hysteria and their own creativity (Bernheimer, 1989). Baudelaire says of Emma Bovary that her qualities included "... imagination, decisiveness, a dandy's delight in domination [with] ... the sensitivity of the hysterical poet" (Bernheimer 132).¹¹ And stories by Barbey D'Aurevilly, for example, or Wedekind's Paris journal, epitomize the artistic and cultural milieu that unites the hysteric with creativity. Their productions represent the self-conscious artistic trope that linked the artist with the sexualized and hysterical woman.

Thus it seems that hysteria has a history of being used for a particular "project," and was used by the artist to interpret and give coherence -- even to justify -- his own

ideas. The artist used hysteria as an explanation for a certain way of being in the world. Somewhat in a similar fashion, psychoanalysis and feminism today use hysteria to interrogate the status of literary and medical texts at the turn-of-the-century. Yet today we are at a distance from the production and use of those nineteenth-century ideas of hysteria as an explanatory tool in their own right -- we use a "meta-hysterical" model to criticize the very notion of hysteria. That is, the way in which hysteria was part of a generalized view of the woman and femininity (a hysteria, one could say), leads us to question the "unconscious" cultural motives behind the production of ideas about hysteria. As such, those notions remain a privileged means for us to question sexuality and gender roles. Psychoanalysis and feminism then allow us to read hysteria as a way of interrogating the status quo.

II. Representation and Theater: Vorstellung and Darstellung

While it may be argued that the texts I have chosen are particularly univocal in their representations of women and hysteria, these texts are, nonetheless, representative of the thinking and writing at the turn-of-the century in which hysteria remains a deeply-structured element. Of the texts that I study in the following chapters, two, Elektra and Lulu are plays; one chapter deals with a series of paintings by Klimt, and one chapter discusses the use of hysterics as photographic subjects. It seems obvious that theater, or at

least the notion of theatricalization or presentation, is an important aspect of my understanding of hysteria.

Hysteria demands to be presented -- and presented to someone -- and is thus inherently theatrical. (It is also dramatic as well.) Theater, like hysteria, participates in a double play of actual presentation and representation. Representation, that is, necessitates an actual presentation. Representations of the object -- woman or hysteric -- verge on their actual presentation as the question of appearance and reality is raised. In this sense, hysteria, like realistic fiction and theater, very often make use of the woman or hysteric in order to understand or question just what representation is.

Analogous to the tension between representation and presentation in theatrical production is Freud's distinction between the two terms in his consideration of hysteria and language, "Vorstellung" and "Darstellung."¹² This distinction is vital, according to David-Menard. "Vorstellung" is the general term for "mental representation" or "idea", that is, the mental correlate of a word or its mental referent. "Vorstellung" is a *symbolization* of the absent represented object through linguistic and visual elements. Freud used "Darstellung," another term for representation, exclusively for dream work and hysterical symptoms. It is the "presentification" of the object, the "present-ness" of the object dreamt or

imagined by the hysteric. Hysteria, in other words, presents (or reenacts) a repressed desire or conflict without the mediation of language. The hysteric's actions signify something, which is not symbolized through speech. In David-Menard's terminology, hysteria tries to short-circuit language and to close the gap of signification.

In hysterical attacks, the subject is unable to symbolize thought; rather, desire becomes fixated on the object. For example, there may be moments in dreams and in hysteria, such as when "one is glued to the spot", or when a paralyzed leg bespeaks forbidden desire, that indicate the collapse of the distance between the represented object and the subject. *Darstellung* is such a "crashing of language on the body" (David-Menard 114). David-Menard writes that, "In hysterical symptoms, inasmuch as they are induced by a very specific metaphoric play, language is fixated; it precipitates onto the body instead of continuing to play in the element of the signifiers" (115).

A. Anna O. and theatricality

I want to turn briefly to the case of one of the most well-known hysterics, "Anna O," because her history might clarify a few points about David-Menard's representational schema, and because her case directly influenced Hofmannsthal's drama, Elektra. Josef Breuer, Freud's early collaborator in The Studies on Hysteria, analyzed the young woman (actually named Bertha Pappenheim) over a period of

several years, from 1880 to 1882, and contributed his analysis of the case to the Studies, along with a theoretical essay. Anna O. suffered from extravagant hysterical symptoms, which Breuer catalogued: paraphasia (partial loss of speech), severe disturbances of vision, paralyses, contractures in the right upper and both lower extremities, paresis of the neck muscles, somnambulism, a severe cough, anorexia, anemia and hallucinations (22-23). During the most severe stage of her illness, Anna O. lost verbal coherency altogether, and this alternated with a loss of her native German, while she retained the ability to speak in English, Italian, or French. Breuer was called in by the parents when the girl was extremely ill from anorexia and after they had done all they could for her.

I want to concentrate on a particular aspect of Anna O's hysteria, which involves what she called "absence." Anna phased in and out of different personality states, which we might now call disassociated states. During these times, she was not aware of herself as "Anna O." She termed these states her "private theater," and even before her illness, she was prone to long periods of day-dreaming, which Breuer believed predisposed her to hysteria (41). During the time that Breuer cared for her, the private theater evolved beyond phantasy, and it was during these absences that Anna O. actually "performed" at her private theater. She often flew into rages, threw objects, spoke

rudely to others, and refused nourishment. Her personality underwent alterations, as she became mean-tempered or severely depressed. During these times, she could speak no German. She claimed "... even when she was in a very bad condition -- a clear-sighted and calm observer sat ["ein scharfer und ruhiger Beobachter"], as she put it, in a corner of her brain and looked on at all the mad business ["das tolle Zeug"]" (46).¹³ At a fundamental level, theatricalization is incorporated into the hysteric's psyche, into her own unconscious representation of her mental life. The split of the ego mimics the internalized gaze of the other whose desires compels the hysterical performance. The very conceptualization of hysteria in the modern age is given in terms of this specularization is within the framework of the subject/object dichotomy or dualism -- the hysteric's split.

Freud's and Breuer's early theory reflects this visualization of psychic split: the psyche of the hysteric is differentiated into two elements, an ego that acts, and one that watches the body (and ego) as it manifests the corporeal display that is hysteria (229). Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who was excited by the ideas surrounding Anna O., describes the "Spaltung der Psyche" ("psychic split") in his short essay on Paul Bourget's "Zur Psychologie der modernen Liebe," written in 1891. His essay begins: "The soul is inexhaustible, because it is simultaneously observer

and object [of consciousness]..." (318). He goes on to say that the modern soul is torn in two, leading to the neurotic's "Hellsichtigkeit" ("clear-sightedness") of an internal battle: "words lie, feelings lie, and self-consciousness lies" (319). For Hofmannsthal, language and symbols may reverberate with falsehood, at least when linked to inner states. Even the hysteric, who refuses language, may be implicated in a falsehood generated by the metaphysics of spectacle.

The word "absence" in Anna O's case indicates a disjunction between performer and spectator. The conscious subject is lost in/to herself, and Anna O. experienced her body without understanding what its actions meant. Her body as a corporal and theatrical event signifies a split between signifier/signified. Since the hysteric cannot speak openly about her desires, during her attacks she remains in the realm of the imaginary and narcissistic identifications, without access to the symbolic. In Lacanian terminology, the Imaginary is the perceptual and experiential space of the body and is connected to visualized identifications. In this psychic space, the subject experiences and lives what it takes to be the self (the 'moi', in Lacan's terminology). This self, though, is a collection of

... erotic relationship[s] in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image which alienates him from himself, is the energy and the form from which there originates that passionate organization which he calls his "moi" (Lacan in Wilden 173).

The hysteric fixes on the body she observes, a body from which her consciousness is alienated, but a body which experiences what consciousness cannot. Perhaps this is why the visual and performative aspect of hysteria is so important. Lacan argues that the hysteric founders upon imaginary relationships, which form the basis of the "alienated moi" (Lacan 1977, 4). So, too, Breuer described Anna O. as being in "alienated" psychic states.

Freud believed the feelings associated with the attack were sexual in nature, which Breuer disagreed with. But even though Breuer claimed that Anna O. was "extraordinarily underdeveloped sexually," she manifested, at the end of the analysis, "... a case of 'transference love'" (57), which Jones identified as an hysterical pregnancy (Studies 41, Jones 246ff). As Freud commented later in Dora, "The hysterical symptom serves the purposes of sexual gratification and represents a part of the sexual life of the person" (148). Symptoms, he continued, "are nothing but the unconscious fantasies made manifest by 'conversion'" (148). Freud's comments bear directly on Anna O's spectacular symptom, one that Breuer had initially hidden from Freud. This hysterical pregnancy occurred when Breuer had suggested that the treatment end.

Anna O's symptom, substituted for a narration of love and sexual desire, is a presentation of her own story in another form. This one desire could never be articulated in

speech. In "giving" Breuer a child, not only was Anna O.'s desire unsymbolized, but so too was Breuer's. He apparently fled to Italy (and here the mythology of psychoanalysis takes over), where he got his own wife pregnant. But Breuer never did see Anna O. again.

Anna O.'s "pregnancy" reveals the collision of different modes of representation, as outlined by David-Menard. The hysteric's "split" in consciousness is a split between a "Vorstellung" that represents the body as signifier and a "Darstellung", which presents the unconscious experience non-symbolically. Insofar as the hysteric has internalized the perception of the other as her own, and in which she watches herself as another, the corporeality and sexuality of the hysteric's own body are experienced by her as "alien agents" (Breuer), and presented as an object of spectacle. Her desire is not consciously known, but shown. In this sense, her own body contradicts the separation between the two modes of representation: her body tries to write ("Vorstellung") what she can only show ("Darstellung").

Unlike David-Menard's account of the completely involuntary nature of the hysterical attack and the loss of "Vorstellung," another feminist theorist, Christina von Braun, argues that the hysteric does have some "say" in the choice of symptoms. Freud and Breuer make it clear that the hysteric has often voluntarily "forgotten" the conflict that

gives rise to her hysteria. Anna O., as Breuer claimed in the course of her aphasia and paraphrasia, had felt very much offended one time and had "determined not to speak about it" (Breuer 25). We might understand this reticence as a culturally prohibited affect, which shamed the girl.

In the hysterical attack, however, which is observed by the conscious ego, "feminine" traits are unconsciously selected and exaggerated. Anna O. became a "good girl" and did not speak of offensive matters. The hysteric plays two roles, according to von Braun. The ego watches the "crazy goings-on," activities prescribed for the woman (29). She "shuts up" (by losing speech); she must stay in bed or at home because she is paralyzed; she is unable to cultivate her own activities or do anything other than what is allowed her by her physician or husband (or mother and father). Von Braun also claims that these activities must be distanced from the "observing" ego, just because they represent what culture, not the woman, demands of her. Yet in the performance of the feminine, the hysteric enjoys a sexuality that would normally be prohibited for her to express or to feel. Thus the attack satisfies desire while allowing the hysteric to consciously disavow prohibited feelings. The hysteric does play a role - that of a culturally defined "woman," and she simultaneously enjoys the benefits of a sexuality that culture wants to repress or extinguish (von Braun 29).

I. The hysteric as theatrical spectacle

The body's mute and physical language, however interpreted, is in a very few years supplanted by another. Freud refocused the investigation into hysteria around the spoken word. The word (and its interpretation) rather than the body becomes the obsession. Freud remained a profoundly linguistic thinker; he reconstituted the visual into the verbal.¹⁴ In the Studies on Hysteria, patient Anna O.'s visible symptoms were verbally articulated in the "talking cure." Her "fixation" in "Darstellung" is disentangled in a movement that allows symptoms to be articulated in speech ("Vorstellung"). However, in this move, the body is negated as the symbolic function of speech replaces it. Yet if the feminine is represented by culture as body, what becomes of the woman in this case? Is she also to disappear? Paradoxically, the "cure" of hysteria is a loss of the feminine body in Freud's thought and its replacement by the "fact" of sexual difference (a "fact," however, still predicated on vision).

On the theatrical stage, however, women were increasingly displayed as dancers and actresses, or as immobile statues awaiting the gaze of the audience. Zola's Nana is an example of the realistic novel that obsessively puts the woman's naked form on stage and the narrative circles Nana's body. There is some coincidence between the public display of woman on the stage and the hysteric's

private exhibition before family/doctor. In both cases, the woman's private world of emotions or sexuality was brought into view for the man. (Of course, women attended the theater as well, but it was the subterranean theaters, frequented by prostitutes, that was depicted in literary narratives.) Seen from within a theatrical/literary system, the hysteric, for example, a Hedda Gabler or a Nana, displays repressed desires of her culture and her role. Hedda Gabler refuses maternity, the prescribed role for women at the turn-of-the-century. Her hysteria is a result of this refusal and of her conflict with social expectations. Nana flagrantly displays the hysteric's overt sexuality and tendency towards melodrama and mendacity. Precisely because the hysteric's desires were prohibited, her symptoms were misinterpreted or again repressed. Nonetheless, the bodies of hysterics and actresses were obsessively put on display and viewed by public and science alike.

What culture and the public considered "feminine," or what was valued as women's "nature" was often depicted on the theatrical stage as hysterical -- Ibsen's Nora and Hedda Gabler, Strindberg's Miss Julie, Hofmannsthal's Elektra and Frau Ohne Schatten, for example, all represented exciting, hysterical, woman. Actresses who played popular roles, such as Sara Bernhardt, renowned in all of Europe, or Gertrud Eysoldt on the German-speaking stage, became icons of

femininity and hysteria as their roles and individuality blurred the line between representation and presentation. Cultural narratives and artistic themes became indistinguishable as women imitated iconography from popular culture, and as popular culture absorbed ideas from the medical profession.

It was not just actresses whose roles were sometimes indistinguishable from the hysteric, but dancers, too, because their flowing bodily movements in performance seemed to capture the vital aspect of sexuality, were linked to hysteria. Dancers were just as popular as actresses, and were themselves subject to a mythologizing tendency on the part of public and critics alike. Both actress and dancer were also linked to a publicly acknowledged sexuality, in that both were often the companions of men, and had to perform as prostitutes for their wages (Stokes 8). The display and performance of the female body (even when clothed) was connected to an illicit, although publicly acknowledged, prostitution. As Zola's Nana makes clear, the dancer, prostitute and hysteric were often conflated by the artist and public. Thus the dancer performed for the audience, capturing its desires for feminine representation. The hysteric functions in a similar way.¹⁵

II. Professor Unrat and the limits of hysteria

A passage from Heinrich Mann's Professor Unrat might elucidate the theatricality inherent in hysteria and its

function as an object that both participates in and reflects culturally repressed desire. Mann's 1910 novel is better known as "The Blue Angel" in the film adaptation by Joseph von Sternberg.¹⁶ In both novel and film, the old professor's repressed sensuality slowly unfolds under the calculated caresses and attention of the prostitute Rosa (renamed Lola in the movie). The professor becomes increasingly enamored of and enthralled by the showgirl, and his position at the secondary school slips as he devotes his attention to her. At the epitome of his debauchery, he helps Rosa paint her face with the thick make-up of the stage and the prostitute.

When she made up, the play of her arms as she used the rose and yellow paints still held him enthralled. He learned to regard her face as a palette and knew the names of the paints and the uses of those little bottles and pots, the powders and creams; keeping quiet and ready when they were being used. ...One evening, when sitting before the glass, she leaned back in her chair and said: "Now go ahead!"

He made her up so well that she did not need to dip a finger in a single ointment. ... And the joy of it made a bond between them when she bent forward, bowing, offering the opening of her bosom to all those eyes. A pricking torment seized him.

... ... His eyes saw below the mere clothes of this woman; it was as if not only her garments and cosmetics that came within his hands but also her very soul (119-120).

The professor is unaware that his own desire influences and directs the woman's actions. He paints her perfectly; he creates, in a narcissistic gesture, a woman that conforms to his needs, unconscious though they are. Underneath the clothes and make-up, he grasps not her soul, but his own. As feminists from Simone de Beauvoir to Luce Irigaray have pointed out, woman is the Other to the man's repressed/denied characteristics. The painted, living mask and its function within the theater as spectacle momentarily erases the difference between subject and object, spectator and observed. The mask is a tangible image which metaphorically stands in for the relationship between the two, just as hysteria stands between women and culture. At the point where the professor's desire becomes synonymous with Rosa's spectacular/theatrical image, each is identified with the other. It seems clear that hysterics internalize and reflect back to the spectator their respective and interrelated desires: male fantasies, female/male gender assumptions, the hysteric's own repressed desires and her protests are integrated in her illness and symptoms.

The reflective and illusory nature of this dialectical relationship corresponds to the Lacanian Imaginary. In the

Imaginary, the subject is deceived by the other. As he projects himself and his desire onto the other, identificatory boundaries are blurred and the two are indistinguishable from each other. This type of hysterical identification is not the hysteria of conversion symptoms, rather a more common identification with what the other has -- identification with their position or desire (Adams 181). Lacan, in "Intervention on the Transference", stresses the "... complexity of identificatory relations" in hysteria (Lacan, 1982). For Lacan, the Imaginary is the intra-psychic world of the subject's body image, of its narcissistic and object identifications, bound by a symbolic, linguistic and cultural one.

In effect this form becomes crystallized in the conflictual tension internal to the subject which determines the awakening of his desire for the object of the desire of the other. ... (173).

In this Imaginary world, the subject is "captive" of its own narcissistic desire in an erotic relationship with the body or its image. The Imaginary structures the narcissistic captivation by the other and loss of self to the other in which perception plays a part. The painted theatrical mask seems uniquely appropriate for such an image. Mann portrays Professor Unrat's loss of his subjecthood in the Other; he is transformed into a beautiful image using Rosa's paints. As Adams points out in her discussion of the two types of hysteria, "The symptom marks the coincidence between two egos which has to be repressed"

(181). The symptom, the theatrical mask, points to such an identification.

The identification between subject and object reflects the psychic and social interaction of a master-slave dialectic.¹⁷ The professor has enough position, power and money to "keep" Rosa, who plays her part in order to secure financial security and status. In Professor Unrat (or hysteria), the master controls the subject and needs to be recognized as having such influence. The slave (woman) fulfills her function by helping create the master through her obligatory duties and recognition of his power. The power imbalance between master and slave, or between physician and hysteric influenced the woman's symptoms in ways which observers at the time were unaware of, and, conversely, this asymmetry effected the master, the Professor and physicians as well.

Freud's analysis of transference did not truly take account of social and economic power relations. He emphasized the role of the analyst as object of incestuous phantasy, for example, but not as a figure who might subtly direct the hysteric's desire in the first place. In Vienna, at least, the physician represented science and authority, even if not social status, and exemplified the world of patriarchal culture. The most blatant case of the imbalance between physician and hysteric is exemplified in Charcot's presentations of hysterics at his Tuesday lectures, where

the power, authority, status, prestige, and class of the master loomed far above that of the working-class girls.

The relationship between male/authorial power in the creation of woman as spectacle/hysteric is made even more specific if we look at von Sternberg's own description of his "discovery" of Marlene Dietrich for the title role in "The Blue Angel." Watching a performance one evening, he says,

I noticed a woman on stage whose face promised everything. This was Marlene Dietrich. I am credited with her discovery. This is not so. I am not an archeologist who finds some buried bones with a pelvis that indicates a female. I am a teacher who took a beautiful woman, instructed her, presented her carefully, edited her charms, disguised her imperfections and led her to crystallize a pictorial aphrodisiac. She was a perfect medium, who with intelligence absorbed my direction, and despite her own misgivings responded to my conception of a female archetype (261).

Von Sternberg's description is uncannily analogous to the process within Mann's narration, and points to a "Pygmalion drive" to create an object according to one's own (male) desire. This impulse motivates several of the texts that I will discuss. The male imbues the woman with his own

desire, and she in turn reflects it back for him and the audience. She performs her role so well that the creator and audience forget that she is only playing a role. It is male desire that compels a certain type of performance -- the woman must conform to his ideal of female perfection, even if it is not hers in some originary sense.

Paradoxically, this created image can be that of the hysteric, even as she pushes culturally sanctioned feminine and erotic qualities to the extreme.

III. Hysteria as an Effect of Narrative

Mann's description of the professor and the showgirl points out the interaction between subject and object, master and slave. Like his brother Thomas, Heinrich Mann was a master of irony, and this rhetorical device allows his narration to maintain some distance from provocative desire. Zola's description of the prostitute's body in Nana, or the narrator Durtal's depiction of love-making in Là-bas, for example, become themselves eroticized as the narration progresses. I call this textual reaction to the female represented in the narrative a male "hysteria," because of the reciprocal relationship between (narrated) man and woman, a relationship that might be compared to that between physician and hysteric. The narrator's voice merges with a fascinated and imaginary male audience that is influenced by the novel's own discourse as the narrator deviates from an originally "objective" description. When the text is a

psychological one, such as Breuer's narration of the case of Anna O., the physician's objectivity is similarly compromised in the narrative. Anna O's hysterical pregnancy reflected the interrelation of the physician's desire and its unconscious manifestation in both observer and observed. The symbiotic relationship between hysteric and physician in the creation and spectacle of desire is analogous to that between audience and spectacle, or between narrator and object of narration.

The effect of the female body must be controlled so that the narrative can proceed. The body's painted surface (or, for example, von Sternberg's preoccupation with the "ewige Weibliche" -- the eternal feminine, as he says), points to another aspect of the male's representation of woman and hysteric that will occur over and over again in the texts that I read. The narrative becomes fixated on a static image or fetishized ideal. Images of women, most remarkably Wanda in Sacher-Masoch's Venus in Furs, written in 1884, shows how an abstract image can easily become a figure of death, of frozen limbs and features. Severin, the protagonist in Venus, describes his first sight of Wanda:

The meadow is smooth as a mirror, like a frozen lake, and there in the center stands the statue of Venus, shining and stately.

But what is this? The goddess is draped in fur: a dark sable cloak flows from her marble shoulders

down to her feet. I stand bewildered, transfixed;
again I am gripped by an indescribable panic
(149).

Many actresses at the turn-of-century played roles in which they were essentially statues; for example, "Pygmalion and Galatea" was a favorite theme among theater-goers (Stokes 8). These images of male desire warming up living matter have a palliative effect: with Sacher-Masoch, an unpredictable and arousing sexuality is fixed in the hallucinatory form of a statue before the desire of the woman overtakes him. The images of fixity and domination weave throughout the narrative.

The sable cloak stands as an intermediate form between the dead statue and the living woman. It functions as a protection, a fetish, against a fear that is visually aroused. It is in the visual field that Freud "sees" the difference between male and female as the spectacle of the male penis and the "invisibility" of the woman's sexual organs -- the lack. According to Mary Ann Doane, what becomes important in vision is whether or not the "lack" exists: vision, at least in the psychoanalytic reading of it, remains precarious in its relation to the phallus and castration (106). However, the visual field does not "guarantee epistemological certitude" of the "fact" of either male or female castration, since the fetish transforms the object in the field of vision. The

fetishized female body becomes the frightening castrated female body that horrifies the male -- this at least is the traditional psychoanalytic view that privileges the visual element in knowledge and desire.

As Irigaray writes, "Woman's castration is defined as having nothing you can see, as her having nothing. ... Nothing to be seen is equivalent to having no thing. No being and no truth. The contract/collusion between one sex/organ and the victory won by visual dominance therefore leaves woman with her sexual void" (Irigaray 48). In the feminist critique of psychoanalysis, the visual field is given critical emphasis, just because it is so closely tied to misperception about the woman and about truth/certainty. The woman often functions as a fetish for patriarchal notions of truth that exclude the woman while necessitating her use within that system. The scopic fetishization of the female body is interrelated to the hysteric's internalization of the male gaze, because it is the male gaze that dominates systems of knowledge and power. The male gaze, that is, takes the female form as the object of knowledge, and the woman, too, sees herself as object, as does the hysteric. Visual metaphors are primary in describing knowledge and the knowing subject, and they reflect a fundamental dualism in our understanding of self. Knowledge involves a knower and a known, and as Freud suggests, intellectual curiosity is linked to the sexual

unknown, a desire to find the "origin" of sexuality. A split between subject and object, or between masculine and feminine, signifies the rupture of univocal or unitary meaning.

IV. Hysteria and the Speech Crisis

How women were defined, how their sexuality was objectified through medical and literary discourses, and the interaction and influence of literary and non-literary texts upon each other excluded women from constructions of their own identity, as least as symbolic and discursive subjects. The hysteric's body is almost always viewed from the perspective of male representational systems, so that hysteria represents not merely the body of the woman, but one for those who represent the woman for their culture. Narratives about hysteria, Freud's for example, seem intent on making a coherent story of hysteria, to recapitulate the details and complete it.¹⁸ They seek to control what remains mysterious and unknowable in hysteria and women. The critic Mary Jacobus argues that if hysteria and women are not somehow made representable, their existence would become "...points of instability which threaten to expose ... products of representation ... as constructs" (Jacobus, 1990, 201). "Hysteria" becomes a whole system of representations that circulated throughout European turn-of-the-century patriarchal culture as a dominant mode of representing and controlling female sexuality.

In the following chapters I discuss how hysteria participates in the problematics of modernism and feminism, which persistently question language and meaning. In particular, it is the symbol which comes under fire. The primary symptom of modernism or decadence in which I am most interested is the so-called "Sprachkrise" (language/speech crisis) that affected the production and conceptions of the artistic and cultural elite at the turn-of-the-century. Avant-garde artists saw their culture as one of alienated mechanization, which denied individuals the opportunity to express their subjectivity through poetic, or metaphorical, speech (Ryan, 1983). The general cultural perception that values were unstable was intensified in the artistic community, in which linguistic signs, the efficacy of language and the truthfulness of the linguistic sign were viewed skeptically. Its effects permeated much of the artistic and intellectual enterprises of the day: in literary and pictorial movements ("l'art pour l'art", art nouveau, Jugendstil), and scientific works (Mach's empiricism, psychoanalysis, sociology). As a cultural phenomenon, hysteria can be linked to this larger group of linguistic questions concerning the nature of representation, particularly since hysteria explicitly destabilizes simple notions of truth.

The language crisis, as a crisis in representation, is related to the hysteric's inability to represent her desire

through spoken language. The hysteric's body becomes a text or stage saturated with meaning, both for herself and others. The limits of language are particularly evident with hysteria, because the symptoms show or present what language cannot say and thus fails to represent. It is not just a question of whether language or vision is superior, but rather a question of what culture or the unconscious permits the individual to experience or to understand. Hysteria marks a disjunction between body and word, desire and repression, male and female, speech and writing. The nature of language -- how and what it means -- is a preoccupation of artist and hysteric alike.

Hysteria epitomizes the split between the signifier/signified that conditions our reflection about language. Some feminists see in this split a metaphor for "writing." The dualistic impulse to divide the body from psychic mechanisms or to disassociate male and female sexuality from one another produces and reproduces an imagined masculinity and femininity. The model of hysteria is itself already a product of a social and ideological organization that necessitates that it is the female who is hysterical. "Theory of culture, theory of society, symbolic systems in general -- art, religion, family, language -- it is all developed while bringing the same schemes to light. ... Organization by hierarchy makes all conceptual organizations subject to man. [It is] Male privilege"

(Cixous 64). Hysteria is part of the process of "writing", whereby social frameworks seem natural, yet implement a domination by one group over another. The dualism implicit in Freud's account, that of a female body split off from the psychic realm, and tragically at variance with it, is yet another aspect of this mechanism.

The hysteric, because she is so explicitly a signifying body -- visible writing -- in opposition to an abstract and invisible speech, unmaskes the contradictions inherent in the idea of a split between the material and the psychic fields. In her book on hysteria, von Braun argues that the hysteric does not allow the body to be "abstracted" and negated, and it perversely refuses to be silenced.¹⁹ The hysteric's crisis is one of writing -- speech is literally denied her, but her body writes, nevertheless. On von Braun's view, hysteria is both the effect of this split and its attempt to close the gap once again. What would it mean to say that hysteria is an effect of "writing?"

Hysteria is a phenomenon born with writing. ...

[Hysteria] refuses ... to be separated into spirit and matter and attempts to overcome the abstractions into which the woman, body and nature have been transformed. It fights for the continuity of the unity of mind and body (von Braun 13).

Von Braun suggests that hysteria, like post-modern conceptions of writing, is an effect of a dualism that splits the subject's materiality from its abstract qualities. Writing is a denigrated form of speech, according to Derrida, just because it is "material" and thus liable to disintegration and disappearance (death) (1976). Writing itself already presupposes a dualism within the concept of the word, and is not just its effect. In just this way, hysteria is a pathology because it pushes the effects of dualism to an extreme. The woman's body, that of a devalued materiality, is the site of her illness. The effects of dualism are shown by the body -- psychic distress is played out in symptoms, yet how could it be hysteria unless the mind and body were not intimately connected?

V. Geographical sites of hysteria: Vienna and Paris

The geographical split between Vienna and Paris as two scenes for scripting hysteria at the turn of the century mirrors a division in hysteria's conceptualization between that of a visual spectacle or a linguistic problem. The primary connection between the two cities is Freud's own travels between Vienna and Paris as a student of Charcot at la Salpêtrière during the winter of 1885, and the way in which he served as a conduit for ideas about hysteria.

In Paris, Charcot's understanding and characterization of hysteria exaggerated its physical signs or stigmata, and his well-known lectures celebrated the theatricality of

hysteria. Freud transformed Charcot's theory of hysteria into one that took into account its linguistic aspects, as previously noted. The texts that I read do not alternate between these two types of representation, but they do reflect the tension between the two.

The texts themselves are drawn from the two capitals and reflect preoccupations of artists in each location. The chapters in this dissertation will follow the more specific artistic representations of hysteria within these two cities. I will show how hysteria as a cultural phenomenon reflected the preoccupations of artists and writers in different ways, always returning, however, to the female body and an imagined sexuality.

Even though Charcot, head physician of the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, was making hysteria a "legitimate" disease as early as the 1870's, I will begin my study in Vienna, where Breuer and Freud were to institute hysteria as the basis of the new psychoanalysis. The cases in the Studies are remembered as the first using the new method of the "talking therapy," and their publication caused an intellectual stir in Vienna. Many artists and writers took issue for or against Freud, and his ideas inspired a number of artistic productions.

In the second chapter, I connect the visual depictions of women and hysteria to a larger group of linguistic questions concerning the nature of representation, using

Gustav Klimt's paintings of women as a focal point. The visual element is essential to any discussion of hysteria, and I argue that the painted field is a projective screen of male fetish and anxiety, which becomes a "dis-ease" of the man, not of the woman. In Klimt's paintings, I discuss how sexuality is manifested and deflected through fetishized figures. I also connect some of the public's reactions to Klimt's works to the rupturing of class taboos, which insist on maintaining a distance between patron and overt sexual impulses. Because Nietzsche had an important influence on many artists in Vienna at the turn of the century, I discuss his remarks on "woman" and "surface." I show how Nietzsche's considerations of rhetoric frequently emphasize a visual element, which links his remarks about women and style to Klimt's paintings.

In the third chapter, I continue my focus on Vienna and discuss Hugo von Hofmannsthal's 1903 drama, "Elektra." Like many of the artists that the Ringstrasse and Cafe Griensteidl cultivated, Hofmannsthal was clearly influenced by Freud's work. Hofmannsthal's "Elektra" was modeled on the case of "Anna O.", an interpretation accepted by Hofmannsthal's contemporaries (Worbs 269). I show that Hofmannsthal's representation of hysteria focuses on the hysteric's relationship to the notion of the maternal, which disturbs the hysteric's relationship to language, her "Muttersprache." Elektra and the queen have lost their

ability to express themselves through words and instead dream, suffer corporeal symptoms or fantasize, as does the hysteric. In my reading of "Elektra," I argue that the character represents a subject caught between the symbolic language of paternal demands and the body of maternal unity. This is closer to Freud's later view that hysteria is a problem of sexual identification. Elektra is unable to articulate her divided sexuality through language: her conflict is her inability to say who and what she is. Does she define herself as the daughter of her mother or her father? What is left for a woman who is neither maternal nor sexual? Hofmannsthal's answer: hysteria.

With Chapter IV, "Medical and literary narratives of hysteria and prostitution in French writing," I turn to Paris and begin my discussion of hysteria with Charcot and the medical establishment in late 19th-century France. Almost all of the works that I read in connection with French works link prostitution and hysteria, and in the naturalist and decadent novels that I study, the female is clearly narrativized in this way. In Chapter III, I discuss how Charcot used photography in his understanding of hysteria, and how the photograph "stilled" the excitable body of the hysteric. In a similar way, I relate Breton's novel Nadja and his use of photographs in the book to Charcot's use of photography. I argue that both writers needed to authenticate what they saw, and that they needed

to "see" something in hysteria that they could not narrate. In this way, "seeing" again becomes important and can be linked to a more general psychoanalytic view of vision. In general, the French physicians were not interested in the hysteric's narrative.

Some French male authors were interested in women's narratives, however. In Chapter V, I discuss two naturalist novels by the Goncourt frères. These novels were part of a perspective immersed in the representation of the female and her body. The subject matter of the naturalist novel tended to depict the female as "naturally" (and degenerately) sliding towards hysteria or prostitution. The Goncourt novels are explicitly concerned with the hysteric's body and her language, and I argue that the female characters' relationship to language, as well as the narrating voice, are problematized in the two novels. The two novels are detailed in their descriptions of the heroines, their hysterical attacks and their stories, especially their tales of sexual misfortune and fall. The Goncourts also explicitly link language, or more appropriately, confession, to the outcomes of their characters. Germinie Lacerteux and La Fille Elisa both are driven insane because language is denied them.

In Chapter VI, I continue to discuss ways in which the representation of the prostitute/hysteric disturbs the narrative, in spite of the supposed objectivity of the

decadent writer. The woman's body marks the site of real difference between the sexes. Huysmans' Là-Bas and Barbey d'Aurevilly's story, "A Woman's Revenge," construct narratives around the effects of female sexuality, which often turns out to be linked to degeneracy, decay or death. The narrators of both texts desire sexual union with women/prostitutes, yet in the course of the narrative, the perception of female sexuality is so unsettling that the female figure within the text (and story) must be dramatically transformed into a deathly figure, a maternal figure, and later, into the hysteric.

The last chapter is an examination of Wedekind's Lulu, and with it, I return to the German-speaking stage. Wedekind explicitly questions women's sexual "nature", social hypocrisy and prostitution in its relation to culture and male desire. In this chapter, I discuss the relationship between contemporary notions of subjectivity and the fragmented self, as portrayed by Lulu. Although the notion of an animated, lively self is a fundamental aspect of Expressionism and vitalism, it is also interesting in light of its relationship to dissociated personality and sexual abuse -- aspects of hysteria. Of particular interest will be the coincidence of Lulu's "role playing" and the contemporary perspective on dissociated states. I also read Cathy Acker's Don Quixote as a modern counterpart to the "Lulu" story, and link these ways of representing women to a

post-modern conception of subjectivity.

It is appropriate that this work was conceived in Paris but first produced and performed in Vienna. Wedekind's play epitomizes both the visual, carnival aspects of hysteria as well as its problematic relationship to language. In it, all the important elements of hysteria that I discuss are highlighted: the hysteric's relationship to sexuality, degeneracy and prostitution; the representation of a patriarchal power structure; the conflicting demands of a dualistic representational system; the theatricality of hysteria and the exhaustion of the form; the relationship to death that the image of the hysteria carries with it.

CHAPTER 1: ENDNOTES

1. See, for example, Jann Matlock, Scenes of Seduction, 128, and Jan Goldstein, Console and Classify, both of whom discuss the growing literature around hysteria in the nineteenth century. As just one example of the specialized literature about hysteria in the German-speaking countries, George Voss, in his immense volume of Klinische Beiträge zur Lehre von der Hysterie. Nach Beobachtungen aus dem Nordwesten Russlands, cites no fewer than 870 articles and papers between the years 1900-1906.

2. To take two examples: In May, 1995, New York University's Postdoctoral program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis held a symposium entitled, "The Psychoanalytic Century: Psyche, Soma, Gender: The Bicentennial of Breuer and Freud's Studies in Hysteria." In attendance were practicing clinicians, historians, literary and psychoanalytic theorists. The symposium's popularity indicates that Freud's "discovery" of psychoanalysis, which he attributed to hysteria and its treatment, as well as hysteria itself, still command a formidable interest for intellectual life at the turn of this century. Secondly, a brief look through the MLA catalogue and Dissertation Abstracts for the last ten years indicates an interest in hysteria, especially as a literary topos and as a topic within cultural studies.

3. Feminists themselves have created a new topos of hysteria which links the hysteric's pathological inability to speak to a patriarchal culture in which women have no voice as subjects. See, among others, Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement, The Newly Born Woman. More particularly, Diane Hunter relates hysteric Anna O's inability to speak to a specific crisis of self-representation within the German language, the "father tongue." See her article, "Hysteria, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism: The Case of Anna O."

4. See the various categories in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (Washington: American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Indeed, the fact that hysteria does not exist as a clinical disorder in the United States but does so in France should indicate something of its arbitrary (though not incoherent) characterization of symptoms.

5. The four stages were (1) those of an *epileptoid* period (loss of consciousness); (2) a *clownic* phase (an "astonishing" series of movements); (3) a phase of "grande attitudes," including the *attitudes passionnelles* (hallucinatory, dreamy and erotic movements) and (4) that of *delire* (morbid delirium). See Étienne Trillat's account of the disputes among the "masters" of hysteria regarding its nosographical and affective features, including the four stages. L'histoire de l'hysteria. Bernheim is known for his dispute with Charcot and his quote that the four stages of hysteria were "... nothing but the hysteria of the culture" of la

Salpêtrière. Gilles de Tourette, one of Charcot's colleagues (and former student at la Salpêtrière) summarizes Bernheim's position in Traité clinique et thérapeutique de l'Hystérie, d'après l'enseignement de la Salpêtrière.

6. And in any case, as Jacobus, et al. argue, the "scientific discourses and representations that were crucial in constructing reality" (for example, their illness/hysteria) is something that "women embodied but did not know." See Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller and Sally Shuttleworth, Body/politic. Women and the Discourse of Science, 7.

7. See Voss's description of the International Congress for Psychiatry in Amsterdam in 1907, which preferred Janet's theory of hysteria caused by the "splitting of consciousness," which leads to psychological and mental degeneration of the brain (Klinische Beiträge). Freud's and Breuer's theory was declared questionable ("bedenklich") for most cases, and useless or dispensable for all of them.

8. Sander Gilman, in Difference and Pathology, makes a similar point about Freud's generalizing from "proletarian" sexuality to bourgeois sexuality; moreover, proletarian sexuality was viewed as a case of the child's polymorphous sexuality.

9. Both Jacques Le Rider, "Modernismus/Feminismus-- Modernität/Virilität, Otto Weininger und die asketische Moderne", from Ornament und Askese, and Rita Felski in "The Counterdiscourse of the Feminine in Three Texts by Wilde, Huysmans, and Sacher-Masoch" refer to the age as one whose aesthetics had been "feminized." Le Rider uses the term "Verweiblichung". More to the point, perhaps, is Max Nordau's pronouncements linking modernism and hysteria in his huge tome, Decadence ["Entartung"] a volume with widespread influence. He says that the modern artist is characterized by his clothing, make-up and artificiality. Literature is characterized by "obscurantism, foggy language, symbolism ... and emotionalism. ... Decadent artists are "geniuses out of balance" and can be recognized by their hysteria.

10. Linda Evans. Fits and Starts. A Genealogy of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France, 18. And while some avant-garde artists overtly claimed an alliance with the hysteric, this dissertation will not deal with so-called male hysteria nor with the artists' self-conscious mimicking of hysteric.

11. Baudelaire, Charles. Oeuvres complètes, 655, qtd. in Bernheimer, 132.

12. The following account is based on David-Menard's account in Monique David-Menard, Hysteria from Freud to Lacan. See Bibliography.

13. Breuer repeats this somewhat differently in the theoretical section: "the conscious ego ["bewusstes Ich"] is completely clear during the attack, and observes all the crazy stuff that happened ..." (228; German edition, 184).

14. One of the first to make this point was Renée Major in Revue Française de Psychanalyse (1973). She argues that with Charcot, the hysteric can only find in the spectator the "regard" of the Other which incarnates her desire; with Freud and the shift to the auditory, the hysteric frees herself from external regard and discovers the internal division between language and desire. Other perspectives find the shift from visual to auditory less liberating. Linda Evans (Fits and Starts) sees in modern Lacanian psychoanalysis a disturbing rejection of the body. The fact that a woman's personal history was heard is generally considered a positive change, yet the move from the body to words neglects the woman's physical life and body.

15. A number of recent dissertations find the connection between performance and hysteria at the turn-of-the-century significant: Lydia Stryker, 1992, studies how actresses and hysterics both play theatrical roles; a 1994 dissertation compares the iconography of female body in its performative aspect to hysteria (Schutzman); yet another compares catharsis in theater and hysteria (Howie). All cites from Dissertation Abstracts.

16. Von Sternberg's film adaptation is itself a marvelous look at how the female is further "specularized" and made into an iconographic figure. In his version, the professor's decisive role in shaping "Lola" is turned around instead into the seductive ploys of the showgirl, which is how hysteria works. Von Sternberg recasts Mann's critical view of the professor and showgirl into a more culturally acceptable view of gender relations.

17. Jessica Benjamin, in Bonds of Love, devotes a chapter to the Hegelian dialectic of love in her analysis of "Story of 'O'."

18. See different perspectives on Freud's understanding of narrative: Peter Brooks (Desire in Narrative) argues that Freud's narrative is actually modernist in its simultaneous use of different temporal constructions; Jacobus (Reading Women) argues that Freud's narrative actually normalizes women's stories into a culturally accepted view of feminine behavior.

19. Von Braun continually points out the contradictions inherent in the representation of hysteria.

Chapter II: Klimt and the Hysterical Body

In this chapter, I connect the visual depictions of women and hysteria to a larger group of linguistic questions concerning the nature of representation, using Gustav Klimt's paintings of women as a focal point. His paintings represent and aesthetically mediate sexual ideologies about women and the female body, and many of them portray an exaggerated and distorted female form outside of socialized sexuality. Klimt's paintings reveal prevalent cultural attitudes towards male and female sexuality, and show unconscious sexual forces in public preoccupations. The public's reactions to Klimt's paintings suggest that these visual icons were invested with unconscious associations that were in turn projected onto the paintings, so that the object became suffused with the male perspective and anxiety. Thus while I do not believe that Klimt's women are "hysterics" in any specific clinical sense, I think that the manner in which he depicts women, including their nakedness, exaggerated sexuality, their emblematic and narrative positions, the ornamentation and camouflage of the body, and so on, are all involved in the production and reproduction of hysteria and femininity.

Whether in an art gallery or in a medical exhibition hall, female sexuality is often central to the spectator's curiosity. One dominant ideology of the woman's body at the

turn of the century identifies female sexuality with pathology. "Women's nature" was seen as excessive, uncontrollable, even unnatural, transgressing the limits of normalcy and rational regulation. In the theoretical speculations of the male physicians who were studying hysteria at the time, the uncontrollable female body was the focus. Hysteria was scientifically fascinating, some of its power drawn from the male's interest in the visibly sexualized body of the hysteric, seen here in the male audience "observing" Charcot's hysteric's in Paris. [See Figure 1: Charcot at Salpêtrière.] In a similar manner, the reception of Klimt's paintings focused on his depictions of female sexuality, which was identified as pathological, yet visually compelling.

In this chapter I want to stay primarily with the topic of hysteria's relationship to the visual field. The visual element is essential to any discussion of hysteria, since hysteria is a disease that demands an audience, and thus a viewing. Hysteria must be displayed, must be a spectacle: the woman must perform to a male audience. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement argue that this "closed circuit of desire" requires visual representation (1988). At one level of understanding, this is the general demand of hysteria. But hysteria is also a phenomenon involving sight in other ways. One of the most prevalent symptoms of hysteria is the so-called "scotoma", the visual disturbances of the

hysteric. Any discussion of "blind spots" leads us immediately to Freud's analysis of scopophilia and repression; what the eye sees and what it blocks out takes us to the question of the fetish, of castration, of Lacan's expansion of the concept of "scotoma" into the mark of consciousness itself. In this sense, hysteria is a "disease" of the man, not of the woman. For it is the male audience, painter, philosopher or analyst who "hysterizes" the woman's body, who projects his own anxiety onto the representation of the woman. Even if a woman were not hysterical, the male would represent her so.

Klimt's paintings provide the basis for investigating the male creation of a "visual hysteria". They help identify questions about the representation of hysteria, not only as a cultural object, but one linked to problems of language, explicitly those posed by Klimt's early contemporary, Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's considerations about rhetoric questions representation and the female body. The body, its surface, its veiling and unveiling are all Schopenhaurian metaphors that he uses for truth and appearance, and he frequently employs the figure of woman as a metaphor of language. Further, Nietzsche's linguistic signifiers center on the visual aspect of knowledge and perception.

I. Sprachkrise

The increasing uncertainty over the relationship between truth and language came together in the so-called "Sprachkrise" (language crisis) at the turn-of-the-century. The general cultural perception that stable values, including linguistic ones, were lacking, led to an aestheticization of everyday experience -- emptiness was covered over by ornamentation. The question of truth and referentiality was posed, artistically, at least, by the emphasis on embellishment. Rhetorical ornamentation, as the elaboration of truth -- better yet, its absence -- and artistic ornamentation -- the embellishment of the surface -- were linked to a lack of depth. The hysteric's gestural excess and theatrical posing, suggesting a pathology of the external body, is thus linked to the idea of ornament. (Nietzsche's famous quote: "Women are considered profound. Why? Because one never fathoms their depths. Women aren't even shallow" (Twilight of the Idols)). Language, art (Klimt's art, in this case) and hysteria are all ornaments.

Klimt's paintings of women and his use of ornamentation are pictorially related to hysteria's sudden emergence as a "medical reality" and its equally abrupt disappearance. Klimt begins with an obsessive representation of the female body, surrounded by natural ornamentation. His early commissioned works for the Burgtheater and the university are examples of this pre-symbolist style (Vernedoe 150-151).

He goes further, though, in the course of his career; ornamentation begins to displace the female body, so that the female body is no longer surrounded by ornament, but replaced by it. An analogy between Klimt's representations of women and the hysteric's representation seems appropriate. In its medical delineations, hysteria is first seen as a body that refers to an "essential" female nature. With the early Freud and Breuer, with Charcot and the French school, the body and symptoms were the primary object of study. However, in a further elaboration, the body disappears. The hysteric's symptoms are no longer crucial in themselves, but in what they refer to. Freud says in Dora (1905), that at first "...the analysis started out from the symptoms, and aimed at clearing them up one after the other. Since then I have abandoned that technique, ... I now ... start out from whatever surface his [sic] unconscious happens to be presenting to his notice at the moment" (26-27). Two points are worth noticing here: the idea that the surface of the unconscious replaces the body surface (that is, the symptom); and the fact that psychic mechanisms of repression characterizing the hysteric become the most important aspect of analysis. Corporeal symptoms are replaced by another language, the spoken word. The word (and its interpretation) becomes Freud's focus. As we will see repeatedly with hysteria, there is always a move between the abstract ("gesitlich") and physical fields of

representation, which is analogous in many cases to the one between spoken and written word.

In a parallel fashion both Freud and Klimt no longer see the body. Rhetorically, one can see this as a move from metaphor to metonymy. The hysteric's identification with the body is displaced away from the body and its "secret." The hysteric's questions about representation (that is, self-representation) coincide with the language crisis. The hysteric questions the validity of language and an ideology that defines her in a certain way. She loses her speech. She becomes only a body. But in a paradoxical move, the hysteric has no body, she is only language, only "ornament".¹ She becomes an excess of energy, uncontainable by cultural boundaries. As I will discuss later in the chapter, the hysteric is "beyond the pleasure principle;" her ornamenting of sexuality leads to death (as represented by men, that is). The concept of hysteria localizes or situates feminine "extravagance" as sexual, as a way of understanding feminine "nature." As I hope it is clear, hysteria in this account is purely a male creation, corresponding to male categories of excess and sexuality.

Klaus Theweleit, in the second volume of Male Phantasies, calls attention to the way in which the notion and reality of "armor" as a protective device for the male becomes increasingly solidified for the German soldiers of the Freikorps in the 1920's.² Female desire, perceived by

men as a powerful sexuality that streams and flows under the skin of the woman, must be "kept in check" by a shield of language or stiffly painted ornamental clothing.

Analogously, male anxiety is projected onto the object, the woman, and she, under Klimt's brush and in Freud's language, becomes encased in an armor that binds her imagined disruptive sexuality so that it cannot flow outward and destroy the male. The same technique (or psychological defense) is used by the painter and the analyst. Theweleit argues that Freud "refuses to concede that the ego lacks definite boundaries, except in an inward direction;" instead, the ego internalizes external boundaries, and incorporates them into a psychic enclosure (252). Again, it is the surface of the unconscious, for Freud, that becomes a limit separating internal processes from their disruptive external manifestations. Theweleit sees the "body armor" projected back onto objects. For Freud, however, the ego and the unconscious, not the body, become the new, although invisible, surface.

II. Nietzsche, language, truth and referentiality

The artistic ornamentation refers to -- and indeed is imbued with -- this excess of sexuality and affect, while it simultaneously tries to control its excess, just as hysterical symptoms present an uncontrolled desire while denying it. Whose desire? Whose body is hidden by the ornamentation? The artistic and hysterical ornament can be

framed by the question of referentiality. Nietzsche inaugurated many of the problems that preoccupied intellectuals. Hermann Brock characterized the age as the epitome of cultural emptiness, a "Wert-Vakuum", an intellectual desert with nothing in it, "or almost nothing except Nietzsche" (Broch in Le Rider 247) -- and one could say that Nietzsche, too, became an obsession, an ornament. Several of Nietzsche's notions united disparate elements in the avant-garde. For example, his distrust of bourgeois "crassness" and his critique of language; his dualism pitting the Apollinian -- a formal integrating notion of beauty -- against the Dionysian -- a disruptive psychic and cultural pessimism; and especially his emphasis on a sensual life force underlying physical phenomena were common elements within intellectual and artistic circles. Klimt himself was known to his contemporaries as a "Nietzscheaner", most likely because he embraced a vitalism and an openly sensual life.

Much of Nietzsche's *corpus* examines the relationship between language and truth, appearance and reality, and between the body's conception and materiality. These are familiar as binary oppositions that categorize and define masculine/feminine, oppositions also involved in "writing." Nietzsche is particularly difficult to pin down in his writings about truth; they move between oppositions, subverting notions of truth and the feminine. One moves

from one level of metaphoricity to another, almost as if a layer of stability were collapsing onto itself. Meanings are replaced by more interpretations. In The Gay Science, Nietzsche claims that the Apollonian appearance of beauty -- language, formal and plastic unity -- are themselves the greatest truth. "What is required is to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of appearance" (38, my emphasis). This echoes the Birth of Tragedy (1876), where the concepts of Apollonian and Dionysian are first introduced. This the first step of my analogy between the body and ornament: Viennese culture at the turn-of-the-century celebrated organic beauty, movement, appearance, decoration, even the body as a natural ornament to be viewed in paintings, as jewelry, and as home decoration. Beauty is truth. [Figures 2 and 3.]

The art nouveau, or *Jugendstil* movement, celebrated organic life and design, and it exaggerated the movements of fluid bodies. Viennese art nouveau favored geometric design as well; the repetitive and rhythmic patterns of Klimt and the graphic artists are good examples (Varnedoe 81). In general, though, one of the movement's hallmark's was the identification of women's sexuality with nature. Women, for example, were often represented with flowing clothing and hair. Organic similarities were postulated between women's bodies and botanical nature, most specifically flowers, both

of a graceful and dangerous kind. The female's naked body was part of an over-arching artistic conception connecting nature and art. Jugendstil was linked to an artistic conception of vitalism, celebrating a life energy or force, a view stemming from Nietzsche and Bergson. We will see this notion at work in Wedekind's play, "Lulu," in Chapter VII, where Lulu is the expression of the vitalist conception of life and death.

A visual parallel from Klimt's oeuvre at the turn-of-century are two pictures, a small drawing and a painting, both titled "Nuda Veritas" [Figures 4 and 5]. Like many of Klimt's depictions, both are allegories. The women's nakedness dispenses with the clothing that in traditional rhetoric and painting hides woman's truth. Clothing represents appearance parading as truth. A woman's naked body is an allusion to the "naked truth." With her nudity, a woman's hidden truth resurfaces: all one needs say about woman can be said at the level of her body. The irony is that as representation, this body can never be "truth", the "thing-in-itself" -- it can only refer to something else. Truth is always beyond woman.

The painting of "Nuda veritas" (Figure 4), like the graphic drawing, is situated in the emblematic tradition. Above the figure are words from Schiller: "Kannst Du nicht allen gefallen/Durch Deine Tat und Dein Kunstwerk;/Mach es wenigen recht/Vielen gefallen ist schlimmer" ["You cannot

please everyone through your acts and your art; make it good for the few. To please many is worse."] The woman stands naked, facing forward with her red hair billowing around her. She holds a mirror in her right hand. It is unclear whether the mirror is turned towards the spectator or the woman holding it; this is left purposely ambivalent. A snake curls around the woman's feet to emphasize the seductive nature of woman, truth and evil. The picture implies that truth is a mediation between narcissism, desire, and sexuality. The identification of woman with her mirror has, of course, a long artistic and literary history. Although Narcissus was a beautiful boy, his image became associated with woman's vanity as Greek homoerotic culture waned in Christian culture. The image of "Vanitas," however, was a lovely woman viewed from the front, and ugly hag from the back.

The female nude from the cover of the first edition of "Ver Sacrum" (1897), the magazine of the Secession's art work and avant-garde writing, is a graphic drawing (see Figure 5). Like the larger painting, the woman (here, with black hair) also holds a mirror with no clear indication of which way it faces and what it reflects. The emblem quotes L. Schefer above the drawing: "Wahrheit ist Feuer und Wahrheit reden/Heisst Leuchten und Brennen" ["Truth is fire and to speak the truth means to shine and burn."] Both figural allegories of truth are supplemented by a verbal

quote, because the picture itself cannot present, without mediation, what that truth is. Paradoxically, the drawing problematizes representation. One may speak the truth, but not paint it or otherwise represent it. The verbal element indicates that representation, especially of women, falls short of truth -- is a subversion of that truth. Perhaps woman -- for the man -- can only be what is represented of her. As we gaze at beauty, figured as a naked woman, the narcissistic implications of the pictures are unmistakable. Is truth a romantic notion of solipsistic self-containment, or is truth the reflection between self and other? In some ways, Nietzsche's desire to "stop at the surface" can be read as a warning lest one fall into the "Wert-Vakuum" of cultural and linguistic emptiness, epitomized by the speechless hysteric.

In paintings and in hysteria, female nature seems reduced to the body, to its surface and external manifestations, in part because the "truth" of woman is unknowable or frightening to the man. Otto Weininger, Klimt's contemporary and an immensely popular (as well as misogynist) philosopher, writes: "The woman is only sexual, the man also sexual" (114). And again: "In women, sexuality is diffusely spread over the whole body, every touch, on whatever spot, excites her sexually" (115). Freud said of Leonardo's "Mona Lisa" that it represented "the opposition that rules the love life of women: tenderness and ... a

consuming sensuality foreign to the male" (Fliedl, in Worbs --get cite). Women are mirrors for male sexual phantasies, and sexual pathology now slips into a category of the natural as far as "female nature" is concerned. No wonder the hysteric was often speechless; her speech was denied and her speechlessness was refracted through male desire.

The theatricality of this mirrored display sets up an analogous relationship between two sets of relationships: the doctor and his patient, and the artist/spectator and the painting. Under these conditions, the hysteric is seen as nothing but the body, yet her body is not hers to withhold from the gaze of the medical establishment or the male audience. The hysteric's body, desire and language belong to another. Augustine, one of the most photographed of Charcot's hysterics, was admitted to his Paris hospital after having been sexually abused by her stepfather, and suffered semi-paralysis, convulsions, and other hysterical symptoms. Charcot did little more than record her complaints, but she was such a "good" patient that she became Charcot's "primary" hysteric. His assistants Regnard and Bourneville continually photograph her in the classical "stages of the grand attack" in Photographique iconographie de la Salpêtrière (1877-1880). These poses strike us now as provocative and seductive -- "hysterical" postures. In some of the photographs of Augustine, the hysteric is positioned in such a way that the attack is not the main object of the

photograph at all. The woman is positioned more for her seductive pose than for the observation of the hysterical symptom (de Marneffe 85) [See Figure 6]. I return to Charcot's hysterics in Chapter V, and there I discuss their narratives and the effects of desire on the photographic images.

Like some of the female imagery in Klimt's paintings that I discuss later in this chapter, the hysteric as a photographic image is controlled and its movement essentially erased. Without the photographic apparatus necessary to "catch" and hold the phases of hysterical attacks, the body during its attacks is unmanageable (Didi-Huberman, 1985). Movement *per se* becomes purely ornamental and superficial in the photographs here -- useless for the clinician in his nosographical categorization. The unmanageable body is ornamental because the movements and gestures deviate from an "essential" hysteria -- those regulated but passionate poses that Charcot could so easily call forth on the stage of the lecture hall. The body itself functioned as a boundary here, too. The static body in the photograph was rigidly restrained within the limits of the examination room. The boundary of the hysteric's body prevents the internal manifestations from actually becoming manifest and destroying the patient's -- Charcot's -- hysteria.

III. Sexuality and Hostility

The male viewer's gaze is stimulated by the woman's body, but his scientific language or his pictures control this eroticization of viewing. But even language gets out of control: Weininger writes that "the hysteric offers the most attractive case to the physician;" Freud writes that hysteria presents "strange and wonderful" symptoms" (Schneider 216).

But in fact, all is not beauty with women. The woman's body, reduced to the beautiful, sexual, and exciting, can also horrify. The public's response to Klimt's 1902 "Beethoven Frieze" in the new Secession Building reveals how public constructions of sexuality intersect with private male anxieties. Klimt's anorectic and threatening women are enveloped by the proliferation of organic and sensuous design, associated with exotic sensuality. (Compare Figure 7 with Figure 10, for example). Nevertheless, the public's response to Klimt's panels was overwhelmingly negative -- the ugliness of the naked women in the frieze was the major criticism [See Figures 7, 8, 9: "Beethoven Frieze"].

The public's reaction was paranoid, perhaps in reaction to the spatial configuration of the exhibition. Painted and mounted in the new Secession art building, the "Beethoven Frieze" invited entrance into an unknown world. The "Beethoven Frieze" is painted along three walls of the L-shaped exhibition space in the Secession building, so that

the viewer gets the impression of entering into an enclosed arena in which the bodies are displayed. Naked bodies literally surround the audience, as the spectacle of madness and of female sexuality overtakes them. All is not static, however; the viewer may move through the exhibition, and the painting invites a narrative reading (sin reclaimed by poetry and music). The audience is a spectator of a performance, perhaps of a strip-tease, or an observer of one of Charcots' public exhibitions of hysteria. Charcot found a similarity between the asylum full of hysterical women and other publicly entertaining spectacles: Salpêtrière was "une sorte de musée pathologique vivant" (Gros 889). One critic suggested that Klimt's work might be better suited in "Präuscher's Panoptikon", that is, in the well-known Viennese wax museum (Bahr 1902). Scopophilia, the private sexual desire to see, here attains the status of public display. The audience is mesmerized by the women's nakedness, but simultaneously the repulsive figures, the grotesque mimicry of the aesthetically pleasing woman, offends them. Desire is exposed and then hidden under a common deprecating language.

Hermann Bahr collected many of the newspaper responses together in a small pamphlet entitled "Gegen Klimt" ("Against Klimt"), and printed the most negative or absurd as marginalia. Many of the critics associated Klimt's figures with madness, hysteria and pathological sexuality.

"... sie modernisirten [sic] die Nacktheit ins Krankhaft-Allegorishe [they modernized nakedness into the pathological-allegorical"]; the paintings were "... künstlerische Selbstbefleckung [artistic masturbation]; "gemalte Wahnsinn [painted madness]; painterly "fixe Ideen; gemalte Pornographie" ["painted pornography"]; "psychopathia pictoria" (my favorite, an obvious reference to Kraft-Ebbing's Psychopathia sexualis). The critics found the representation of female sexuality and "eroticism" there "disgusting and repulsive." One critic vacillates between sexual curiosity and loathing: "The exhibition will indubitably cause a sensation, ["Aufregen"] but also certainly repulsion and indignation" (67). The female body offends the sensibility of the "änsandige Bürgertum" (upstanding bourgeois). For the reviewers and spectators, sexual excess disfigures beauty; it becomes frightening.

Male voyeurism, here infused with the scandal of impropriety and excitement, also includes the desire to punish and denigrate the depicted female. This tendency is obvious in the deprecations hurled at the figures in the reviews. An example from Bahr's "Gegen Klimt" is telling: "The exhibition marks a decidedly embarrassing sensation; the paintings are deeply offensive to morals" (71). The male audience expressed a surprising amount of offense at Klimt's freize, and this outrage defends a certain type of sexuality. Something other than "aesthetic" considerations

seems to be at work here (but how the aesthetic is linked to the sexual is exactly the point). This scandalized voyeurism, on one interpretation, as Laura Mulvey explains in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" is linked, at least in film (and, I would argue here, specularly) to castration anxiety. In modern readings of traditional Freudian theory, the woman functions as a marker of sexual difference, and her body is a reminder of castration for the male. Thus gazing at the representation of woman, the feminine, can evoke the fear of the castration threat that must be overcome by males in a phallogentric system. Hence the vilification targeting the offending feminine object[s].

The pleasurable sexual and sadistic gaze of the voyeur maintains the male in the dominating subject position while humiliating the woman as object. The male punishes the one [woman] who threatens an imagined ego integrity.

"Repulsive", "crazy", "mad": these are the hostile epithets that are hurled by the male public at the female figures of the Frieze paintings. The representation of woman as mad or hysterical might be an effect of anxiety in the male viewer.

The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from his castration anxiety: reenactment of the original trauma ... counterbalanced by devaluation, punishment ... of the guilty object ... or complete disavowal of castration by substitution of a fetish. ... The first avenue,

voyeurism, has associations with sadism, pleasure in ascertaining guilt ... control ... and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness (Mulvey 205).

I return to women's image as fetish later in this chapter. Here, I concentrate on the representations in the Frieze paintings that seem to produce anxiety and hostility on the part of the male spectator. Bäumer, in her book about Klimt, mentions that at a Secession exhibition, Klimt removed one of the paintings because it was "causing fear" in the spectators (Bäumer 14). (Unfortunately, it was not recorded which painting this was.) The point is clear: Klimt's paintings of women did provoke an anxious reaction.

To stay with the paradigm of castration anxiety, the "insufficiency" of these female bodies does not extinguish the male desire to look. In spite of her "lack", the woman fascinates the man and he is drawn to her sexuality. It is the woman's perceived lack that fixes the male in a dominating position, just as her "lack" is part of what motivates the sexual and scopophilic desire of the heterosexual male in the first place. This unconscious scotomization of the female seems to me to be one explanation of the audience's scandalized outcry. Otto Weininger, in a chapter on aesthetics, comes very close to saying the same thing. He claims that although men are attracted by women's bodies and genitals, these parts are

nevertheless ugly, and the reason is that, "sie [verletzen] das Schamgefühl im Manne [they hurt men's feeling of shame]" (320, my emphasis). The male public that criticized Klimt's female figures echo the same sentiment. The female figures in these representations, if we follow Mulvey's argument, are the object of verbal denigration because they unconsciously remind the male viewer of castration anxiety - their "lack" reminds him that he might be in danger of losing his penis, too.

However, Mulvey does not address the notion that the denigration of the sexual object might also be connected to the fear of the phallic woman, that is, Mulvey's analysis stays within the conceptual boundaries of the Oedipal configuration. One more interpretation could be that the shock of the figures represented an even more primitive reaction: Klimt's viewers might also have been frightened by the unconscious fear of the woman herself as the castrating agent, and not just a reminder of the fear. And in fact, Felix Salten (who wrote Bambi and is charged with writing the child-pornographic Josefine Mützenberger) compares the type of woman who is represented in these Frieze pictures to the those of the Salome and Judith pictures. Those women are sexually excessive, but their sexuality is rendered more powerful and frightening because they hold the castrated member (i.e., the head) in their hands. These women do not allude to their own "lack", rather they explicitly threaten

the male with it. In either interpretation, however, the point remains that the hostility and sadistic denigration of the female representations by the critics could be attributed to the fear that the representations arouse in the unconscious phantasy of the viewer.

IV. Class and Sexuality

The public outcry over the Beethoven Frieze exhibition is, further, linked to the class structure of the audience which came into conflict with the sexuality of the depicted women. The "Judith" and "Salome" women were a type of "hohe Frau," that is, wealthy bourgeois, even noble class, women. The stereotypical body types of the Jewish bourgeois salon woman were depicted in the Beethoven Frieze. Klimt painted two classes of women: the full-bodied, blond or red-headed models of the working class -- such as his favorite model Herma -- and the Jewish "Jourdame" of the ornamental paintings, such as those portraits of an Adele Bloch or Emilie Flögel, for example (Fischer 121). While it has always been acceptable to paint the model (or lover) as a sexual object, the depiction of naked women from the social class that supports the artist is usually not sanctioned. The more flagrantly sexual, and usually nude, figures that Klimt painted, "Watersnakes II," "Danae", and "Goldfish," were all based on his working class models (See Figures 10, 11 and 12). These women depict an open and provocative sexuality. They are reflections of male sexual desire --

and these women were unmistakably lower class, at least to the eyes of the public of the time. They are visual representation of Schnitzler's "süsse Mädels," the girls with whom the bourgeois and aristocratic male had sexual contact, since the women of his own circle were forbidden to him until marriage (Fischer 107).

We are made aware of the class division (both socio-economic and between types of women) in the remarks leveled against the female types in the "Beethoven Frieze." Hermann Bahr again quotes the critics: "I would like to meet the father, brother or husband who could lead his daughter, sister or wife into the present Secession exhibition and who would not leave in highest indignation" (71) (my emphasis). "The exhibition would be appropriate for a déclassé night club, but not for women and girls" (71). There are women, and there are women: the two should not be interchanged, as Klimt did in his paintings in the Frieze.

These paintings of the sexually provocative women are connected to water and its flowing sensuality, and distinct from the depictions of upper class women in this respect. Male desire, as Theweleit says, "flows in a certain sense *through women*. In some way or another, it always flows in relation to the image of woman" (272, author's emphasis). Theweleit argues that the water imagery, although positive because it represents the movement and flow of desire (a desire that the male denies himself) is also the abstraction

of desire. The dissolving of the woman's own boundaries in her merging with the water signifies a loss of her identity as a distinct object. She becomes merely a representation of real desire. It is the woman who is dissolved in the sensuous flow of sex. Klimt does not represent the male as a disintegrating object; the male stands outside of the flow, watching, painting, describing. The "Danae" and "Goldfishes" are imbued with an accessible sensuality, but the ornately encrusted portraits of the upper class women are stiff, without movement. They are a different class, and hence possess a different sexuality.

The women in the Beethoven Frieze depict the female body as sexualized within the framework of the inaccessible upper class or bourgeois woman. They resemble the woman depicted in the "Judith" painting, whom Felix Salten compared to "Eine schöne jüdische Jourdame -- denke man sich bekleidet mit einer Pailletten-Robe aus einem Wiener Ringstraßen Atelier ... Wundervoll ist der Leib dieser Judith gemalt, dieser knabenhafte Zarte, beinahe hagere Leib ..." ["A beautiful Jewish Jourdame -- one thinks of her being clothed in a spangled dress from a Vienna Ringstrasse salon ... the body of this Judith is wonderfully painted, this boyish tenderness, this almost skinny body ..."] (Salten in Fischer 121, my emphasis). The Jewish art patroness was a familiar and essential part of the bourgeois structure of Viennese society, and indeed exemplified the extent to which

the Jew had been incorporated into the culture and artistic life that of society (Fischer 121). Klimt weds the emaciated yet sensual representations to cultural decadence and upper class patronage.

Thus the audience was forced to gaze upon the bodies of women that were forbidden to it, and in so doing, were confronted with both social and sexual restrictions. Even the titles of the paintings that correspond to the women in the Frieze are names of danger: "Lewdness," "Lust," "Excess," "Madness" and "Death," for example, name forbidden subjects. The women's bodies were shockingly pathological, but familiar. Such women should not arouse illicit sexual desire, yet are displayed here as exhibitionistic objects. Yet their very ambiguity as sexual objects is perplexing. Are they examples of a forbidden bourgeois woman? Do they arouse a homoerotic interest, as "knabenhaft" (boyish)? Perhaps the tabooed desire surrounding the representation of these forbidden objects refers obliquely to private taboos and desires -- to the most-forbidden woman, the mother. Freud's depiction of the inaccessible bourgeois mother, for example, and the sexuality of the working class "Süsse Mädel" are linked through a forbidden connection in these works by Klimt.

So, too, the male observer was fascinated and repulsed by the sexuality in hysteria. Breuer, who co-wrote Studies on Hysteria with Freud in 1896, apparently did not admit her

hysterical pregnancy. The question remains, though, whether Anna O.'s class origin might not also have something to do with the fact that Breuer could not see what was happening in front of him. Such a woman should have no sexual desire, or at least conceal it. (And in fact, Breuer could never totally accept Freud's account of the sexual origin of hysteria or neurosis.) Krafft-Ebing, who chronicled the sexual pathologies of his time, indignantly cites many examples of women who, in their hysterical attacks, became seductive and hyper-sexual. Their sexuality was offensive to those who regarded such desire to be an attribute of lower class women. Both Freud and Klimt confounded prevailing sexual stereotypes. Freud transferred stereotypes of lower class prostitutes and sexuality to all women (Gilman 25). Klimt suffused representations of upper-class women with an illicit sexuality as well. In later chapters, the social class of the hysteric and prostitute in relation to the narrator also plays a role in the representation of her sexuality, especially in works by Wedekind and the Goncourt brothers.

VI. Nietzsche and Rhetoric

Manfred Schneider, in "Hysterie als Gesamtkunstwerk" argues that "the hysterical sign, the production of symptoms, is a reading" (215). Hysteria is a language, and hysterical symptoms do not "naturally" refer to anything. The hysteric reads the signs from a cultural repertoire, and

her symptoms (signs) are quotations from cultural artifacts. The hysteric's particular symptoms were "read" from cultural products. Although they referred to a unique experience of the woman's body, those signifiers were also simultaneously cultural ones. Symptoms were recognized by both hysteric and doctor alike; by painters and artists, by consumers of postcards and newspapers. [Figures 2 and 3.] Schneider emphasizes that these cultural repertoires from which hysterical symptoms were drawn stemmed from literary and dramatic works, and reached a saturation point (222), at which point they ceased to have cultural or personal significance.

The hysteric was everywhere in turn-of-the-century Vienna. "Hysteria" was circulated endlessly in the popular and cultural press to describe anything uncontrollable, sexual, or feminine. Klimt's paintings were just one aspect of the process whereby the body of the woman came into public circulation as something to be read about women; his bodies both produced and reflected dominant forms of what "feminine" was to be. The Frieze critics, for example, were already familiar with, and were themselves producing, the association of femininity and insanity; they had already accepted a cultural perspective equating modernism with neurosis, with femininity and hysteria.

But the hysteric hides her sexuality behind a screen of non-sexual symbols (lameness, paralysis, fainting,

convulsions). In the "medicalization of the gaze" (Foucault) the invisible is sought under a wealth of exterior symptoms. The body is a site for symptoms; it signifies beyond itself, to an interior which knowledge will make visible. Charcot, as we have seen, sought the external manifestation of the physiological disruption; Freud, conversely, began to look inward for the psychological cause -- a reversal in direction. Thus the hysteric's body itself becomes the site of skepticism.

The suspicion of the sign and the symptom takes us back to Nietzsche and linguistic problems. Nietzsche's metaphors for the problems of language are well-known: the veil and the woman, to take two examples. The veil is a trope that refers to the emptiness of language, and woman to the absence of truth. Nietzsche says in The Gay Science, for example, that "I fear that women who have grown old are more sceptical in the secret recesses of their hearts than any of the men; they believe in the superficiality of existence as in its essence, and all virtue and profundity is to them only the disguising of this "truth," the very desireable disguising of a *pudendum* -- an affair, therefore, of decency and modesty, and nothing more!" (64, author's emphasis).

Earlier, we saw that for Nietzsche, appearance is to be seized upon for its aesthetic and sensuous pleasures. Appearance is truth. In "Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne" ("Truth and Falsehood in an

extramoral sense"), the argument shifts to question the equation of appearance with truth. Nietzsche specifically sets up a correlation between rhetorical [ornamental] language and the body, including, by extension, the hysterical body. Nietzsche's well-known quote about language from "Wahrheit," is also appropriate for the hysteric, as he says:

What is truth? [hysteria] A movable army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short, the sum of human relations, which are poetically and rhetorically exceeded, transferred and embellished and which after long use, are thought by a people to be stable, canonical and binding: truths [hysteria] are illusions, about which one has forgotten, that they are such; metaphors, which have become over-used and sensuously powerless; coins which have lost their picture and are regarded only as metal, no longer as coins (611).

Language and symbols ultimately refer to the perceiving body. Each word, each thought, is one step removed from "true" experience. Any language, not just poetic language is itself metaphoric. Language is a rhetoric, an ornament of/on feeling. Language comes after, or is an supplement to, feeling, and is in excess of it. Language elaborates unconscious and uncensored thoughts and feelings, and

represents repression, a forgetting, as he says. This view seems similar to Lacan's more specific analogy between language as desire for the lost object and the subject's sensual identification with it.

Forgetting emphasizes for Nietzsche the excess and the artificiality of language. The inessential is mistaken for the essential. Thus one body (rhetorical language) is substituted for another (the perceiving body). The body that perceives is overtaken by a body of language. If previously the hysteric's symptoms were read as part of her "truth", now, her symptoms are read as inessential, even as a lie. They refer to something else, something invisible -- or perhaps to nothing. Here we have the second step of the analogy: the hysteric has no body, it has become inessential. The symptom is again excessive, an ornamentation.

In The Gay Science, Nietzsche uses another traditional rhetorical trope, equating language to ornamental clothing. The literary figure of clothing is analogous to the hysterical symptom as a lie or a fake (albeit an attractive one):

... What things are called is incomparably more important than what they are. The reputation, name, and appearance ... of a thing is what it counts for -- originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and

altogether foreign to their nature and even to their skin -- all this grows from generation unto generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such (#58, 121-122).

Language, "thrown over" nature, is false. Appearance - the veil, clothing, ornamentation -- is mistakenly confused with the "skin" underneath. Hysterical symptoms, as a language, would also seem to cover up a truth. Rhetoric, ornamentation, clothing, hysteria: all are beautiful but superfluous -- and false because they hide the real "corpus" underneath the rhetorical veil or the symptoms: "Truth" or "woman". Nietzschean truth is the body in its own experience. His problem occurs when the body in question is that of woman. Once one penetrates the "veil of Maja," the body of truth or of woman does not satisfy the curious seeker (who seems, moreover, to always be male). The body of the woman (literally and figuratively) thus functions as yet another trope, another sign. Her sensual and material body seduces the male away from truth. This implies that the truth which rhetoric veils is also a seduction. From what? Away from what? What is truth in all of this? Perhaps, as Derrida argues,

it is the knowledge that in "truth" there is no truth in language, or in woman.

Here again, we return to the question of castration anxiety, for what "truth" is the woman to possess if not a penis? Derrida argues that on Nietzsche's reading, this is man's, not woman's, problem of truth (that is, a male reading of that truth). The scientist and the philosopher have sought a denial of their own anxiety in a "truth" that denigrates woman while trying to confirm the phallus in the woman.

The visual experience of difference and repression involves a narrative push towards knowledge and is driven by the desire to "see," but this is a complex structuring, as Peter Brooks points out in his study of narrative, Body Work (13). As part of, and motive for, creating meaning in the world by way of symbols, the body is accounted for by the psychosexual thought of difference. He says, "Phantasies project it [the body] forward in imagining scenarios of fulfillment, pleasures, power and backward to the unconscious infantile sources of phantasy" (14).

The body is implicated in notions of knowledge and truth; notions of truth become fetishes. I would like to broaden the concept of fetish for my analysis of Klimt's paintings and for his culture. I see the fetish as a generalized reaction to a particular way of observing women, based on a broader cultural perception of female sexuality

that could be related to a fear of the imaginary castrated woman -- and castrating woman. The castration problem is a metaphor for the west's relationship to problems of truth and referentiality. Truth and fetish are part of a way to avoid seeing what the woman doesn't have. Truth is anxiety for phallogentric culture. A woman's body remains bound by cultural attitudes that prevent her from "exposing" her notion of truth and the body. The same anxiety around the woman's body is prevalent in Wedekind's "Lulu," and I return to both Nietzsche and Derrida in the last chapter.

Let us return to Klimt's portraits, and his movement away from the body. The Judith painting is a transitional one, both decorative and representational. [Figure 13: "Judith and Holofernes," 1901, and compare to "Judith II," 1902, Figure 14.] Felix Salten wrote admiringly about the "Judith" portrait: "This Judith is one who entices men's eyes. A slender, supple-pliant woman with a smoldering fire in her dark look ..." (Fliedl 109, my emphasis). The male imagines himself an object of the woman's gaze, ("she entices"), but the picture's attraction seems based on his own desire for sexual viewing: voyeurism and narcissism. Thus, the woman is the object of male desire, although he attributes desire to her. Salten avoids mentioning the coupling of sexuality (orgasmic smile of Judith) with the decapitated head of her lover. It is almost as if Salten represses the symbolism of castration so frequently

commented upon in the reading of such pictures. Instead, he concentrates upon the imagined sexual availability of Judith. The painting's decorative ornamentation deflects a confrontation with excessive female sexuality, here figured as the female's power to castrate.

I will return to the decorative surface in a moment, but as an aside, let me mention Freud's 1910 essay, "The Psycho-Analytic View of Psychogenic Disturbance of Vision", because he there discusses how scopophilia is related to hysterical blindness. Hysterical blindness is founded on the conflict between the ego instincts and the sexual instincts, Freud argues in this essay. The sexual instinct may be tied to a particular organ, the eye, for example, and may be satisfied by looking at an object. If the object is a forbidden one, however, the threatened ego over-retaliates by repressing sexual desire, and the eye, too, is punished, so that the object remains unseen (Freud uses the term "talion punishment" [*lex talonsis*, the old Testament view of "an eye for an eye."]). However, Freud also attributes a sort of spiteful pleasure to the repressed instinct as well:

It looks as though the repression had been carried too far by the ego; as though it had emptied the baby out with the bath-water; the ego refuses to see anything at all any more, now that the sexual interest in seeing has made itself so prominent. But the alterative picture seems more to the

point. This attributes the active role instead to the repressed pleasure in looking. The repressed instinct takes its revenge for being held back from further psychical expansion, by becoming able to extend its dominance over the organ that is in its service (216).

In the conflict between ego and sexual drives, Freud wants to give the active power to the sexual instincts, and so they remain dominant. Thus we can imagine that the field of vision is eroticized in general because of the repression that is carried out in relation to one forbidden object. The fetish, then, becomes increasingly the object of erotic attraction. Could we imagine a sort of hysterical blindness on Salten's part, and even on the part of the male painter and spectator as well? So entranced is the writer by the beauty of the woman and the force of his own denial, that her castrating potential is overlooked. Although the viewer's vision is not totally blinded here, my point is that the spectator experiences a conflict in his field of vision: the imagined sexuality of the represented woman obscures the violence of that sexuality. The fact that Salten had previously called this "Judith" the "schöne Jüdische Jourdame" of the upper class, whose sexuality was forbidden, could be yet another reason for the absence of any mention of the severed head in Salten's account of the painting. Again, though, I understand and use "hysterical

blindness" in an idiosyncratic way here, to refer to a process that takes place in the male viewer, and is not part of the hysteric's symptoms.

V. Fetish and Icon

In other paintings by Klimt, the female body is almost totally obscured by decoration. (See Figures 15: "Emilie Flöge; Figure 16: "Adele Bloch-Bauer I;" Figure 17: "Fritza Riedler.) If Klimt had earlier represented female sexuality as veering towards the pathological in the "Beethoven Frieze," the excess has now become overwhelming. One has only to think of the motivation for the fetish. Male anxiety is displaced onto an extravagance of surface. By concealing the body, Klimt also reveals that too much sexuality cannot be figured or represented. And in fact, this ambiguity of revealing and concealing the phallic lack -- the fetish's metonymical function -- is strikingly displayed in Klimt's portraits. The shape of the decorated female bodies is penile and it mirrors the contours of the male. The male shape is projected onto the absent figure of the woman. She has no body; she has become a decorated phallus. The figure is an uncanny resurrection of the very lack that the male fears. The figures of the woman, as fetish, preserves the "truth" that the male suspects in the woman (her lack), but by its very shape, the portrait satisfies his anxiety. And its shape, upright and stiff -- like the upright phallus of Freud's "Medusa's Head" that

wards off castration anxiety.

The ornamental element in Klimt's later paintings is directly related to the idea of the fetish. While I would not go so far as to suggest that every symbol or sign that stands for something else is a fetish (unless one were to suggest that all acts of symbolization are, in origin, a fetish) I think that Klimt's visual display is, among other things, a scotomization of desire, and alludes to a feminine "lack" as conceived by the male. To continue again with Laura Mulvey's argument in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," there are at least two ways of looking. One has been discussed: the denigration of the object, linked with sadism. The other avenue transforms the female into an iconic fetish.

Freud's 1927 essay, "Fetishism", seems purposely ambiguous, and in it, Freud is careful to show that the fetish is itself the result of the subject holding two contradictory psychic positions in abeyance. The fetish, the result of the male's castration anxiety, stands for the phallus that is lacking in the woman, and allows the fetishist, by implication, to deny the "fact" of castration in the mother, yet it also -- and simultaneously -- is the realization of the lack, thus the necessity of a substitute. Knowledge and desire are held captive in the fetish: repression is "seen" through the eye. "He retains this belief [the woman having a penis] but he also gives it up; during the conflict between the dead weight of the unwelcome

perception and the force of the opposite wish, a compromise is constructed such as is only possible in the realm of unconscious modes of thought" ("Fetishism" 200).

In this essay, Freud argues in the asides against Rene Laforque's notion of "scotomization", which Laforque used as synonym for repression whose effects are seen (or not) in the visual realm. Freud objects to this use because the fetishist does not completely repress his anxiety, as is evidenced by the existence of the fetish in the first place. The term "scotoma", originally applied to the hysteric's well-documented visual disturbances, including hallucinations, blind spots, etc., was associated with the first stage the "aura hysterica", a "... luminous image, first circular, then semi-circular, then zig-zag ..., like the drawings of a fortification, flickering ..." (Apter 148). More recently, Lacan has expanded the meaning of scotomization; the scopic field is "hystericized in order to camouflage the spectacle of the phallic lack" (149).³ The camouflage of the phallic lack, when attached to an object, is the fetish.

For Freud, the true fetish rules the fetishist's sexual choice, and his description in "Fetishism" implies the desire for immediate sexual gratification (198). In that essay, the fetish is related to the mother's castrated condition, which the boy attributes to all women. The castrated mother is contrasted to the "phallic mother" in

"The Medusa's Head," however. Freud emphasizes the mother in a stage prior to the child's perception and knowledge of castration. For the infant, the mother is the source of phantasy and fulfillment. It was Freud's followers (e.g. Melanie Klein) who linked the phallic woman with castration, and who saw in the "phallic mother" a threat to the child's "wholeness."

Although my account of fetishism might sound abstract, Otto Weininger provides a concrete analogy in his own aesthetics. "Probably no male human being is spared the terrified shock of threatened castration at the sight of the female genitals" (201), Freud writes, and he might have been commenting about Weininger when he remarks that some men are never able to overcome this "horror". For Weininger, the woman's body is "incomplete", and this accounts for her inherent lack of harmonious beauty. Weininger's aesthetics abhor the female body. He says in a chapter entitled "Erotik und Aesthetik" that "[daß] das Weib nicht in seiner Nacktheit am schönsten ist. ... das völlig nackte lebendige Weib [erzeugt] den Eindruck von etwas Unfertigem. ... Das nackte Weib ist, im einzelnen schöner denn als Ganzes" ["the woman is not most beautiful when naked, ... the fully naked living woman creates the impression of something unfinished, ... the naked woman is more beautiful in particular features than as a whole"] (319). The problem of woman's beauty is her genitals. Weininger implies that any

part of the body can be a fetish, "replacing" the woman's lack of male genitals and the ugliness of the female's.

Perhaps the "incompleteness" of Weininger's female for the male in the culture at that time is "completed" by Klimt's paintings. In Klimt's decorative paintings, as a visual space for unconscious associations, the spectacle of the female body and its "lack" is covered with a fetish of ornamentation. In Lacanian vocabulary, metonymy is the general term for affective displacement, and since language substitutes for the object, metonymy is the effect of desire that creates language. Decoration, too, participates in this logic of "writing": decoration, as fetish, is also metonymy, or more specifically, synecdoche. Synecdoche as a rhetorical trope has traditionally been associated with the fetish, since the fetish stands for something else: *pars pro toto*, or *totum pro parte* (Spackman 192). Yet the whole that the fetish points to does not exist: "The mother's penis, the 'thing itself' is always already a fetish invented by the child, a belief implying at once denial and affirmation of castration" (Kofman in Spackman 193).

To the substitution of part for whole that it effects (or of any object contiguous to another) corresponds the substitution of a part of the body (or of a related object) to the complete sexual partner in fetishism. That this is not just a superficial analogy is borne out by the fact that

metonymical substitution does not exhaust itself in the pure and simple surrogation of one term for another; the substituted term is instead at once negated and evoked by its substitute in a procedure whose ambiguity closely recalls Freudian "Verleugnung" (Agamben in Spackman 192).

Let us turn briefly to one example of these overly decorated figures (See Figure 18: "Expectation"). Notice that the woman in this rather Beardslieysque picture holds her own head in her hands, as if she, too, like Judith, were carrying the decapitated trophy. This trophy of castration is covered with exorbitant detail. The phallic structure of the entire depiction, including the specifics within the painting -- the dress, the design of eyes (symbol of castration) -- all effectively displace sexually-produced anxiety onto the decorative surface. The woman's beauty and desirability remain intact only if the woman's corporal integrity is annihilated -- only if she is a fragmented body and partially eroticized. The ornamental surface points by its excess beyond the body; ornament is a symptom. Male constructed sexuality transgresses its own boundaries.

An interesting aside to my assessment is given by many art historians, who see Klimt's voluptuous facades and decorations in a purely positive light: they see the proliferation of decoration, of orientalism, of the "natural" facade as a sign of affirmative pan-sexuality in

Klimt's work. The art historian Comini writes, "It is [a] basic message of inevitable, cycle-perpetuating Eros that streams forth from ... many of Klimt's portraits ... Klimt transformed the manifest Eros into sexual symbolism, a shimmering facade of voluptuous ornament which could be seen as just that or as more, according to what was reflected in the eye of the beholder" (14-15).

This explanation of sexuality in the facade accepts that the "eye of the beholder" belongs to the male viewer. The critic never questions the symbolization of excessive decoration itself, nor its function in obscuring the body. Sexuality does indeed "shimmer" on the surface of the woman's body (as Weininger also implied), but the body surface is displaced onto the facade of design. The body becomes pure design and excess. The ornament can be read as a symptom that points beyond -- into -- the picture. The male artist constructs female sexuality as a sexuality that hides itself, just as the male physician begins to construct a hysteria that is given only by linguistic symbols. The body of sexuality must be mastered by language, just as the represented body is mastered by ornament.

Moreover, the stiffness of the decorated body acts as a boundary and a shield to contain the male viewer's own anxiety. Theweleit has shown how the soldiers of the Freikorps equated the woman's body with flooding waters, an unimaginable force that disrupts the male's body and ego

integrity. The male soldier, however, never abandoned himself to this flow, rather he erected towers and shields around himself. His own body become an armor. The armor protects not the woman, but the fragile ego of the male. A rigid male armor is projected onto the female form. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1924), Freud employs the metaphor of a reservoir of libido, whose energy is ready to be employed in object cathexis or attraction. However, the libido can "dry up" by too much investment in self or other. In Klimt's paintings, an analogy might be that the female sexualized body must also be dessicated so as not to disrupt the equilibrium established by conventional standards of viewing. Klimt's early representatations of female sexuality employ streams of flowing water and languid women; his women float and drift in a liquid pleasure of female sexuality. Here, this moisture dries up, and is replaced by the inert metallic gold of the armored and ornamental portraits.⁴ Similarly, Freud dismisses "that oceanic feeling" in The Ego and the Id and posits, instead, dams and limits.

If we turn again to Klimt's bony and anorexic female figures from the Beethoven Frieze, again, as in the portraits, one could read the desiccated figures as another way of projecting death onto the female. The figures seem literally without much life; they are not encased in decoration, rather they are spectral and haunting, even

uncanny. For Klimt, the rivers of desire dry up. The sensuous and liquid medium through which women's bodies earlier drifted has been replaced by a brittle body armor.

The fetishized surface and the rigid body also function to limit the woman's disruptive influence. This is also visible in the way that the portraits seem literally encased and entombed by the decorative surroundings. As in the photographic images of the hysteric, movement is stilled and constrained. The female's sexuality no longer flows; it is held back. That streaming sexuality that leads to a dissolving unity of bodies has been replaced by sharp delineations, angles and boundaries. Nietzsche's ornamental cloth is thrown over the woman by the male to protect his anxious self-conception, so that he can paint, describe, philosophize. He gains distance, that is, from the disrupting influence. "The magic and the most powerful effect of woman is, in philosophical language, action at a distance, *actio in distans*; but this requires first of all and above all -- *distance*" (Nietzsche in Derrida, Spurs, 47).

The effectiveness of the fetish within public representation is based on an assumption that each male spectator participates in private Oedipal anxieties. But one could perhaps generalize this anxiety into a cultural one for that time. After all, the imagined threat of the "Neue Frau," the emancipated woman, with her independence,

ability to work for herself, her refusal to follow conventional patterns of public and private conduct, her suspect sexuality, were threatening to the turn-of-the-century culture. The new woman was seen as masculine, relinquishing her traditional feminine role. She caused cultural anxiety. This image of the masculine woman does not function as a fetish. The fear of cultural castration is forcibly projected onto the Other. Rather, the fetish loses its effectiveness and the woman becomes again the object of sadism.

So, too, once Freud began to discuss the sexual nature of the hysteric, he dispenses with the body. In his analysis of Miss Lucy (Studies), Freud's primary clue is her lack of smell (anosmia); in the famous Dora case, he speaks disparagingly of her symptoms: hers was merely a case of "petite hysterie", with the commonest of somatic and psychic symptoms..." (39). Yet Freud kept returning to this case, attempting to apply to it his new technique of interpretation from the Interpretation of Dreams. What is invisible now interests him, the psychic mechanisms. What interests him is his own analysis, his own fumbling narration, his attempt to master his own desire, seen as countertransference -- his own desire and his inability to do so. Even when his patients talked, Freud interpreted what they said. He mastered their language with his own. We know that Freud was unable to admit the reality of a

feminine sexuality in its own right; it was a frightening prospect. In the medical texts, physical descriptions of hysteria begin to disappear -- Freud and his followers obsessively talk about talking. Male hysteria is finally recognized.

The physical symptoms of hysteria have lost their efficacy; like the "coins" in the Nietzschean metaphor, they have become over-saturated with use. The magic circle of speculation has been broken. The physician lends them no credence, the hysteric finds they do not have the desired effect. Another language must be found. As with Klimt's paintings, the body of the woman no longer is itself enough; it has been too long exploited, its representations have been over-used.

In all of these representations, the body never appears for the woman or the hysteric herself. Nor does her spoken language. In these representations of the woman or the hysteric, language reflects only the male's desire. The hysteric has internalized the male's view of her body, which is symbolically fragmented by the subject herself. She has no body -- no complete body. She has no integrated representation of her body for herself. The hysteric's knowledge of her body is disrupted; she gives her symptoms over to the male gaze, to the interpreter of her desire. Her body symbolizes beyond its surface -- it signifies, both to herself and to the male, an extravagant and frightening

unrepressed sexuality at the "interior" of her nature. Ultimately, for the artist and the doctor, the female body is a symptom of her sexual pathology, and is seen as hysterical or reduced to a fetishized surface. Male desire delineates a physical and psychic pathology that escapes the woman herself.

CHAPTER II: ENDNOTES

1. "The hysteric has no body" is an expression used by Monique David-Menard in Hysteria from Freud to Lacan. Body and Language in Pschychoanalysis.
2. I am indebted to Theweleit's work for many of the ideas about liquid, streaming and armor.
3. Thus Lacan would see the female hysteric as suffering from phallic anxiety.
4. As an aside, Klimt's father was himself a goldsmith.

Chapter III. Hofmannsthal's Elektra and the representation of hysteria

Hofmannsthal's use of the concepts of hysteria allowed him to articulate problems of language and the self in his 1903 drama, Elektra. The play revises the classical theme of revenge and matricide by centering discord around an indisputable psychological interpretation. Elektra's actions are grounded in hysterical reactions and are thwarted both by her own hysterical obsessions as well as those of her mother. Hofmannsthal used Freud and Breuer's case study of Anna O. from Studien über Hysteria as the model for his heroine, and in a number of ways the play is similar to Anna O's situation (Worbs 1983; Urban 1978). In a broader sense, however, Hofmannsthal's play explores Elektra's capacity for action, even though the drama utilizes classical characters and setting, as do many texts of German humanism (Mueller, 71). Yet Elektra, like Hofmannsthal's other plays from this period, is dominated by the playwright's "... obsessive concern with questions of identity and its relationship to sexuality and action" (72). This preoccupation expands the characters' motivations to inner conflicts and delineates the relationship between individual and modern society. Thus, in Elektra, Hofmannsthal's characterization of the feminine leads to the conclusion that a woman's ability to act is limited or disturbed because of her gender, and her femininity

culminates in hysterical symptoms. The drama modernizes the classical tragedy within a psychological framework which sets the immobilized hysteric against an active male.

Hofmannsthal's Elektra is a paranoid and bloody vision of a daughter's revenge for her father's death. The play begins with Elektra speaking to her dead father, and proceeds as she tries to enlist her sister, Chrysothemis, in her vague intent to kill the mother. Yet there is no plot, no plan: revenge is purely imaginative. The play becomes increasingly frantic as Elektra's desire becomes "hysterical": she speaks more and more graphically of her mother's death, her connection to her father, and of her life dedicated to violent, sexual memory. Orestes suddenly appears, and after a moment of shock over his sister's condition, he is quickly convinced to carry out the revenge that Elektra has been unable to accomplish. As the murders are made known, Elektra joyfully dances, as she had imagined in the play's first scene. With her mother's death and her father's revenge, Elektra dies.

In Elektra, Hofmannsthal suggests that a woman who desires is hysterical, and in this, he contributes to a long classical tradition, which begins with the Greek tragedies of Medea, Phedra, Cassandra and, of course, Elektra. In Hofmannsthal's version of Elektra, female characters are stripped of their maternal concerns, allowing a female non-reproductive sexuality to predominate and engendering

hysteria as the consequence. In this chapter, I discuss the problematic relationship among the daughter, maternity and hysteria, especially in relationship to "Muttersprache." In Section I, I discuss Elektra's connection to Anna O. and to Hofmannsthal's Vienna. Elektra's contradictory identification with both maternal and paternal domains will be the subject of Sections II and III. Section IV shows how language is effected in the hysteric's contradictory entanglement in symbolic and maternal spaces. In Section IV, I also return to briefly to Vienna and a discussion of the institution of motherhood seen in light of Hofmannsthal's contemporaries.

I. Background

Elektra as a whole depicts a world out of sync -- its classical elements and characters are strange and phantasmagoric. Unlike naturalist plays at the turn-of-the-century, such as Strindberg's "Miss Julie," Ibsen's bourgeois domestic plays or Hauptmann's dramas of the working class, Hofmannsthal's dramas have much more in common with the symbolist theater of Meyerink and Maeterlink. His plays portray dream-worlds, unreal circumstances, all appropriate vehicles for the depiction of unconscious motivations and enactment. Indeed, Hofmannsthal's knowledge of so-called "hypnoid" states helps create characters who more naturally exist in a world without conscious motivation and whose actions are prompted

by unconscious stimuli. In the hysteric's so-called "secondary" or hypnoid state, the hysteric loses consciousness of everyday reality and experiences another state of consciousness, sometimes accompanied by hallucinations (Breuer and Freud 12). Both Elektra and her mother often move in a trance-like reverie:

Elektra fährt zusammen, wie der Nachtwander, der seinen Namen rufen hört. Sie taumelt. Ihre Augen sehen um sich, als fänden sie sich nicht gleich zurecht (16).

Elektra walks like a sleepwalker who hears her name being called. She stumbles. She looks around, as if she is not quite balanced.

Hofmannsthal was familiar with psychological terminology and their significance. Even before the Studies in Hysteria, Hofmannsthal was using terms such as "Spaltung des Bewusstseins" (split in consciousness), terms which Freud and Breuer also employed. In Elektra, the daughter diagnoses the queen Klytämnestra as being divided from herself: "Was sie ins Ohr dir zischen, trennt dein Denken fort und fort entzwei, so gehst du hin im Taumel, immer bist du als wie im Traum ("What they whisper] splits your thoughts further and further in two , so you walk in confusion, always as if in a dream") (26). Both women live alienated from their own conscious intents and thoughts, split off from "rational" control.

In another similarity to the hysteric's of Studies on Hysteria, Elektra's visions and hallucinations of her father come at fixed intervals in the evening, just as did Anna O.'s hallucination in her hypnoid states (Worbs 285). The stage directions accompanying Elektra's opening monologue indicate that she should "direct her eyes to the ground." She conjures up her father's image, as if she were in a state of autohypnosis, as one critic comments (Worbs 282). She lives in a world of hallucinatory imagery, as she wails, calls to her father and sweeps away imaginary blood, and invokes scenes of murder and incest.

The regularity with which Elektra hallucinates her father's image reveals the compulsive nature of her frenzy, and alludes to what Freud later called the "repetition compulsion" (Beyond, 1922). Its significance for Elektra lies in two areas. Freud uses hysteria to describe the compulsion in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, where he remarks that the hysteric repeats, paradoxically, unpleasant emotions or memories of trauma. It could be, he claims, the ego's attempt to actively master painful memories to which the ego originally was the passive subject. The repetitious nature of Elektra's (and her mother's) symptoms testifies to the strength of the unresolved past for the two hysterics.

More importantly, though, the repetition compulsion is related to the so-called death drive. Freud's view on this subject is open to various interpretations, but one

postulated by the French psychoanalyst Laplanche is that the death drive is the sexual instinct "turned around" on the ego itself and which disrupts its illusory sense of coherency (1979). Indeed, in *Elektra* we see both the sexual and destructive elements striving for expression, which end up destroying the girl. The powerful forces of a destructive sexuality create a masochistic hysteric, one who ultimately annihilates herself. We could add other elements of a masochistic neurotic here: Elektra's guilt (seen in her inability to wield the ax and kill her mother herself); her so-called "moral masochism;" aggression towards an object turned inwards. My point, however, is that sexuality is linked to the "death drive" and that Elektra experiences a conflict in each of these domains.

Both sexuality and death are given hallucinatory realism in *Elektra*. Elektra voices at one point a narcissistic sexuality, and thus sexuality is conspicuously brought to the forefront of the drama. Elektra hypnotically recalls sensual images from her youth:

Ich glaube, ich war schön; wenn ich die Lampe
ausblies vor meinem Spiegel, fühlte ich
mit keuschem Schauder, wie mein nackter Leib
vor Unberühtheit durch die schwüle Nacht
wie etwas Göttliches hinleuchtete (62).

.

I believe that I was beautiful: when I blew out the lamp in front of my mirror, I felt with a chaste shiver how my naked body, untouched, shone through the hot night like something divine. ...

These narcissistic passages are replaced by graphic sexual scenes involving the father and step-father (indeed, their ambiguity is the mark of Elektra's hallucinatory state). Just as Freud argued in Studies that sexual desire and/or trauma was usually at the center of the hysteric's pathology, Elektra compulsively relives traumatic sexual encounters:

Vestehtst du, Bruder! diese süßen Schauder
hab ich dem Vater opfern müssen. ...

....

Da mußte ich den Gräßlichen, der atmet
wie eine Viper, über mich in mein
schlafloses Bette lassen, der mich zwang,
alles zu wissen, wie es zwischen Mann
und Weib zugeht. Die Nächte, weh, die Nächte,
in denen ichs begriff! Da war mein Leib
eiskalt und doch verkohlt, im Innersten
verbrannt (63).

Do you understand, brother, I had to sacrifice
this sweet trembling to father. ... Then I had to
share my bed with that horrible thing, which
breathed like a viper; which compelled me to know

everything that happens between man and woman.

The nights, oh, the nights, in which I understood
this! Then my body was ice-cold but charred,
burned to the quick.

Elektra's traumatic re-enactments of incest are coupled with Agamemnon's murder. Hofmannsthal disregards the classical mythic and dramatic reasons for the queen's action as well: only her sexual desire is presented as a motive.¹ In his presentation of sexual themes, including incest, Hofmannsthal was part of a group of avant-garde writers, such as Hermann Bahr, Felix Salten, Arthur Schnitzler and Peter Altenberg, that made sexuality an important focus of their writing. Like other writers, his references to sexuality helped psychologize the classics and provide another level of motivations to the action.

Unlike Sophocles' heroine, Hofmannsthal's Elektra never sees beyond her imprisonment into the larger political or social world; she is tied to the visible disruption of domestic life. Political imbalance has been replaced by familial disorder. Hysteria may be an individual illness, but it is also a power struggle taking place *within* the structure of the family and the home -- until the hysteric is institutionalized. (And Chrysothemis warns Elektra that she has overheard the queen and king plotting to imprison Elektra in a palace tower.) Although Hofmannsthal utilized the Sophoclean rubric for Elektra, his play is domesticated

and played within the confines of a claustrophobic Viennese atmosphere and a psychological framework. There is no parallel between inner disruption, political unrest and natural disaster as in the Greek tragedy. Hofmannsthal's drama erases the broad political and moral dimensions of the earlier play and presents instead the pain and ambiguous states of mind of the hysteric. The individual's inability to act and control her own life is viewed in this play as the result of personal history and family drama.

Viennese culture at the turn-of-the-century tended to internalize social problems, making of them domestic or artistic ones. Arthur Schnitzler's well-known play, "Die Reigen" ("La Ronde") transmutes class and sexual politics into the domesticated sphere of artistically arranged sexual relations, for example. Sidney Polkovsky, in his review of Anna O's Vienna, argues that art and culture were a cover behind which problems of personal identity were played out (1982). Hofmannsthal's contemporary, Karl Kraus, embraced the aphorism and the well-chosen word as a facade behind which his own conflicts about sexuality and women were enacted (Wagner, 1982). But the inverse is also true. By isolating questions of identity to an inner, familial circle, or sublimating them into artistic creations, the social construction of the hysteric was not addressed, even though the family played out, or mirrored, social and artistic concerns. The individual hysteric may be paralysed

by her ailment, but Hofmannsthal's play also reflects the immobility and confusion that characterized the avant-garde artist when confronted with political and social unrest.

Turn-of-the-century Vienna, like Paris, Munich, London and much of Europe, was beginning to feel the agitation of radical parties demanding full legal and human rights. In Vienna, political groups, such as the Social Democratic Party, were re-evaluating gender roles, and ethnic national parties were seeking recognition. Like most of the Viennese writers and artists, Hofmannsthal stood outside of political life and was not involved in the wave of rallies and demonstrations taking place on the streets of Vienna. In the face of what seemed like approaching anarchy, a distinguishing trait of much avant-garde art represents a retreat from political and social action into the aesthetic realm of "l'art pour l'art." Hofmannsthal writes:

Tobt der Pöbel in den Gassen, ei, mein Kind, so lass
ihn schrein'n;

Denn sein Lieben und sein Hassen ist verächtlich und
gemein!

Während sie uns Zeit noch lassen, wollen wir uns
Schönerm Weih'n.

Lass den Pöbel in den Gassen; Phrasen, Taumel, Lügen,
Schein,

Sie verschwinden, sie verblassen --

Schöne Wahrheit lebt allein.

[If the mob is raging in the streets, oh, my child, let
 them scream;

For its love and hate are reprehensible and mean!
 While they still grant us time, we'll dedicate ourself
 to something more beautiful.

Leave the mob in streets; phrases, swaggers, lies,
 appearance

Will disappear and fade; beautiful truth alone remains]
 (Hofmannsthal, 1974).

Hofmannsthal's well-constructed poem, with its internal and end rhymes, betrays an anxiety about a social world not nearly so ordered (Janik and Toulmin 42). Hofmannsthal had distinct ideas about radical politics and contrasted this "horizontal" experience of life in history with the so-called "vertical" (Miles 77). The vertical experience is a "... constant infusion of present experience with the spirit of the past," a history of *Bildung* and culture, whereas the horizontal perspective was preoccupied only by immediacy and the visible moment (Miles 77, 80). The vertical represents the past, one's individual memories and familial traditions as well as one's cultural heritage. The horizontal is the "continual forgetting of the masses" (79). The "once upon a time" of the folk tale and cultural histories was being replaced by the hectic "'yesterday' of the worker's daily paper" (Hofmannsthal in Miles 80). Seen in the context of these two contradictory forms of historical awareness,

Elektra represents a conflict between those who live a horizontal history, with no connection to memory and history at all, such as the sister, Chrysothemis, and the queen; and Elektra, who is paralyzed by her enmeshment in her own vertical history. No one in the play is able to live -- memory and tradition are separated from action. Elektra's hysteria is the effect of vertical memory and history become pathology. The individual's paralysis within history and memory is how Freud and Breuer originally describe hysteria, as well: "the hysteric suffers mainly from reminiscences" (7). The unconscious chains the individual to a past with no future; the vertical becomes its own limit.

The misogyny, fear of proletarian revolution and industrialization at the fin-de-siecle have a certain basis in the "vertical" cultural history represented by the interest in the madonna cult and pre-historical matriarchal society, exemplified by the enormous popularity of Bachofen's Mutterrecht (von Braun 237; Mueller 72). As von Braun points out, what the madonna cult and matriarchal reconstructions have in common is a "de-sexualization" of the mother which makes of her a chaste figure, one which does not threaten the male. Elektra, for example, is too dangerous to be a mother and is desexualized. Although one fin-de-siecle aesthetic ideal was the androgynous child, Elektra is obviously monstrous in her de-sexed nature. In a parallel fashion, males take on a "parthenogenetic" ideal,

that is, assume female characteristics (von Braun 237). Thus is Ägist, Elektra's murderous step-father, reduced to a "Weib" [woman].

Hofmannsthal's re-working of the Sophocles drama creatively modernizes and interprets Elektra's conflict, and in doing so, alludes to the changing status of women within the artist's own culture. Elektra and her mother -- not male injustice nor war, not the social system nor political treason -- cause the impasse and tragedy in the play. Hofmannsthal's politics pit him against change -- against a new role and conceptualization of gender and women's sexuality. But Hofmannsthal would not be alone in this, even if he were to take a different position in his definition of "woman." Numerous women writers, such as the vitalist-expressionist artist Laura Marholm, argued that modern culture was being destabilized by women's undue involvement in spheres for which they were naturally unfit. This included, above all, a woman's replacement of maternal concerns and preoccupations with production rather than reproduction. In Hofmannsthal's Elektra, the consequences of the female characters' misplaced desire are hysteria and death. Just as turn-of-the-century society struggled with questions of feminine sexuality and roles, so, too, Hofmannsthal's play dramatizes this conflict.

II. Elektra's Identification with the Maternal

David-Menard suggests that hysterical desire "... is rooted in the maternal position. The essence of hysteria is played out in the traumatic relation to the maternal, a relation affecting every demand that, addressed to a man, derives from that relation its absolute character and that, for that reason, ... takes the form of a violent refusal" (14). This passage could mean that the hysteric's demands are absolute because of her relation to the maternal position (and not necessarily to the mother), which I understand as a narcissistic one -- one founded on an identity between mother and daughter -- and which therefore complicates the hysteric's desire for a heterosexual sexual pleasure. The hysteric's position is in part a product of her relationship to her gendered sexual identity and language.

Hofmannsthal portrays Elektra as an isolated, alienated figure, continually questioning her own identity. Elektra initially appears from the shadows, alone and speaking to the hallucinated image of her father: "Allein, weh, ganz allein!/Der Vater fort, hinabgescheucht in seine kalten Klüfte" [Alone, oh, completely alone!/Father gone, frightened away to his cold cavern."] Although it seems that Elektra has no relation to her mother except for her hate, it becomes clear that the abhorrence for her living mother feeds the desire for her father's revenge. From the

beginning, Elektra is caught between her father and mother.

Hofmannsthal's representation of the mother-daughter relationship, however, invokes phantasies of a maternal-child unity turned murderous. The animosity between the mother-daughter couple is extreme in Elektra. Hofmannsthal has created a metaphorical space to represent a childhood of cruelty and neglect, and the maternal figure represents a limit for the heroine's independence.

Klytämnestra throws Elektra into a hostile environment devoid of her care or interaction. Explaining her haggard and aged appearance to Orestes at the end of the play, Elektra says: "Princesses do not flourish when one feeds them with rotten leftovers ["Wegwurf vom Zugemuse"], priestesses are not created to jump at whips and dress in such short rags ["kurzen Lumpen"] instead of flowing gowns" (60). Elektra and her sister have been confined to the court's back spaces, rarely allowed inside the palace and never beyond its walls. In one precipitating motivation for the dramatic action that does take place, Chrysothemis warns Elektra that her mother has plans to entomb her in the tower. The stage as a whole is confined and restricted. Hofmannsthal's stage instructions call for the stage to be "... narrow, inescapable, closed in. ... It is the rear court of the palace, ringed in by the quarters of slaves and workers. ... The walls have few windows and are irregular, of different dimensions." (Hofmannsthal, 1957, 241).

Within a paranöic enclosure, there is no escape from the domineering presence of the mother, except through fantasy of her murder.

Elektra cannot escape from her mother's physical presence, but she repudiates motherhood and any reference to it. Yet in spite of her mother's ill treatment of her, Elektra also identifies so strongly with her that she cannot separate herself from the mother:

... Du bist ja
wie ein Koloß, aus dessen ehernen Händen
ich nie entsprungen bin. Du hast mich ja
am Zaum. Du bindest mich, an was du willst. ...
Ich weiss nicht, wie ich jemals sterben sollte--
als daran, daß du stürbest (27).

["You are/like a colossus, from whose iron hands/I
have never escaped. You have kept/me reined in.
You bind me to what you want..../I don't know how
I should die---/ unless you should die too."]

Ostensively Elektra accuses her mother of keeping her captive since Agamemnon's murder, and she alludes to her future death at the hands of her brother (which is as yet a phantasy). Yet Elektra also admits her identification with her mother and her mother's desire ("bound to her will;" "doing what she wants"). She cannot reconcile the fact that her murderous mother was the one who "spewed her from her womb" and she cries, "I lay, naked, on this lap? You raised

me up to those breasts?"(27). The contemporary psychologist Nancy Chodorow, in her discussion of motherhood, argues that girls maintain intrapsychic relationships with their pre-oedipal mothers and that they are pre-occupied with questions of how to identify without merging with her (Garner, 1991). Hofmannsthal's hysteric is an example of a daughter who is a psychic and physical prisoner of her mother. The daughter has never created an identity of her own. The more tenuous and ambiguous Elektra's identification with her mother, the greater is her inability to act.

Elektra's identity is further bound to the queen in that both mother and daughter are presented as sexually ambiguous figures, particularly since sexual desire is gendered according to masculine precepts in the play. Klytämnestra, as a sexualized figure, is an outcast, as is Elektra, who, as asexual, is also marginalized -- a prophetess, as she says. After Klytämnestra marries her brother-in-law and usurps the king's position, her new husband Ägist is metaphorically castrated ("feminized") by the queen. Elektra explicitly says this when Elektra's sister, Chrysothemis, tries to warn her that Klytämnestra and Ägistes are planning to entomb Elektra in the castle tower:

Die beiden Weiber? ... Nun, meine Mutter und jenes
andre Weib, die Memme, ei Ägist, der tapfre

Meuchelmörder, er, der Heldentaten nun im Bett vollführt... (16, 17).

[The two women? ... Ah, my mother and that other woman, the coward, indeed Ägist, the brave treacherous murderer, he now performs acts of bravery only in bed.

The king has been reduced to another woman by the queen. Klytämnestra's power comes from her dual representation as a threatening phallic figure: she rules in the position of the father and has used a symbolic phallus to advance her own ends; she also embodies the menacing image of the Kleinian phallic mother, who threatens to swallow, suffocate or imprison the infant.² In the imagery of fin-de-siecle Vienna, the fantasy of this phallic woman was superimposed on the iconic depictions of the "New Woman" and "femme fatale;" numerous paintings (by Klimt, for example) and literary works abound with the imagery of a castrating and threatening woman.

Like the "New Woman", the hysteric Klytämnestra is perceived as partially masculine, and as such, her maternal function is disturbed. The queen has abdicated her role as mother by desiring her own privilege and interests more than that of her children. Klytämnestra has acted beyond the bounds of allowable female activity, thus she is no longer a woman -- that is, a mother. Because of this, she is unable to implant maternal desire in her daughter; inversely, this

"contaminates" Elektra's relationship to her mother and to the cultural maternal norms. Similarly, it was feared that the "New Woman" threatened the social order in her failure to perpetuate the institution of motherhood and marriage.

Klytämnestra lacks femininity because she acts beyond the norms dictated by traditional sexuality and maternal instincts. In Elektra, a woman's identity is conferred through her association and identification with motherhood. Significantly, perhaps, Hofmannsthal was reading, like other "fashionable" intellectuals at that time, Bachofen's Das Mutterrecht, published in 1861 (Mueller 72). Bachofen's reconstruction of a pre-literate matriarchal society was widely discussed by the cultured public (72). Even if one cannot trace a direct influence of Bachofen's work to Elektra, the drama shows Hofmannsthal's interest in the idea of motherhood and the effects of gender on action.

Like Elektra, Hofmannsthal's later work, "Frau Ohne Schatten," written in 1919, indicates his interest in the relationship of maternity and femininity. In that play, the fairy queen is sterile, and the dyer's wife, although fertile, does not wish to have children. If the empress can bribe the wife's shadow from her, each can have what the other wants: the empress will become fertile, the wife will enjoy a life of art and luxury. The fertile but uninterested wife is represented as narcissistic and self-involved (hysterical), since she will not produce children

for her husband. The empress's final act of self-sacrifice near the end of the play -- letting go of the shadow so that the dyer's wife may have it again -- is rewarded with fertility for both wives, a just compensation for a "feminine" act of self-denial. Nothing else is considered feminine. Unlike the male heroes, who are rewarded with liberation and an augmented sense of self for their acts of renunciation, the women here are compensated with motherhood (Finney 178).

No one is rewarded with motherhood in Elektra. Even though Klytämnestra confesses that she has plans to marry both of her daughters off, it is clear that Elektra will remain childless and mad.

Ich red und stehe doch nicht Rede, lebe
und lebe nicht, hab langes Haar und fühle
doch nichts von dem,
was Weiber, heißt es, fühlen... (55).

[I speak and yet do not speak; live and do not
live; have long hair and still feel nothing that
women should feel].

Instead, she is sterile and without children: "I have pulled nothing from my body but curses and confusion." She, like the queen, has given up her femininity, that is, her identification with maternity. She rejects the maternal role and function, unlike the dyer's wife and the empress. As Tubert notes, in cultures where maternity is normative,

infertility is a transgression that leads to madness and death (1993).³ And certainly, the queen's daughters are both without partners or children. Elektra's "frigidity" and lack of interest in sexual matters (except that of her incest memories) are noticeable traits of her madness. She is a witch-like "prophetess," just as is the empress's maid in "Woman Without a Shadow," a common perception of the hysteric and the sterile woman who rejects social and cultural norms of motherhood (Clément and Cixous, 1988). As Finney points out in her analysis of the opera libretto, the maid would prefer that the empress, like herself, remain childless. Finney argues that the euphoric resolution to the "woman question" in "Frau Ohne Schatten" -- marriage and children -- is a happy ending only if the reader accepts the patriarchal norms that induct the woman into relinquishing a life of autonomy and independent sexuality for a life in favor of husband and children (Finney 178).

The belief that women were expected to attain their happiness through others and through self-sacrifice if necessary was a central position of the debate concerning motherhood and its relation to female nature. The Austrian essayist Rosa Mayreder and German leftist political thinker Helene Langer, for example, both active in the left-wing/bourgeois women's movements, opposed the writings of well-known author Laura Marholm (Mayreder, 1903; Lange, 1901). Marholm took the position that the fundamental and

natural difference between men and women was "Mütterlichkeit," expressed as the ability of women to bear children, and in her attitude towards children as well as a more general sense of life beyond the individual self (Scott-Jones 209). Marholm herself was a prolific journalist and co-founder of the Berlin art group, "Schwarze Ferkel," which included Strindberg, as well as her husband, the Swedish writer Ola Hanssen. For Marholm, femininity and motherhood were not cultural products but were essential qualities of women.⁴

Although Marholm advocated sexual fulfillment as did many of her socialist and feminist contemporaries, she also believed that true fulfillment came only through motherhood. Indeed, for Marholm, a woman's sexual needs, although sparked by genuine sexual desire, are ultimately based on the desire for a child. Hence men could use sexual pleasure as a vehicle of artistic inspiration, whereas women were the bearers of life.

Marholm's writings, which try to unify female sexual desire and motherhood, indicate how pervasive are patriarchal prohibitions and delineations of gender and sexual identity. Marholm exalts sexual pleasure, but cannot imagine female pleasure outside of maternal interests. It must always be connected to the desire of the other -- a man or a child. Hofmannsthal's addition to this debate seems to coincide with the ideas of Marholm. The queen,

Klytämnestra, as well as Elektra and the empress and the dyer's wife in Frau Ohne Schatten are all represented as unnatural and hysterical in their desire to escape from a specifically feminine gendered sexuality.

Judith Butler argues that from within a traditional psychoanalytic system, women are only represented as mothers, as the embodiment of pre-individuation (Butler in Berg 57). If the mother, from the position of the symbolic, represents a "nostalgic desire for lost unity, a state of non-unity..." and a loss of individual self-hood, then what is she, if not this loss or lack? (Berg 58.) Turning to Elektra, we can perhaps understand Elektra's rejection of motherhood on another level. To reject motherhood would be to strive for individual autonomy. To reject the feminine is to try to speak as a subject, not merely as a mother. Although Hofmannsthal presents this repudiation of "feminine" choices negatively, we can still see that he had difficulty, outside of common representations (which he also made use of) in presenting what a non-maternal woman would be. His answer: the hysteric.

In spite of Elektra's rejection of motherhood, she is still connected to her mother in symbolic ways. Klytämnestra, for example, is rendered non-maternal, thus non-feminine, through her sexual desire and her former possession of the murder weapon. In Elektra, whoever has the ax -- the metaphorical phallus -- is "masculinized."⁵ The

ax, then, is the marker of sexual differentiation and identity within the play. Elektra guards the ax with which her mother had murdered her husband; Elektra has hidden the weapon for Orestes, hoping to hand it over to him. She and her mother are locked in psychic combat over the question of its possession. As a symbolic marker, the ax is able to confer on its owner the ability to act, to become "masculine."

In spite of the two hysterics identification with a gendered masculinity, the mother and daughter are tightly identified with each other. Several critics link Elektra's maternal identification to oedipal desire. For example, Robertson says, "Her [Elektra's] obsession with revenge is the conscious equivalent of a thinly repressed sexual attachment to her father and identification with her mother; and this accounts for the inhibition which makes her forget about the axe and excludes her from any share in the act of revenge" (326). I argue, in addition, that Hofmannsthal represents a hysteric as much bound by a pre-Oedipal attachment to her mother as by Oedipal guilt. The only way that Elektra can free herself (to be herself) is by murdering the queen. When the queen is murdered, Elektra dies soon after.

Elektra rejects the maternal function, although she does identify with her mother's body as maternal object, through their shared alienation from customary sexuality,

and because of the ax that is transferred between them. In each of these ways, Elektra clings to the mother as the originary object of infantile and narcissistic desire. How can she achieve an identity of her own? She tries to separate from the mother through language, a language which her mother does not possess.

III. Identification with the Paternal Order

The ax, shared by mother and daughter, unites them in a sort of battle, but it also is an object that explicitly divides them. The ax represents an instrument that separates life and death, masculine and feminine. It is the symbol of the father. The ax ("das Beil") is a word obsessively spoken by Elektra. Upon seeing her sister, Elektra notices that her hands are supplicating like her father's, "through which the ax fell;" she wants to "raise the ax high." She imagines the ax that killed her father as "whistling through the air" and slaughtering her mother just as an animal is sacrificed. This one word represents the power of language and the paternal order. It is also the object that Elektra forgets to give her brother, the object that she is ultimately unable to "possess."

This word "Beil" symbolizes language as a whole within the play. Language creates a space of separation in the individual psyche, family and culture. Language, in the form of the father's injunction against a continued unity between mother and child, is accompanied by the recognition

of the incest taboo for both boy and girl. Sexuality and its social meaning is achieved through the severing of the mother-child dyad (Berg, 1991). Language thus becomes a substitute for the child's desire for pre-oedipal/pre-linguistic harmony. The word "ax" both distances mother and daughter, and closes the gap between them. It is only possible, though, through the agency of the father.

The intrusion of the father between mother and child initiates the Oedipal phase and structures heterosexuality and individuality. The incest taboo and oedipal complex do not, as Judith Butler argues, "... designate an event or primal scene that could be empirically verified, but instead indicate a set of linguistic laws that are fundamental to gender and individuation" (Butler in Berg 58). The incest taboo, central to the west's theory of cultural identity and subjectivity, identifies the mother's body within a pre-cultural and pre-linguistic state. The boy has little trouble rejecting the mother and identifying with a state of laws and culture represented by his father. But because of their sex and identification with a maternal figure, girls have a harder task when separating from her mother. A girl must first repudiate her own sexual identity in the form of her mother, and then again identify with her as she gains her gendered identity as a female. She is excluded from the symbolic order in ways that boys are not, because her primary identification is not with the father and the

paternal order he represents.

Orestes, unlike Elektra, is fully distinct from his mother and stands in sharp contrast to her. He has been banished, an act which symbolically, as well as literally, assures his separation from his mother's influence. Because Orest has grown into a man with his own identity, he can act. So completely has he achieved independence and a separate identity that he is capable of murdering the mother with whom he was previously united. He is now so little a son that no one in the family recognizes him; his name and his memory are what binds him to it.

Orestes has returned home and he kills his mother at Elektra's urging; he acts independently of her, however, and does not use the ax that Elektra had saved for him. A long tradition in the Elektra research revolves around the question of Elektra's inaction and Orestes' ability to act (Wittman 80). Yet, it is Elektra's language which propels her brother to avenge Agememnon's death, and it is through the brilliance of her speech to her mother that her subsequent murder is made present. Language is Elektra's action. In fact, Hofmannsthal once remarked that "Die Entscheindende liegt nicht in die Tat sondern in die Treue" ["The decisive point lays not action but in faithfulness"] (Hofmannsthal in Wittman 81).

Elektra believes that language is ineffectual in the face of action: "... was aus einem Mund hervorkommt, ist

ohnmachtige Luft..." ["what comes out of a mouth is impotent air"]; yet her words exercise a magical effect on those who hear them. Elektra exemplifies the uneasy transition between maternal bond and paternal law through her use of language. Unlike many hysterics, Elektra does speak eloquently and she initially identifies herself exclusively with her father, not her mother. Elektra conjures her father's image at the play's beginning and alludes to universal laws of regularity and of established order (Wittman 69).

Es ist die Stunde, unsre Stunde ists!
 Die Stunde, wo sie dich geschlachtet haben,
 ...Vater!
 dein Tag wird kommen! Von den Sternen
 stürzt alle Zeit herab, so wird das Blut
 aus hundert Kehlen stürzen auf dein Grab! (14).
 It is the hour, it is our hour!
 The hour, when they slaughtered you, ...
 Father, your day will come! From the stars
 all time comes rushing down, just as the blood
 will rush onto your grave from a hundred throats!

Elektra unites the time of the past, present and future ("das ewige Blut des Mordes") in her hallucinatory incantation (Wittman 69). Moreover, in doing so, Elektra alludes to the regularity of time, to natural laws, and to an orderly correspondence between the heavens and mundane

events. Thus her language allies her with her father and universal, elemental laws, laws which her mother has broken. At one level of representation, then, Elektra has already deviated from the normal course of events in standing with her father in her linguistic use against her mother. She does not long for unity with the mother, but for a bloody affiliation with her father and his laws.

Elektra obsessively imagines the day when Agemnemnon is avenged and she loses herself in dreams of revenge and blood, both of a metaphorical and literal kind..

... und wir,
 dein Blut, dein Sohn Orest und deine Töchter,
 wir drei, wenn alles dies vollbracht und Purpur-
 gezelte aufgerichtet sind, vom Dunst
 des Blutes, den die Sonne an sich zieht,
 dann tanzen wir, dein Blut, rings um dein Grab:
 und über Leichen hin werd ich das Knie
 hochbeben Schritt für Schritt, ... (15).
 And we,
 your blood, your son Orestes and your daughters,
 we three, when all this is perfected and tents of
 purple are set up, from the aroma
 of blood, which the sun heats up,
 then we will dance, your blood, around your
 grave...

The matricide that Elektra dreams of but cannot commit

is culturally vindicated. Indeed, this is the western "lesson" of the classical myth, and Freud was its outspoken champion. In discussing the transition between matriarchal and patariarchal culture, Freud saw that the change necessitated a shift in epistemological perspective:

An echo of this can still be heard, I think, in the Oresteia of Aeschylus. This turning from the mother to the father, however, signifies above all a victory of spirituality over the senses -- that is to say, a step forward in culture, since maternity is proved by the senses whereas paternity is a surmise based on a deduction and a premiss. This declaration in favour of the thought-process, thereby raising it above sense perception, has proved to a be step with serious consequences (Freud in Clement and Cixous 100).

Language acquisition, the father's abstract and rigid law that separates mother and child, gains sway over individual and culture. The struggling ascendancy of paternal rights rather than maternal ones, the rule of sense over sensuality, is a conflict that runs through Hofmannsthal's Elektra. Language wins in this drama: Elektra speaks. Whatever bond holds the daughter to the mother is loosened by Elektra's insistent and incantory use of language.

IV. Maternal vs. Paternal

At least one modern critic, Helene Cixous, objects to Freud's analysis of the victory of the paternal over the maternal: "What value does blood have? What is the value of words? In the struggle between Blood and Words, the marriage pact -- a commitment made with words and will -- is stronger ... than the blood-tie. The link to mother loosens. The link to word tightens." (Cixous 103-104). Elektra's insistence on the law of paternal rights and obligations, her belief in her brother's inheritance of the throne, is stronger than what Cixous would call her "blood bond" to the mother. Elektra has already moved into the symbolic space. She speaks of her blood relation to her father "wir, dein Blut," not to her mother. The blood that links Elektra to her mother is the blood of matricide: "Was bluten muss? Dein eigenes Genick" [what must bleed? your own neck"]. Matricide is demanded because of Agememnon's law. Yet Hofmannsthal reveals the conflict inherent in such a demand: in spite of Elektra's commitment to the abstract notion of matricide, demanded by paternal law, she cannot act. Instead, as Hofmannsthal said, she has the "fiery tongue."⁶ This oxymoron, uniting spirit, and body is instantiated by the hysteric, a marriage of body with the word. Hysteria.

Hysteria has a "tendency to reverse priorities" and to privilege the female over the male (Kostenbaum, 1988). The queen, as hysteric, has established her own matriarchal

rule, and Elektra's presence threatens to invert the matriarchal status quo, which is itself already a reversal of order. Elektra is doubly threatening because she agitates for the removal of female power and the resumption of the father. Elektra functions to hold Orest's patriarchal position open for him to assume upon his return (Martens 48). Her death guarantees that patriarchal order will be restored, and that she, unlike her mother, will pose no threat to the sovereignty of the Atrides' rule. Elektra effectively militates against her position as female.

The conflict between maternal and paternal demands is analogous to the split characteristic of the hysteric's consciousness, as Breuer postulated in his theoretical section of Studies on Hysteria. As Freud, too, asserted, the conflict arises between sexual thoughts and the "great moral purity" that some "refined" girls exhibit (245). The split in the hysteric's thoughts has been further conceptualized in other ways: as metaphor for the division between masculine and feminine, between patriarchal law and maternal physicality, between unconscious desire and physical symptom. This split further calls into question the role of the symbolic in the first place.

In hysteria, the split between maternal and paternal loyalties is historicized through women's resistance to the values of phallogocentrism. In her work on hysteria, Nicht-Ich, Christina von Braun attempts to show that the

contradictions between the abstract law of paternal injunction and the sensual experience of maternal unity are displayed most evidently on the body of the hysteric. The hysteric's symptoms evidence desire which goes unsatisfied, and as signs, the symptoms are proof that culture prohibits their open expression. But hysterical "writing" on the body cannot transmit itself directly into culture and into the symbolic order, and so ceases to exist except by the transmission of others -- through their texts or through memory and ritual (Clément and Cixous 9). It would be the queen, Klytämnestra, in Hofmannsthal's text, who is hysterical in this sense. Klytämnestra cannot remember her actions, and thus ritualizes them, rather than articulating them. Elektra does not forget. She re-experiences those traumatic actions through her obsessive recall and speech. In this respect of her obsessive memory, Elektra is no hysteric.

Memory is an activity that characterizes Elektra's very being. She says to her sister:

Vergessen? Was! bin ich ein Tier? vergessen?

... ich bin kein Vieh, ich kann nicht
vergessen! (20).

Forget? What! am I an animal? forget?

... I am no animal, I cannot forget!

Memory needs to be spoken so that desire and revenge can be perpetuated. As the play progresses, Elektra's

incessant remembering drives Chrysthemis from her; she repeatedly hallucinates her father's death and conjures up her mother's similar fate at the hands of Orestes. Memory merges with Elektra's desire for her mother's death.

The queen asks Elektra to speak the words that will heal her. Elektra's powerful use of language speaks of "old things" as if "they had happened yesterday." Klytämnestra needs Elektra's words to return her to memory. "You have words," she says, "das rechte Wort" ("the right word") to heal. At times, language means too much -- it erases distance between past, present and future in a hallucinatory tumult, while at other times it is unable to express anything of individual experience. Hofmannsthal frequently wrestled with the problem of language in relation to individuality and self-consistency. His well-known literary expression of this discontent with language is the so-called "Lord Chandos Brief." In the letter, the Chandos narrator suffers a breakdown: language (like forgetfulness) is necessary for health. When words no longer signify a given and stable reality, the world and the self grow unintelligible and incoherent. The inward experience of the individual "is experienced as the realm of speechlessness" (Wittman 89). Speech, in other words, is incommensurate to "true" self experience.

The queen, in particular, is affected by the loss of language. Language fails to find its subject and so erases

Klytämnestra's sense of personal identity. The queen experiences language in much the same way as does Lord Chandos. She says, "Ich denke, aber alles türmt sich mir/eins über andre" ["I think, but everything piles up in me, one thing on top of another"] (30). Unable to find the words that would recall her past to her, she has no power to organize her present. She is only a dreaming body, lost in nightmares: "... dann schwindelt mich, ich weiß/auf einmal nicht mehr, wer ich bin, und das ist/das Grauen, daß hießt mit lebendigem Leib/ins Chaos sinken, ..." ["... then I become dizzy, I no longer know who I am, and that is the horror -- to sink, with one's living body, into chaos"] (30). Without spoken language, her body displays all the marks of the hysteric analyzed by Charcot or Freud. Her body is riddled with bloody stigmata (she sees "traces of blood which they say animals have sucked from me"); her my liver is swollen as are her eyelids; she cannot sleep, she is obsessive and restless; she attributes her disturbing hallucinations to bodily illness -- all because she is distanced from the truthful memory language would yield.

For Klytämnestra, the truth is twofold: she has murdered her husband and with this act, repudiated the bonds of maternity. With the murder, Klytämnestra separates herself from the norms of culture, including passive sexuality and loyalty to husband and children. Spoken language, which would express those injunctions, cannot

express her anymore. She has positioned herself outside of ordered language and rules. Yet she needs them in order to achieve a coherent identity. Consequently, she begs her daughter Elektra to speak the incantations that would ease her suffering: "Es gibt Bräuche./Es muß für alles richtige Bräuche geben./ Wie man ein Wort und einen Satz ausspricht,/darauf kommt vieles an. ... Du redest/von alten Dingen so, wie wenn sie gestern/geschehen wären." ("There must be antidotes for everything. Much depends upon how one speaks a word and sentence. You speak of old things as if they happened yesterday.") (30-31; 33). Without language and without an anchor in the symbolic realm, Klytämnestra is adrift in hallucinations and nightmares. In her hatred of her mother, Elektra condemns her to die without a word, that is, without letting her speak her truth and thus dying without an identity.

Even though Elektra denies her mother a language -- she will not help her speak -- she shows it to her. In the monologue between the two women, just before Orestes' return, Elektra relates her mother's death scene. Elektra recounts a horrible, bloody chase that identifies the mother and her dead husband. "Der Jäger ... fängt dich ab: doch nur im Lauf!/Wer schlachtet ein Opfertier im Schlaf! ["the hunter will trap you, but on the run!/ Who would slaughter a sacrificial animal as it sleeps!'] (39). Elektra wants her mother to see the identification of hunter/hunted,

mother/father in the body language of her own daughter.

Und ich stehe neben dir: du kannst den Blick
nicht von mir wenden, immer krampft es dich,
daß du von meinem schweigenden Gesicht
ein Wort ablesen willst, ...

....

... verendend willst du
dich auf ein Wort besinnen, irgend eines
noch von dir geben, nur ein Wort, anstatt
der blutigen Träne, die dem Tier sogar
im Sterben nicht versagt ist: da steh ich
vor dir, und nun liest du mit starrem Aug
das ungeheure Wort, das mir in mein Gesicht
geschrieben ist: denn mein Gesicht
ist aus des Vaters und aus deinen Zügen
gemischt, und da habe ich mit meinem stummen
Dastehen dein letztes Wort zunicht gemacht,...
(40-41).

And I stand next to you: you cannot turn your
gaze/ from me, it convulses you to try and read a
word from my silent face. ...

Perishing, you want to remember a word, you want
to speak any word, instead of the bloody tears
that are not denied even to the sacrificed animal:

I stand in front of you, and now you are reading with staring eyes the monstrous word that is written on my face: for my face is a mixture of your traits and my father's, and I have killed your last word by silently standing here.

The word will be literally written on Elektra's body, on her face. The word presents, and not merely represents, the plight of the hysteric: she is the amalgam of two others. The hysteric has no identity, for she is only the graphic and corporeal desire of her parents. Elektra presents the problem of sexuality and identity by the "writing" of her desire and conflict. She has the desire of each parent, but where is hers?

The hysteric presents her identity as the fusion of two others, thus she remains alienated from her own identity. But her questioning of identity can be read another way. The hysteric fights to maintain a full sexual identity, which includes both male and female, mother and father, death and birth, abstract law and material body. This means that she uses her body to re-integrate those elements separated by "Logos."

Where logos demands the separation of speech and sexuality, hysteria fights for its unification. Where logos demands the transformation of woman into a speechless, "pure" sexuality, hysteria makes instead words, language, abstraction out of

sexuality (Von Braun 195).

By combining word and body, Elektra combines, as von Braun indicates, an identification with her father and the paternal order, as well as the pre-linguistic imaginary realm of the mother. She will not become one or the other. Whether one regards this as a heroic gesture or a movement of resignation, the fact remains that Elektra is caught between two worlds, both of which signify to and through her.

The physical effects of language are part of the problematic between the hysteric's modes of psychical representation, between "Vorstellung" (representation) and "Darstellung", presentification. The hysteric's difficulty in transforming the "Darstellung" into "Vorstellung" (from body-felt language into verbal language) often renders her body immobile, or transforms it into a physical theatrical stage. Freud speaks of the tension between the two in The Interpretation of Dreams, where he analyzes dreams and their linguistic structure. As with hysteria, a metaphor may not be sufficiently signifiable and can lead to bodily symptoms (David-Menard 114).

The "Wort" written on Elektra's face paralyzes her. Her "stumm Dastehen" is speechless being. At the narrative level, Elektra uses symbolic language ("Vorstellung") to speak of murder. But the unspoken word that is written on her face can only be shown ("Darstellung"). That "word"

exemplifies how desire cannot be mediated through spoken language, the language of paternal prohibition in the symbolic realm. Spoken language, representing paternal order, is partially and momentarily incapacitated. The symbolic, in other words, censures itself. In Freud's "Assessment of the Unconscious", he defines conscious presentation as the " ... presentation of the thing and the word together in language, and unconscious presentations as the thing alone" (Freud in Rose 14). In hysteria, the thing and the word come together as body.

The fact that Elektra speaks of an unspoken word, seen on the body, points to her most hysterical symptom: her use of language. Language itself becomes the symptom. Through language, her body literally speaks, and it speaks of her love and desire for her murdered father, a desire prohibited by the father's language she does speak.

"It is as if, all at once, the word covered a thing, a portion of the body, whose otherness with respect to the words that designate it is no longer apparent. What is called hallucination consists in an obliteration of things by words, by certain words" (David-Menard 114). This description of the hysteric's relationship to words is echoed by Chandos, perhaps himself a hysteric: "Es ist mir dann, als bestünden mein Körper aus lauter Chiffren, die mir alles aufschliessen" ["It is as if my body were made from nothing but symbols, which opened up everything to me"]

(469) .

What is the desire and conflict that is both censured and shown on the body? Hofmannsthal does not say, but he has used a metaphor of language to reveal how language cannot speak; it shows. What might it show? It is Elektra herself, the hysteric's "coupling" of word and body. Elektra unifies contradictions on her body: body and law, mother and father, desire and injunction. The conflict between sexual desire (that is, what the mother wants, what Elektra incestuously desires) and paternal order (that is, the establishment of the paternal institution and rights) is so great that it prevents the hysteric from speaking. Yet desire -- for each -- is metaphorically synthesized by the word on the body. This union of diverse identities, although an attempt of the hysteric to regain possession of a self, is nevertheless, in Hofmannsthal's play, doomed to failure. For Elektra is never able to resolve the contradictions between the maternal and paternal. In this conflict, Elektra cannot choose between the roles of being daughter to her mother or to her dead father.

Elektra exemplifies Freud's notion that the hysteric's inability to attain a "normal" heterosexuality is the root of her neurosis (Freud, 1908). Her ambivalent desire is similar to the much later case of Dora, recounted by Freud. Dora could not fully identify with either parent, and suffered imaginary body fragmentation, played out in

conversion symptoms (Lacan, 1987). Elektra, too, identifies strongly with both her mother and her father. She has no determinable gender, no stable self identity. She cannot totally represent herself as either male or female.

In the end, Elektra does what all "good" hysterics do -- she parodies the role of woman, but Elektra goes further, she tragically believes in it herself.⁷ Although she rejects the maternal (as displayed by the mother), she invokes the self-sacrificing maternal role for herself that is characteristic of western cultural imperatives. She sacrifices herself to the new order, the paternal order that she fought for and against. With her mother murdered, Elektra paradoxically cannot find an identity with which to fight the paternal any longer. It was through her mother, a mother with whom she too strongly identified, that she was given the strength to remain alive. Living, Elektra was full of speech, symbolic of the father. Yet when her mother is killed, Elektra, too, loses speech and life. The word again becomes body, as Elektra dances.

Elektra's death is but one that will occur in each of the texts that I read. The extinction of Elektra's life is related to the "preservation of energy" that Freud and Breuer discuss in Studies on Hysteria, and in is linked to the death instinct. Freud elaborates this concept in texts such as Beyond the Pleasure Principle. "... psychoanalysis observed the regularity with which libido is withdrawn from

the object and directed on to the ego (the process of introversion); ... the ego now found its position among sexual objects and was at once given the foremost place among them" (51-52). In hysteria, the ego itself (including the body of the hysteric) is eroticized, with no chance of symbolization. In these later works, Freud argues that libidinal energy strives towards discharge, which functions to bring the organism to a homeostatic position -- death, in other words. Hofmannsthal gives a particular artistic representation of this drive to quiescence. With his hysteric, the repressed sexuality, once loosened, is so strong that it destroys that which it desires -- its own pleasure. Elektra, in her hysterical joy (*jouissance*) at her brother's act, discharges, as it were, all the libidinal energy that had been repressed for years. Whether one views this as a sexual discharge or not, Elektra externalizes in dance (as with hysterical symptoms) her "psychic" energy as body. Whatever equilibrium remained to Elektra is lost. Elektra's frenzy and frantic movement is finally ended at the close of the drama. Her longing for her father's revenge and her drive to join him are represented as a sexuality turned onto the individual, leading to death. "Schweigen und tanzen," she says, and dies.

ENDNOTES

1. Hofmannsthal, that is, chooses to ignore certain problems from the classical text. Similarly, as Marie Balmory makes clear in her book Psychoanalyzing Psychoanalysis, Freud ignores and represses certain issues in the Oedipal myth. For example, and most compellingly, he refuses to acknowledge that Laius had committed a sexual crime, and that his death was punishment for both murder and sexual transgression. Freud deals only with Oedipus' reaction to and retribution of his father's crime that was passed on through the generations of the Atrides' family.

2. See Melanie Klein's discussion of the "phallic" mother, from whose "castrating" genitals the child turns in terror before the onset of the "castrated" female genitals of the Oedipal phase.

3. It might be interesting to compare how Wagner's "Parzival" treats infertility in relation to "Elektra." One common theme is that in both, male agency restores order and fecundity to the kingdom. Male infertility may fare better at the hands of the two writers.

4. Laura Marholm, like a modern-day Phyllis Schlafly, epitomized numerous contradictions about women and motherhood. Both women, well-educated and prolific writers with considerable influence, denied (deny) to other women their success by emphasizing woman's preeminent role as mother.

5. See Jacques Lacan's comments on the "feminizing" letter in Poe's "The Purloined Letter." "Seminar on the Purloined Letter." Yale French Studies 48 (1973): 38-72.

6. A view that intrigued almost all writers on the subject, from Sophocles to Goethe. The latter is the source of Hofmannsthal's remark (see Mueller, 73).

7. On the role of parody and hysteria, see von Braun and Cixous.

Chapter IV: Medical narratives of hysteria in French writing

In this chapter, I will discuss the relationship between hysteria and the French medical establishment in late 19th-century Paris. Why turn to Paris? Paris was the center of research on hysteria, especially after Charcot's establishment of a medical wing at the old Salpêtrière hospital, which was designed just for hysterics. It was the nucleus of the literary and artistic culture of decadence, naturalism and the avant-garde: it was the center of the "culture of hysteria." The hysteric on display at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris is herself the culmination and exemplar of the coincidence of male phantasies about female sexuality in medicine and art: she is exposed and subdued. Her body is displayed for the audience as she hypnotically obeys the will of the male controlling her.

Further, it was in Paris that Freud studied with Charcot and the site from which he brings back ideas that influenced his own development. During his study from October, 1885 until February, 1886, Freud observed the hysterics and their attacks, displays which he did not see in Vienna. He was aware of Charcot's personal influence on the patients, and on his students as well. Although Freud did not articulate it as such, Paris was the origin of his break with Charcot and where he personally felt the influence of the transference reaction to the "master."

Like any good hysteric (and after all, Freud identified with the hysteric and the neurotic), Freud's attitude was shaped by his relationship to the doctor, and, as son and student, he rebelled against the relationship.¹ Transference, the psychical relationship between doctor and patient, is one of the major components of hysteria, often determining the configuration of the symptom and the cure.

In the first section of this chapter, I briefly outline the rise of hysteria in France as a medical entity. In Section II, I discuss Charcot and his views more fully, and argue that he repressed female narrative in favor of the visual symptom. With Charcot, the emphasis is on the external manifestation of the disease, its visual quality and its nosographical features. I compare a few photographic examples of the hysteric to female stage and literary figures, showing how the line between literary and medical iconography were completely blurred in the representation of femininity, especially along the lines of sexuality and morbidity. In Section III, I connect hysteria as a clinical entity to the Surrealists' use of the hysteric as an artistic symbol. This will set the stage for examining hysteria as a literary invention in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

I. Hysteria and Prostitution: background

Nineteenth-century France, especially Paris, was, like much of Europe, preoccupied with ideas of hysteria. During

the "golden age of hysteria", from 1872-1893, when Jean Marie Charcot was director of the Salpêtrière asylum, the battle over the nature of hysteria was already raging (Goldstein 128). This fight reflected the growing gulf between divergent schools of medicine and their jockeying for power positions within the Third Republic (128). Medicine was breaking away from its old association with charlantan and surgeons and was beginning to achieve some recognition for itself as a science (Roudenescou 40). With the positivism promoted by Comte and others, psychiatry, too, saw itself as an empirical science, following laws of observation and experimentation. The symptoms of hysteria, previously not amenable to medical categories, were increasingly subject to empirical diagnosis.

For Charcot, hysteria was not only a manifestation of inner pathology, perhaps caused by microbes and transmittable as a nervous malady, but it was also a neurological disease, functioning autonomously and without lesional traces (Roudinesco 27). Charcot's school, by accepting both pathological and physiological categories, more quickly adopted the disease as a psychiatric ailment, which needed care by trained psychiatric doctors. As Goldstein notes, any diagnosis needs both the patient with symptoms and the doctor making the diagnosis (324). Her study shows how the battles over professional turf in France -- between the conservative, powerful academic medical

generalists and the newly emerging psychiatric profession, and between the legal and medical professions -- were a major impetus to the diagnosis and promulgation of hysteria during the nineteenth century.² Hysteria, that is, so openly symptomatic, became a field on which cultural wars were waged in a battle over its control.³

The old "aliénists", called so because they attempted to understand the nature of the patient's "estranged" (aliené) nature and who claimed a specialist's knowledge of insanity, had staked out hysteria as the field in which to assert intellectual and political prerogative in the new positive sciences (Matlock 137; Evans 14). They had been largely responsible for the Law of 1838 which mandated that the mentally ill be separated from criminals after their incarceration. The seriously mentally ill were then sent to asylums, and those with nervous illness, such as hysterics, were sent to hospitals where the aliénists were allowed to treat them there (Matlock 129). The field of psychiatry thus entered the debate over hysteria partly in order to wrest control of the asylums from the state penal apparatus and from the church. With the secularization of the public hospitals and their freedom from the old monarchism, psychiatry and its proponents came increasingly to set the tone for scientific and medical discussions (Evans 14).

Between 1869 and 1883, the number of women diagnosed as hysterics at la Salpêtrière increased from 6.3% to 17.8%,

respectively. This increase in the number of hysterics confined to public hospitals -- this means among lower class and working women -- seems to be in marked contrast to other western European countries, where the experience of hysteria is predominately limited to the bourgeois or upper class woman.⁴ In Germany and Austria, for example, hysteria was seen as the result of the excessively pampered and overstimulated life that a woman led. Yet this might be a literary convention, which associated degenerate artists and their public posturing with the decadent upper-class. Although this assumption also played a part in the view of French specialists and the literary world, the high number of so many working class women diagnosed as hysterics demanded some change in diagnosis and understanding. This lead the way for the connection between prostitution and hysteria as a medical consideration (Evans 10). In Chapter V, I discuss this connection between prostitution, hysteria and the working class in the naturalist novels of the Goncourt brothers and Zola. The aesthete's version of the hysteric in the works of Barbey D'Aurevilley and Huysman is the subject of Chapter VI.

Many hospital inmates were prostitutes; in fact, one-twentieth of all patients were said to be so, according to the influential social hygienist and medical doctor, Parent-Duchâtelet (Matlock 123). The records show this to be a conservative estimate, at least as recorded by the women

themselves. They claimed to be seamstresses (24%), domestics and other menial laborers, yet it is likely that a large number of these women did earn extra money through prostitution (123).

The fact that the lower classes were associated with hysterical women, prostitutes and "uncivilized" sexual behavior is not confined to France, yet this view reveals how contradictory were the ideas concerning hysteria. If anything, the sexualized working class woman ought to be less hysterical than her repressed counterpart, since the "blocking" of sexual outlets was considered a prime cause of hysteria. The view that the working class in general possessed an excess of natural sexuality, which was especially dominant in women, was part of the medical ideology regarding the working class. In France, medical reports increasingly reported the hysteric's history as indicative of class illness or as originating from an association with proletarian sexual desire (that is, prostitution). This excess was itself also considered a "cause" of hysteria. Thus in France, at least, most cases reported by physicians were women from the public asylums and hospitals. Sander Gilman points out that in Vienna, Freud's generalizations about female sexuality is based on prejudices about lower-class prostitutes, which he applied to all women (Gilman 54-55). Yet Freud largely ignores the working class in his case studies, with few exceptions (for

example, young Lucy, the English domestic), and concentrates on the stifled Victorian bourgeois woman.

Heredity, too, played a large part in the French conception of the disease, and it was increasingly studied as a basis for social hygiene. In fact, Charcot believed the genetic predisposition to hysteria was highly significant. But whatever the views linking hysteria and prostitution, the specificity of hysteria and prostitution was located in the woman's sexual difference, and medical narratives tried to situate this difference in sexual desire (Matlock 127). Prostitution and hysteria were so closely aligned in medical and popular discourse because these two feminine "states" represent the major conceptions and constructions of the feminine as excessive or degenerate. No matter if class, heredity, education or gender were each considered or argued as the cause or effect of hysteria, in the end, feminine sexuality was the feature that was singled out: hysteria centered on sexual difference or the excess and/or absence of sexual desire (127).

II. Charcot and the phenomenon of hysteria

It would seem atavistic, in a cultural climate where female desire and hysteria were beginning to be narrativized in medical reports, that Charcot replaced the nascent plot and voice of the hysteric's narrative with the eye of the observer. Charcot is respected as the first physician to actually distinguish hysterical symptoms from organic

disorders and to identify systematic patterns in the attacks themselves. Because of this and through the force of his own personality, he "rehabilitated" hysteria as an illness worthy of serious psychiatric consideration (Evans 48).

Yet each of these achievements were accompanied, and, in fact, made necessary by Charcot's empiricism and his disregard for the symptom's meaning and his strict attention to the phenomenal aspect of the symptom itself. That is, Charcot did not take into account a narrative of the woman who suffered from the symptoms of hysteria, which so interested his younger contemporary, Pierre Janet.⁵ This deafness to narrative separates him, oddly enough, from his predecessors, such as Briquet or Parent-Duchâtelet, who saw that the often miserable lives of hysterical women played a part in the illness (Matlock 130; 147). Charles Briquet, a physician who closely studied hysteria and wrote the massive and well-regarded Traité clinique et thérapeutique de l'hysteria (1859), emphasized social and familial factors in the evolution of a woman's hysteria (Evans 16). The contemporary historian Roudinesco writes that Briquet tried to integrate hysteria into a sociological framework; he wanted to include the facts and conditions of a woman's life, her age, reproductive rhythms, but also astrological forecasts and other occult ruminations as factors of the disease. Charcot, however, reversed this conception, and classified the symptoms according to correlations of their

physical signs only and connected them to the research of pathological differences (Roudinesco 49).

Although Charcot insisted that hysteria was not linked to sexuality, we know that he believed hysteria was ultimately due to "chose génitales ... toujours ... toujours," as Freud says in his Autobiography (294). Even though Freud cites Charcot's statement in his autobiography, the young student also affirmed that he had no preconceived notion of the importance of sexual factor in the etiologie of hysteria. "The two researchers with whom I studied, Charcot and Breuer, were far from having the same supposition; in fact, they had a personal repugnance for this idea which had originally inspired in me the same feelings" (Roudinesco 32). As Roudinesco argues, "sexe" and "choses génitales" were not of the same theoretical order for Freud and Charcot. That is, Freud inscribes the notion of "sexual" into a theory of the unconscious which Charcot never had. He separated the idea of the sexual from its physiological attributes, and instead reads it as a psychological function.

Charcot's "causes génitales," were, contrarily, physiological reactions. They reflected decidedly skewed assumptions about a female gendered sexual desire. He saw hysterics as manifesting a seductive attitude towards others, a sexual predilection proceeding from the ovaries or the genitals. These assumptions were never publicly stated,

even though the master's students and initiates carried this private "knowledge" about hysteria with them. This secret possession of authoritarian privilege is itself a determinant of the expression of sexuality and an indication of its relationship to class and gender inequity.

The nineteenth century "truth" about hysteria's sexual cause was one that Charcot insisted on misunderstanding and on not seeing (Clinic 54-55). Foucault has written of the proliferation of discourses on sexuality that simultaneously creates and bars that same knowledge. Charcot's clinic, Foucault claims, "... was an enormous apparatus for observation, with its examinations, interrogations, and experiments, but it was also a machinery for incitement..." (55). The more this apparatus produced a discourse on sexuality, the more the doctors refused to see or hear it: "The important thing in this affair, is not that these men shut their eyes or stopped their ears, or that they were mistaken, it is rather that they constructed around and apropos of sex an immense apparatus for producing truth, even if this truth was to be masked at the last moment" (56). For example, while Charcot denied that sexuality had anything to do with hysteria, the doctors at Salpêtrière during his tenure as director went so far as to invent the ovarian compressor, a strap/girdle that placed pressure on the woman's ovaries during the hysterical attack (Evans 29). At will, they could essentially point to the sex of the

woman and induce the hysterical performance, yet the "truthful" explicitness of this sexual performance went unseen.

This "apparatus of hysteria" is similar to the subversion of desire by social and internalized repression that Guattari and Deleuze discuss in Anti-Oedipus (1983). Here, in Charcot's public space and with visible instruments, desire is literally attached to machines which produce it. The desire is channeled into oppressive exhibits of desire for the pleasure of men, rather than "flowing" into pleasure for women. Even this needs to be modified, for it seems that the hysterics did receive some pleasure from their performance. This would assume that both hysteric and physician have desire which is both produced and utilized by hysteria, although in different ways.

Still, the legitimization of hysteria was the prerogative of the scientist. The "secretiveness" of the female genitals, their imagined effect on hysterical symptoms, and Charcot's voyeuristic public display of the hysteric in the cause of science links both male and female sexuality to hysteria, and further, publicizes the inherent domination of the female patient by the male doctor. As we have seen in Klimt's *Beethoven's Frieze*, the critical space between the art gallery and medical arena collapses when the female sexualized body is displayed or represented. Charles

Bernheimer likens the spectacle of the hysteric on the medical stage to the "open" sexuality of the prostitute (Bernheimer 252). The hysterical woman's body was laid open to the public view of licentious spectators, and yet the physicians remained blind to what was "urgently solicited" (Foucault 55).

Freud has called Charcot a "seer" (Charcot 14). Indeed, his genius was in the fact that he did see, but he did not listen nor hear. He was fascinated by the appearance of the symptoms themselves. His patients, in fact, were little more than objects with symptoms appended. He led the patients into his all-black consultation room and examined them, ordering them to respond only when he asked them to. He demanded silence and gazed sternly at them when they proffered voluntary information (Evans 20). Only in this way could their symptoms become visible to him. His authoritarian presence, tempered by a kind demeanor, nevertheless (according to Freud), could not help but influence the production of hysterical symptoms. His patronage of the hysteric would certainly make life in an insane asylum much more endurable. Some of his charges, such as Blanche Wittman, for example, or G  nevi  ve, in fact, were given quite a lot of freedom, and many became well-known within the wing and by the spectators because they were accorded the privilege of performing every week. Charcot did develop methods to distinguish hysteria from

organic and neurological disorders, and for this his accomplishments are remarkable. He systematized the great range of hysterical symptoms -- blindness, deafness, paralysis, local anesthetics, the inability to walk or talk; various types of eating disorders, including anorexia; fever, amenorrhea and long periods of sleep, trances or somnambulism -- and separated them from organic or neurological disorders, which often looked identical (Evans 25). He also developed the "science" of stigmata, which identified signs common to all hysterics. Just one of these stigmata, such as local insensitivity or restricted blindness, could be used to immediately classify a woman as hysteric (26).

Charcot identified systematic patterns in the seemingly unrelated and chaotic hysterical symptoms (Evans 48). Usually the patients were brought in by a bewildered family member, the police or other public institutions, and the women frequently exhibited the convulsions and dramatic gestures typical of hysteria, or the more common physical symptoms, including paralysis and anesthetized body parts. Charcot was able to show that in spite of the diverse and bewildering array of symptoms or of the divergent "causes" - - physical or psychic trauma, arguments, love disappointments -- a characteristic order was common to all symptoms. Richet, his assistant says: "...Medical observation, patient and wise, ... showed that ... there is

a secret order, a necessary and pre-ordained series that one can always identify if one undertakes a methodical study" (Richet in Evans 24). The secret order is ultimately visible and empirically verifiable, whereas Freud, in contrast, located the secret order in a logic of an invisible nature.

Charcot's nosographic genius carried the "clinical gaze" of the eighteenth century to the extreme (the phrase is Foucault's, 1973). Yet this gaze allowed him a perspective that other scientists did not possess. Particularly within the hysterical attack, he perceived a sequential or temporal pattern. This sequential pattern was visible even if all the phases of the "grand attaque" were not always present. His contemporary, Charles Lasèque, who also examined particular symptoms and investigated their differences from organic pathologies, could come up with no order common to them all (Goldstein 328). The "...description ... in clinical medicine, does not mean placing the hidden or the visible within reach of those who have no direct access to them; what it means is to give speech to that which everyone sees without seeing -- a speech that can be understood only by those initiated into true speech" (Foucault, Clinic 115). Charcot's ability to see and name what others saw without seeing -- the temporal unfolding of the hysteric's symptoms -- gained him international acclaim because it allowed doctors to

uniformly label as hysterical those symptoms that had hitherto been considered equivocal (Goldstein, 330). This furthered the scientists' belief in their own cognitive mastery of the disease, and confirmed that they had indeed found the truth of the disease in its physical manifestations (333).

Charcot's ability to perceive order in the hysterical attack shows how the observer's interest not only discovers, but helps create the order that is observed, a phenomenon that is implicated in what Didi-Huberman calls the "invention of hysteria" (1987). Through the use of photographic stills, Charcot was able to capture movements that had hitherto eluded observation, and demonstrated that seemingly unrelated movements contained a narrative sequence, which was revealed in the attacks. Didi-Huberman observes that the effect of the photographic stills is to replace the chaotic movements of the hysterical attack with stasis (202). The doctor's ability to reproduce, through hypnosis and photography, and then label each stage of the attack gave scientists the impression of cognitive and intellectual control over a seemingly uncontrollable, even violent, series of phenomena (Evans 24).

Didi-Huberman's study emphasizes the fictive character of the hysteric's poses (Didi-Huberman 113). Charcot not only described the specific moments and forms of the attack, but he was also a master in creating order through hypnotic

suggestion. The temporality that the photograph established was illusory, Didi-Huberman argues, and it cuts up the "passage" of the attack into "before" and "after" -- but the process itself is never in the photograph (203). Even the physical manipulation of the technical apparatus makes the poses suspicious. At this stage in the history of photography, the actual photographic process -- the time it took for the camera to "take" the picture -- required that the subject literally stop and "pose."

Photographs from the Iconographie photographique show that the hysterics' poses imitate the exaggerated gestures of the French classical acting style, and also mimic those of 19th century Pre-Raphaelite paintings (Heath 36). Images of the hysterical woman, especially the "melancholic" poses of a popularized "Ophelia" figure, indicate how the imaginative and scientific imagery colludes in perpetuating a way of seeing women. For example, Figures 19 and 20 show two popular "Ophelia" figures, painted by Ernest Hérbert and George Richard Falkenberg, respectively. Ophelia's suicidal madness is transformed into a romantic portrait. Dijkstra links the culture's obsession with a mad Ophelia to its imagining of woman as moribund, helpless and self-sacrificing. These images contributed to a popular vocabulary of "women's station" by insisting that she be vulnerable and fragile, making her more desirable (Dijkstra 42-46). Dijkstra shows that several painted versions of

Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott" and "Elaine" were popular literary impulses to this iconography of a feminine self-sacrifice that leads to madness and suicide, as painters took inspiration from literary women tragically dying for their lovers. Compare these two Ophelias with a posed photograph taken of a hysterical woman in London's Bedlam Asylum, a truly mad "Ophelia." [Figure 21.] This type of wild-eyed hysteric is similar to Gertrud Eysold's stage portrayal of Hofmannsthal's "Elektra."

These images perpetuate two primary "takes" of women: the woman in deep repose, already stilled, an Ophelia or melancholic; and the hysteric whose movement is halted in mid-motion. The stilled images of Blanche Witte dancing in Iconographie photographique can be read as an affirmation of the relationship between the dancer and the hysteric, a connection of sexual exhibitionism, another "secret" of which the public knew (Dijkstra 243). [See Figure 22.] Other photographs place the famous Augustine in bedroom clothes and view her hysterical attacks as sexual provocations. [Figures 23 - 26.] The predilection for the death-like figure or the sexualized woman in the photographs and in popular paintings points to sexuality or death as the originary trauma of hysteria. That is, the artistic manipulations of hysteria signify a "truth" of hysteria that eludes the doctors: its relationship to the repetition compulsion, itself a coupling of sexual and death drives.

Freud originally thought that the hysteric repeated her "reminiscences" and that she somehow played out the memory "live" as drama or as symbolic manifestation. This naive view of repetition, discussed in the Studies, is later elaborated in Freud's theories of repetition compulsion. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1929), he expanded on the puzzling relationship between the repetition of psychic pain that may paradoxically bring pleasure: a pleasure of mastery or of "secondary gain" accompanies the active repetition of a disturbing episode. The repetition compulsion is tied fundamentally to the sexual drive, however, in that sexuality seeks continually to return to its originary source, the autoerotic body. This body once socialized and physically represented becomes a source of conflict for sexual energy and flow. The photographic stills of the hysteric may hint at the ambiguous connection between sexuality and death. The attempt to "still" the hysteric's movement is to master her imagined sexuality. To channel the hysteric's sexuality is to divert it into death. Sexuality and death circulate throughout these pictures not only as male phantasies of hysteria, but as a cultural attempt to master the relationship between them. Unfortunately, mastery remains to the master, and the woman is subjected to sadistic efforts of control. Again, however, although the artist and physician maintained the upper hand, when sexuality is diverted, it still exists.

Thus the hysteric, too, seems to have taken some pleasure in her symptoms and their repetition.

The doctors dutifully record the historical and clinical features of the hysterical attack, but they do not ask, nor seem to question, what the relationship might be between such a trauma and its subsequent symptom. If anything, the symptom is one that Freud called "associative determination", that is, the symptom occurs because of the temporal coincidence of trauma and symptom (symbol). The symptom has no meaning in its own right, but gains one through its accidental occurrence with the trauma (Fischer 129). Trembling, for example, may occur because of a frightening shock, and the two become associated, temporally and causally, in the hysteric's mind. Many of the symptoms recorded by the doctors are of this kind -- the hysteric produces what seems to be a literal and physical reenactment of a shocking upset. Although the underlying shock is recorded, its meaning for the symptoms is unimportant for Charcot, while its repetition is accorded significance. The contemporaneity of trauma and symptom were taken entirely for granted by the doctors and the two are recorded without comment. However, a symptom created by symbolic association, through linguistic expression, for example, is never mentioned or pursued. (Freud's patient Cécilie, whose face blushes when thinking of a "slap in the face", would be such a case) (Fischer 133).

Charcot believed that the hysteric repeated, in her hystericized hypnotic state, emotional or physical traumas. The "attitudes passionnelles" for example, were regarded as the repetition of frightening or bewildering scenes from the hysterics' history. They pleaded, begged or spoke to fathers, mothers or lovers in imaginary and hallucinatory scenes. The fact of the repetition, not its purported content, was important. Charcot, the positivist, regarded only the physical manifestations of hysteria as scientifically valid. Narrative was not, for Charcot, a symptom.

But something embedded within the hysteric's narrative did fascinate Charcot. Was it the enticement of a sexual moment? The desire to capture the traumatic moment before it became narrativized, in order to find in its immobility a truth that movement and narrative could not render? Whatever evidence or "fact" that the photograph captured was only a resemblance to the thing itself -- it is as much made ("facies") as it is phenomenon ("factum") (Didi-Huberman 63). The photographs were themselves spectacle, portraits, not just scientific evidence. As representation, the photograph is already outside of "truth." The only symptoms are fleeting and immaterial -- a body in movement.

Nosography, the delineation of external pathological markers, was Charcot's forte; his was indeed a science determined almost exclusively by visual manifestations. The

medical gaze seeks a visible surface onto which invisible mechanisms are externalized. With the hysteric, the surface of the body seems synonymous with its displaced interior. For example, Charcot believed that brain lesions caused the hysteric's mental images or hallucinations. These images were then externally manifested through stigmata, pains, contorted limbs, expressions and gestures. Mental images, such as fixed ideas, hallucinations, scotoma or blind spots could thus cause the seemingly irrational and unmotivated movements of the hysteric. The brain produced thoughts as images, which became disorganized and incoherent during hysterical attacks. The body itself was seen as the external manifestation of the brain work gone astray (Kopjec 30).⁶

What was observable about hysteria if not the body in conflict? The frequent and repetitive suggestions given to the hysterics were the doctor's attempts to create or recreate that observable moment, a fact, a moment that could be stopped and studied. It was an attempt to return to the moment of the originating trauma (Didi-Huberman 203). A suggestion given in hypnosis, which sets up a fictive situation, almost creates the moment that can never be photographed -- the moment that had created the original psychic and physical "shock" to the nervous system (203). Hence the photographer obsessively repeats the poses, the suggestions, the drama. The scientist, as much as the

hysteric, is involved in a repetitive movement; both are part of the hysteric's performance. The hysteric's energistic impulse must be stilled in order for the physician to reach understanding. Sexuality, as force and movement, must be evacuated from the body; woman must be scrutinized and pinned down.

The obsession with scrutizing the female body is similar to the male suspicion, which I describe more fully in the following chapters, that underneath the woman's clothing, or even skin, there is "nothing." The repetitive nature of Charcot's photography, even the use of the same subject over and over, reflects, on the one hand, that one woman can stand in for many, if just one could "get" it. Further, though, it is as though the camera, with its "scientific" ability to see truth, must be engaged in the apparatus of male desire and suspicion. The more Charcot and his studio photograph the hysterics, the more determined are they that their photographs are a true rendering. Of what? They cannot, in the end, find that "fact" they are seeking. The hysterical moment of trauma eludes them. Yet this puts into play their own "horror" of what is "underneath" the woman, her secret -- this trauma is also always escaping them. As a fetish, the photographic image of the women both reveals and does not show what the male fears most. Thus is woman both sexualized and moribund.

III. Hysteria and its Surrealist transformation

The connection between sexuality and death was taken up as a literary theme by the Surrealists in the latter part of the first decade after World War I. The Surrealists made use of Freud's ideas, and effectively manipulated his techniques of free association to create a new type of art. Andre Breton attempts to artistically present a psychotic woman in his 1928 novel, Nadja, but he acknowledges his failure to do so, even though he uses surrealist methods. Breton's familiarity with psychiatry and medicine links artistic and medical representations in interesting ways. He serves as a link between the late nineteenth-century psychiatry of Charcot and the artistic and psychoanalytic concerns of the twentieth century. The surrealist concerns with hysteria as an art form illuminate how the medical profession saw hysteria as well -- as sexually provocative, fascinating and, ultimately, as a pathology to be used to further its own program. As Bernheimer notes, the hysteric had to dutifully repeat her trauma as drama (Bernheimer 255).

Breton and the surrealists admired the hysteric, and, as they proclaim in the Révolution Surréaliste (1924), the hysteric epitomized artistic freedom in her use of symptoms as signs, and, they famously proclaim, hysteria "is not a pathological phenomenon and can in every respect be considered a supreme vehicle of expression" (Roudinesco 7). The surrealists saw the medical gaze of Charcot as part of

the institutionalization of hysteria and insanity, and insisted that the physician should no longer occupy a position of authority vis-a-vis the mad (7). Further, they realized that the relationship between doctor and patient was primary in hysteria as illness. They say, "Hysteria is a more or less irreducible mental state characterized by a subversion of the relations between the subject and the ethical universe in which he believes himself a practical participant, outside of any systematic delirium. This mental state is based on the need for a reciprocal seduction, which explains the hastily accepted miracles of medical suggestion (or counter-suggestion)" (7).

Breton relates that Nadja, too, was under his spell, although he does not analyze his effect on her, as he would do with the hysterics in his Révolution article. "She seems to be suffering from a certain inner conflict, but suddenly she surrenders, offers her lips. ... Now she tells me of my power over her, of my faculty for making her think and do what I desire. ..." (79). Later, he collects some of her sentences with their still resonating fascination: "If you desire it," she had said, "for you I would be nothing, or merely a footprint." Or, "You are my master. I am only an atom respiring at the corner of your lips or expiring" (116). And indeed, his power over her is so great that without his help, she is committed to the insane asylum at Vaucluse. Breton's control over Nadja is similar to

Charcot's over his hysterics in the Salpêtrière. In both instances, the male seems oblivious to his power -- or at least takes it for granted. Similarly, the women, in some ways, submit to and take some pleasure in their subservience, since it allows the transferential relationship to be maintained.

As a symbol and muse, the hysteric serves a function for the artist, yet as a real woman, she cannot really co-exist within normal narrative limits or lives. Breton views Nadja through his relationship with her. He admires her independence, yet as Ladimer argues, once she begins to consistently shock norms of acceptable behavior (even norms for artistic behavior), and acts less and less "feminine" (or increasingly "feminine"), Breton cannot tolerate her. He cannot tolerate her prostitution and her "scandalous" behavior in her hotel corridor. So, too, the hysterics on the hospital ward suffered treatments invented to "correct" their stories and cure their symptoms. They were designed to maintain social and gender control over women who frequently acted "virile" or lascivious within the hospital ward (Evans 38-39). The medical narrative that often accompanies the treatment parallels social fears about class and gender disruptions. The hysteric's attacks were often accompanied by unrestrained behavior and sexual provacativeness -- behavior "unfit" for home and work. The hysterics' attempts at self-assertion on the ward, including

sexually provocative behavior, were viewed by the doctors as resistance to the male authority that would cure them (Evans 30).

In his attempt to render the surrealist vision of the independent, genius-driven mad woman, Breton tries different technical means, including non-linear narrative styles, such as comparisons and allusions. Artistically presented, the hysteric's drama does not have to be narratively motivated or coherent. As the critic Ladimer observes, the narrative of Nadja moves between a logical, sequentially ordered prose style (indebted to the medical profession, as Roudisnesco points out) and the lack of such narrative linearity. His language of representation vacillates purposefully between a logical, coherent account of his real-life relationship with the woman, and an "analogical, feminine" language that strives to avoid the mundane manner of everyday representation (Ladimer, 1980). He does not, however, actually reproduce or represent Nadja's speech as an example of what we might today call "écriture féminine." Rather, Breton attempts to portray Nadja in vignettes that are linked associatively to other surrealist events, such as coincidences or artistic inspiration in his own life.

However, Breton makes very little attempt to analyze her history or her illness. He comes to an understanding of himself but not the woman, Nadja. Nadja's madness points out to Breton his own lack of "genius" and his fear of

committing the extreme act -- double suicide, which Nadja suggested to him. Although Breton sees genius in Nadja's actions and language, he also unwillingly admits that there is an uncrossable boundary between their two modes of experience. By the end of the novel, it is as if Breton gives up and resorts to a "medical" account, with a more traditional historical narrative. Thus, although their intentions are far apart, both Breton and Charcot repudiate the hysteric's narrative, in favor of one they hope will be a truer account.

Yet the poetic ("real") truths about Nadja are buttressed by photographs of her art work, and of places and people associated with her. Beajour argues that "Breton's dissatisfaction with his written account is emphasized by his great concern for the precise verifiable *quality* of the narrative, the abundance of documents and photographs provided -- for the book is in part a scrap book -- his insistence that nothing was invented, and the elusiveness of the wondrous, mystical sense he is trying to capture without recourse to fiction" (Ladimer 180, emphasis in original).

Far from disregarding Breton's attempts, I relate them to Charcot's obsession with photographing his hysterics. One striking similarity between Breton's and Charcot's accounts is that they both have recourse to photography to witness their "truth" of women's narratives. Charcot's patients were not just photographed, but, as *dramatis*

personae, made into objects as their convulsions became a "series of still-life portraits that Charcot and his assistants collected in albums" (Evans 24). As Breton repeats at the end of Nadja, the surrealist tenet of beauty was that it was to be "convulsive." He could be speaking about the attraction of the hysteric on display on the Salpêtrière stage.

A voyeurism pervades Charcot's empirical method, especially when the object under study is a woman in sexualized dramatic form. Perhaps, he, too, was trying to capture something "elusive and wondrous" of the hysteric. And in fact, Charcot and his staff photographers put together a huge volume of art work of medieval painting and iconography in order to prove that hysteria had been prevalent in different ages under a religious guise (Les Démoniaques dans l'Art). Charcot resorted to pictorial representation to make his theories more believable, just as Breton shored up his narrative with photographs. Was it a fear that words can be misconstrued in a way that a picture cannot be that is at the heart of the use of pictorial imagery? Was it that both men, Charcot and Breton, were primarily visual thinkers? Or was it that indeed, they could not capture the truth of woman?

Like Charot, Breton heard the mad woman's account of her life, but he did not make anything of it. Breton listened to minute details and excruciatingly trivial

renditions of Nadja's childhood. "Sometimes I reacted with terrible violence against the over-detailed account she gave me of certain scenes of her past life, concerning which I decided, probaby quite superfically, that her dignity could not have survived entirely intact" (113). Besides wondering exactly what Breton means by "dignity," one might also react negatively to Breton's dismissive attitude towards Nadja. It is as if he wanted to hear nothing from her but her "mad" associations, not her real life. In fact he says that, "For some time, I had stopped understanding Nadja. Actually, perhaps we have never understood one another, at least about our way of dealing with the simple matters of existence" (130).

Breton decides that the details and prosaic events of Nadja's life are not as important in his artistic representation of Nadja as is the attempt to capture his own sense of "wonderment" and self-knowledge. I am not criticizing Breton for refusing to be Nadja's therapist: rather I am suggesting that the suppression of the woman's own story in favor of the male artist's or doctor's has served particular purposes for him. Nadja's story becomes Breton's own: he, like Freud, identified with "his" hysteric/madwoman. Indeed, for Breton and the surrealists, as for Baudelaire, the hysteric was the artistic allegory extraordinaire, a figure with which the artist identified.⁷

In spite of his interest in psychoanalysis, Breton had

artistic, not therapeutic uses for it. Roudinesco argues that the narrative of Nadja is that of a psychiatrist who cannot cure his patient, or rather, who denounces psychiatry and identifies with the madwoman, his patient (27). In this novel, Breton abandons his attachment to the medical establishment. However, thirty-five years later, he adds a note of gratitude to Babinski (Charcot's student), to whom he was indebted for his knowledge of psychiatry.

For somewhat similar reasons then, Breton, like Charcot, rejected symbolic meaning in the hysteric's (or the mad woman's) story. Breton took Nadja's life as a given, as a strange gift and did not analyze it as a case study. Charcot, too, although listening to the stories that the hysterics told him, was looking at something else. He was, like the artist, interested in what manifested itself on the body's canvas, one could say.

IV. The doctor's narrative of the hysteric's body

The stories that the doctors and psychiatrists told about hysteria were more about bodies with symptoms than about the meanings the stories held for the women with the symptoms. Even Briquet, who claimed to know fifteen casual "agents" of hysterical symptoms, and who listened to his patients' stories, focused more on the body's symptoms than its causes. This is partly due to his belief that the proclivity to hysteria was part of feminine nature, and hence the sensitivity of a woman's nature could not be

changed (Matlock 147, 148). Symptoms might be eradicated and the body cured, but hysteria itself was not perhaps so easily separated from female nature. A physical or psychic trauma could be implicated in hysteria, but unlike narration with interpretive power, Briquet's stories did not have plots -- there was no meaning assigned to the events (Matlock 140). The shock of the event was seen as a literal, physical fact, not a psychological one.

Of the hundreds of cases recorded by Charcot and his associates in Clinique des maladies du système nerveux, many do occur after a literal shock to the system -- a fright or a fall, for example. For example, one complicated case involved a young woman, Jeanne, twenty-three, who had been admitted to Salpêtrière for corneal trouble (V. 4, 1891, 182-183). She had convulsions since the age of 10, but they did not seem hysterical in character, and she was able to work at a children's hospital in spite of them. After her admission to the hospital, however, she had once lost consciousness. She had fallen to the ground, suffered a loss of vision and experienced a ringing in the ears. Since this episode, she had frequently felt nauseated, experienced the well-known symptom of the "boule" ("ball in the throat", associated with hysterical attacks), and cried for about one-half hour after each such an experience. Her trembling began on a day visit with her mother, while she was still confined to the hospital. A large barking dog knocked her

mother over and onto her back. The daughter was terrified and her legs became weak and trembling, but after an hour she calmed down. Later that night at the hospital, she again experienced the "boule", the nausea and this time, her whole body trembled, after which she cried.

Such reports from the Cliniques or the Iconographie always give a brief medical background of the patient (if a woman, this includes the age of menses and whether or not it is irregular, painful, etc.) and whether or not there appears to be any "antecedents hereditaires or personnels" in the family (in this case there were none). Any hysterical stigmata are noted (in Jeanne's case, above, there were several, including restricted vision and loss of smell, and an irregularity in the ovaries). The convulsions and trembling are observed in detail, and may go on for pages, while the "precipitating cause" of her trembling is given. Here, it is the dog attack. Indeed, it is taken for granted that Jeanne's hysterical trembling, mimicking the earlier convulsion, was caused by the fright the animal gave her. Even if this is the case, what about her other symptoms, the ones that seem to have originated during her stay at the hospital -- the loss of consciousness, the "boule" and other stigmata never experienced before her confinement at Salpêtrière? The production of specific symptoms seems to confirm Bernheim's criticism that the Charcot's hospital manufactured its own "culture hystérique"

(Evans 42). Further, no narrative or precipitating cause is attached to these attacks at the hospital. For the physicians, there is a natural evolution from the mild to the "grande attaque."

In another such case, a young girl working at a clothing store is struck by a horse pulling a carriage during lunch. She was not run over, suffered no concussion or broken bones, but returned to work pale and upset. A few days after the shock, the girl experienced nausea and loss of appetite. Her right hand began to tremble, she lost the feeling in her fingers, and was unable to continue work. She did not experience any hysterical attacks until she was involved in a violent argument with her father and "another" (a lover or boyfriend? The doctors in the case do not ask this question, nor provide an answer), which seemed to precipitate a classical hysterical attack, including the "arc-en-cercle". This was the only incident of her "grande attaque." After that, she had no other such attacks, although the trembling continued in her right hand. It never ceased except during sleep, and, the girl's mother added, in moments of "lively diversion" (Iconographie v. 4). This illustrates, for Charcot, that both physical and emotional shock are implicated in hysteria. Indeed, emotional trauma or the subsequent grande attacks seem to occur only after a possible brain lesion has been effected through physical shock.

Had Charcot listened to his patients, he might have discovered something about them that would have helped ease their sufferings and would have perhaps moved the study of hysteria in another direction (Showalter 154). Drinka, in his account of the "birth" of neurosis, gives rich narratives of the two star hysterics at Salpêtrière, Geneviève and Louise (called Augustine). Geneviève had been in trouble from her early years; an orphan, she had periods of intense anger and was placed with a foster family in the country. In her adolescence, she fell in love with a young man, Camille, who died of fever and during the next year she suffered from depression and listlessness. Finally employed, she was seduced by her employer and suffered a hysterical pregnancy. Suicide attempts followed; after incarceration in a mental hospital, she escaped with a medical student with whom she had a sexual liaison. Geneviève was finally sent to Salpêtrière, where she drew the attention of Charcot and his students. She even escaped from this hospital two times, becoming pregnant at each escape, and she fell in love with another medical student (it is assumed) who helped her escape a third time. It is presumably to these episodes that Breton and the Surrealists alluded in their romanticization of Salpêtrière's famous hysterics and their doctor lovers.

The doctors described Geneviève as a woman who easily fell in and out of hysterical attacks, whose seizures,

particularly in the "delirious" stage, were much studied and photographed. This stage is characterized by poses of religious and/or sexual ecstasy and suffering; Geneviève interposed these gestures and movements with erotic pleas and sexually provocative language. She apparently was able to vacillate quickly between the two stages of "saint" and prostitute (Drinka 94).⁸ When Regnard and Bourneville (the professional photographers engaged by Charcot) began their photographic study of her, they were easily able to photograph the different phases of the "grand attaque", because she could be so easily prompted -- by amyl nitrate or compression on her ovaries: "Back and forth, in and out, ecstasy, arc-en-cercle, ecstasy, erotic posturing, laughing, crying, giggling, crying ...": these are the movements of the hysteric Geneviève (Drinka 94). Her medical story ends with her final apprehension and incarceration at Salpêtrière.

Augustine, the "queen of the hysterics" also had a sad and mean life before her incarceration at Salpêtrière. As a girl, she had been a rebellious child at the convent where she was educated, and was frequently punished for her belligerent and sometimes sexual behavior. She suffered her first hysterical attacks after being raped by her mother's lover, and other familial transgressions increased the girl's illness, until she was finally admitted to Charcot's clinic. There, she exhibited frequent and often day-long attacks, in

which she seemed entranced, speaking and gesticulating to her mother, her early adolescent lover and her rapist (97-99). Although a willing actress, Augustine dreamt of "... fire, blood, rape, hatred of men, revolution, and escape" (Showalter 154). She tried to escape several times from the clinic, and her rebellious behavior led to punishments of ether or chloroform treatments. Finally, Augustine did manage to escape from Salpêtrière, and was never seen nor heard from again (Showalter 154). Ironically, the two women most photographed and studied at Salpêtrière were the ones who also tried to escape from the asylum, suggesting that relative freedom might have been a favor granted to them by their hysterical attacks.

In the Iconographie, the accounts of the hysterics' lives are given in cursory style, while the detailed observation of the body is overwhelming. Mary Jacobus has written that the medical and scientific discourses in the nineteenth century constructed a reality that the woman embodied but did not know (i-ii). Certainly, in these accounts, whatever meaning and experience of her own life the hysteric might have had were distinct from its medical delineation. Even the accounts of physicians more sympathetic to the hysteric's history, such as Hippolyte Bernheim, reveal very little of the patients' narratives in his case histories (which, in Hypnosis and Suggestion in Psychotherapy, were often of an argumentative nature, trying

to disprove Charcot and his non-therapeutic use of hypnotism) (1891). The hysteria of many women who came before Bernheim in the Nancy hospital was "caused," he said, by losses of family members, including children or infants, or after violent emotional upsets (for example, arguments with family members, spousal beatings, or altercations with intimate friends). But even when the symptoms were cured by hypnosis, one wonders how wretched the lives of these women remained even if they had no more hysterical pains. What happened to the seventeen-year old who was admitted to the hospital with headaches, pains and sounds in her head? Was she ever cured of her vaginal bleeding and unspecified local anesthesia? The records say that she had lost her infant and had just been turned out of the house by her mother-in-law. After five days of hypnotic suggestion, the young woman felt well enough to leave. Her hysterical symptoms alleviated, the woman continued, most probably, a life afflicted with worse ills. Even knowing the women's stories does not provide, however, more than a skeletal outline of these women's emotional and subjective lives. What was important to them? What would they have to say? Their actions -- attempts at escape, their nightmares and the hysterical symptoms -- speak, but they supply only partial explanations, only signs pointing to a mute desire.

Thus Charcot and the other doctors created a narrative for the hysteric, regardless of her own. The much-

photographed Augustine became so adept at falling into the hypnotic trances which repeated the four stages of the attack that she could divide her hysterical performances into scenes, tableaux and intermissions (Showalter 154). Each stage of the grand attack was delayed and recorded on film. These voyeuristic and medical narratives betray the profession's investment in the social and cultural values of its time, and are easily read as narratives of women's difference (Matlock 152).

For example, hypnotism was used excessively at Salpêtrière primarily for the purpose of reproducing the hysterical symptoms as scientific data and recreating them for further empirical observation (Evans 44). Yet because Charcot believed that only a hysteric could be effectively hypnotized, hypnotism was not used as a treatment or cure, but only to reveal the degree of hysteria.⁹ To take just one example, a woman was presented at the Tuesday lectures because of a paralyzed hand, which greatly interested Charcot (Charcot, 1887). She related that the hand became paralyzed after she hit her son with it. Charcot wondered if, under hypnosis, the anger would be equal to the anger of the original "hysterical" attack. Indeed, under hypnotism, the two seem quite similar. But the meaning of the woman's anger, her relationship to her son and the subsequent symptom were never questioned by Charcot: what mattered was the similarity of the hysterical and hypnotic states and the

re-creation of an affect in hypnosis. Didi-Huberman writes that Charcot resolutely refused to interpret the symptoms as signs, but instead demanded that they be "... externalizations of his desire to define hysteria nosographically" (Didi-Huberman, 1985). For Charcot, the symptoms that he recorded did not symbolize anything else -- they were "naturalistic" expressions of physiology gone astray (Gros 896). Symptoms were not manifestations of the hysteric's unrealized or untold narrative, but of the doctor's own desire to define and classify.

Yet psychic shock and emotional upsets did have causative power in Charcot's view. But what about events or feelings that were so shocking? Why was an argument grave enough to induce hysteria in a daughter, or so overwhelming as to cause paralysis in a young mother? Charcot could not say. Even though the master overwhelmed the patients and dominated the wards of Salpêtrière, he nevertheless did not want to hear the secrets of the hysteric's narrative. Their stories, so similar to those found in the naturalist novels of the late nineteenth century, found a listener in the ears of the confessor and the eyes of the serial reader.

CHAPTER IV: ENDNOTES

1. Some critics argue that psychoanalysis itself originates out of the theoretical workings of Freud's own transference to many "fathers," including his own biological father, his friend and mentor Breuer, the physician Charcot, and his university professors Meyer and . See Roudinesco and .
2. See Goldstein's "Hysteria, anticlerical politics, and the view beyond the asylum," in Console and Classify, 322-361.
3. Numerous writers have pointed out, for example, that Charcot and his colleagues were Republicans and had specific beliefs about science and its place in political and social life. They were opposed to the conservative, Catholic and authoritarian supporters of the "ancien regime" (See, for example, Roudinesco's account).
4. I have in mind a project which would turn to the public asylums of Vienna in the years during which Freud worked. Because of Freud's influence, and his work among the bourgeois women, often Jewish, the lower class hysteric is largely ignored in the history of hysteria in Vienna.
5. Janet is today being "rehabilitated" as the psychiatrist who sympathetically believed his patients' stories of sexual abuse, in opposition to Freud, who misogynistically refused to believe or who just plain lied to save his own interests. See, for example, Jeffrey Masson or Barbara Hermann.
6. In her 1981 article, Kopjec traces arguments about mental imagery and their relationship to hysteria.
7. See Gérard Garsarian, "Le figure du poète hystérique," where he discusses Baudelaire's identification with the hysterical Emma of Flaubert's Madame Bovary. Baudelaire writes, "Mme. Bovary, ce n'est pas vous, Flaubert, car Mme. Bovary, c'est moi!" (177).
8. Drinka also notes that Geneviève's poses resembled those of the much photographed contemporary Belgian "saint", Louise Lateau, whom the hysteric tried to visit.
9. Charcot was well aware that Bernheim and Janet used hypnotism to induce states of calm in the women, and that there was some evidence that it "cured" some hysterics. (See Roudinesco and Evans over the debate concerning the uses of hypnotism in the establishment of a criteria for hysteria and for effecting a cure.)

Chapter V: Literary Narratives of the Hysteric and the Prostitute

In this chapter, I discuss two novels by the Goncourt brothers, Germinie Lacerteux (1865) and La Fille Élisa (1876), as examples of how the representation of hysteria was part of the way in which the naturalist movement in general studied and depicted its subject matter. Naturalism represented the female and her body as indicative of "natural" categories of hysteria and prostitution. Naturalist texts, written almost exclusively by men, represent the woman as highly sexualized and destructive to the narrative. At the same time, these texts point to a nineteenth-century preoccupation with duality -- the split between the mind and body, between spirit and materiality, represented by the cerebral male and sexualized physicality of the female, respectively. Although naturalism disavowed the split between the mind and body and tried to depict the organic unity of the two, the Goncourts novels still inadvertently portray a profound division between women's sexuality and nature and the world of culture and male prerogative.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the hysteric also represents this split: her mind is "split", a view advanced by Pierre Janet and first postulated by Freud and Breuer in Studies on Hysteria. Conversely, though, the hysteric represents the denial of a split, for she blatantly presents

the mind's integration with, and control of, the body. The hysteric invalidates the argument that the mind can be split off from the body as so many artists, philosophers and even doctors suggested: the hysteric shows on her body exactly what the (unconscious) mind desires but cannot articulate in language (Von Braun, 1985). That is, the hysteric is precisely a disease or series of symptoms that appears such only within a dualistic system of thought and representation.

In this chapter, I will show that the Goncourt novels are explicitly concerned with the hysteric's body and her language. In a more subtle fashion, they question the relationship between the two. In Section I, I discuss the Goncourt novels in the naturalist context. In Section II, I show that the woman's, particularly the working-class woman's, relationship to language is problematized. The woman's body speaks, but not through spoken language. The absence of language and speech contributes to the heroine's hysteria and madness in Germinie Lacerteux, and its complete suppression has much the same effect in La Fille Élisa. The loss of language is, moreover, tied to a narrative that anxiously tries to avoid the sexuality of the hysterical woman.

I. Realism and the working class hysteric: Germinie Lacerteux

The psycho-sociological theory of hysteria, one which the French physician Briquet advocated in the late

nineteenth century, postulated that the conditions of modern life were sufficient to provoke hysterical symptoms (Roudinesco, 38). These same conditions, created by capitalist industry, also produced a milieu that the naturalist novelists analyzed and represented in their novels. Many novelists in the late nineteenth-century tried to mirror the harsh social life around them, and documented the horrendous conditions in which many people were forced to live, and they recorded fictionally the psychological toll that such existence took. Not only did the French novelist of the late nineteenth century investigate the "lower depths" of poverty and crime, but he also visited the Tuesday lectures of Charcot in order to study the conditions and iconography of hysteria. For example, the Goncourt brothers attended the lectures, along with other writers, such as Daudet and Alex Munthe.

The subject of Germinie Lacerteux, a working-class woman jilted by a jaded lover and driven mad by the tension between desire and possession who "falls" into prostitution, was made popular by Eugène Sue in his extraordinarily popular serialization in the 1840's, Les Mystères de Paris (Brooks 146). His sociological studies and melodramatic narratives portrayed victims of urban society in which the upper class exploited the populace as much as the working class was consumed by its own greedy nature. However, the heroine of Les Mystères, Fleur-de-Marie, is not just a sympathetic representative of the working class. The body

of the prostitute -- the sexually deviant body -- as Brooks terms it, allowed the artist of the nineteenth century to "... deal with the dangerous and fearful subject of female sexuality in a manner not possible when portraying women of the upper and middle classes" (Brooks, 159).¹ The prostitute cannot erase the marks left on her by her descent into the contaminated "underbelly" of Paris (156). Further, the prostitute's body, repeatedly exchanged, gives the narrative something to "count" and "recount" -- it provides narrative material (163). The nineteenth-century naturalist narrative takes an interest in, and is fueled by, the body and its dependence on the social machinations of money and financial exchange.

Although the Goncourt brothers did not participate as much in the "slumming" that many writers indulged in, they based both of their novels, Germinie Lacerteux and La Fille Elisa on true stories. Their Journals contain references to their own maid's life as primary material for Germinie Lacerteux, and to the life and death of a prostitute condemned for murder, made use of in La Fille Elisa. These popular literary texts chronicling the lives of lower class prostitutes -- the stories, in many cases, taken from the much-read newspaper accounts of the time -- intersect with the public concerns of medical doctors and health officials in the lives of the lower class in general. The convergence between social phenomena and literary preoccupation makes it possible for the miseries and symptoms of the working class

hysteric to be recorded as a narrative. The "true-life" literary narratives, like the nineteenth-century medical case studies of hysterics, are filled with information about the history of the woman, including histories of her family and her sexual life, traumatic events and other seemingly relevant material (Matlock, 130). Matlock argues that these narratives, both medical and literary, connect class, environment and sexual difference to political and social organization. What the medical reports do not do, however, is create plots in the sense of giving causal and explanatory weight to the particular elements of the narrative (Brooks, 148). We have seen this in Chapter V and the discussion of Charcot. Although the Goncourts themselves shy away from the specifics of contemporary political reality (Thaler, 104), their narratives link degenerate sexuality with the lower classes and with the powerless.

The naturalist fiction of Zola and the Goncourts, detailing the body of women and their social environment, describe an object of the lower class capable of wringing pity from their readers. (However, Edmond records how embarrassed Zola was when he overheard a courtesan in a cafe refuse to read his serialization of Nana on account of its "smuttiness") (Baldick, 29). In their naturalist novels, the Goncourts describe the sociological conditions that allow the "too sensitive" nature of the female protagonists to evolve only to be crushed and transformed by the brutal

exigencies of modern urban life. The novels treat their working class subject melodramatically, with a simple and almost tragic plot. The heroine never has the chance or means to overcome her impoverished station in life. Unlike some of the popular naturalist novels of the time, neither *Germinie's* narrative nor *Elisa's* plot contain the possibility of salvation and both are extraordinarily ill-equipped to control the passions and external forces that capsize their lives. From a none-too-promising start of rural poverty and neglect, *Germinie* sinks lower and lower into sexual obsession, drunkenness, madness and death. *Elisa's* life, from its inception, is filled with scenes of blood, violence, brutality, life and death. Her mother is the mid-wife to prostitutes in the poor section of Paris and she sells her daughter into prostitution as soon as she can.

What shocked the contemporary reading audience about *Germinie Lacerteux* seemed to be that the narrative attributed such a depth of feeling and passion to a working class woman (Satiat 29). These emotions were identified with hysteria, and were linked to madness and prostitution. *Germinie's* passion ultimately ends the narrative. Upper class and bourgeois women could easily fall into paroxysms of hysteria when their overwrought nerves were bombarded with too much sensation, as with *Madame Bovary*, but that the same sorts of emotions could be found in the upstairs maid caused a stir. Indeed, when these passions were attributed to such a woman, the emotions and their representations were

regarded as obscene and distasteful. The book was of "débauche de bas étage" (Lagenevais qted. in Satiat, 29); it depicted "Sales amours d'une Margoton hystérique" (Duchesne qted. in Satiat, 29), "préoccupé exclusivement de physiologie et de sexualité" (Satiat, 29); it was nothing but an "orgie de réalisme brutal" (Merlet qted. in Satiat, 29); and it was one of the "...extrémités les plus crues du réalisme moderne" (Lagenevais qted. in Satiat, 29). The objection to the book was part of the general objection to the subject matter of naturalism, and to the narrative style that employed close observation of a "base" subject.

Germinie Lacertuex, as well as La Fille Elisa, are content to portray a subject of the working class and give her upper class sentiments (Thaler, 105). Thaler, a modern critic, argues that the Goncourts, unlike some naturalist novelists, were really creating a new literary subject (blending a working class woman with bourgeois sentiments), but not forging a new genre.

Zola, however, in Nana, moves beyond the plot and description of the prostitute. The "golden Venus" of Paris subverts the class divisions that form the social and economic institutions of the Third Republic, and she moves into and destroys, like an infection, the cohesiveness of bourgeois and upper class integrity (Brooks, 1984).² Because of her powerful sexuality and seductive ability, Nana manipulates the male who wields economic control in society. She does so in order to increase her own pleasure

and desirability. As a representation of the force that threatens fragile social norms, Nana, like the women of Barbey D'Aurevilly's stories, endangers the stability of the representational social order as well as the narrative itself. The prostitute's ability to deceive the male observer and undermine the structural stability of social relations is the same phenomenon observed by the social hygienist Parent-Duchâtelet in his study of the real-life "insoumises" and courtesans during the mid and late nineteenth century.³ (I return to Parent-Duchâtelet in Chapter VII.)

Class transgressions are not part of the novelistic intrigue, and neither of the two Goncourt novels ally sexual and class violations, as does Nana, for instance. Germinie falls only relative to her already lowly economic class; Elisa, born into prostitution and violence, also "falls" into murder and imprisonment. Her "nature" and environment are the causal agents, not the conflict between woman as a powerful and frightening agent of the working class and the male-dominated economic and political world.

Only in the rural brothel, where Elisa begins her career, do some of the prostitutes marry out of their profession into the rural bourgeois or working class. The clients are "condemned" to treat the women relatively well, since they know them and interact with them in the village. In the country, the behavior of clients and prostitutes is still constrained by traditional social mores and

considerations, and the "rigor of the morals and the police ... protect the young girls". In contrast to Paris, the customer is "... plus naive, plus sensuelle, moins cèrèbral, moins hantée de lectures cruelles ... " ("more naive, more sensual, less abstract, less haunted by cruel reading ...") La Fille Elisa 59).

The Goncourts' representation of the rural prostitute is rather cynical, since Elisa finds the country life boring. Like Flaubet's Emma, Elisa longs for adventure. Elisa follows her first lover from one rural garrison to another, caught up in the fabrications of an exalted love. She suffers brutal beating at his hands, yet supports him by street walking. When she finally leaves him, she returns to Paris, where she moves from brothel to brothel, finally ending up in an establishment that caters to the military garrison at the edge of town.

Unlike the novels of Zola as described by Brooks, the Goncourt's narrative does not extend beyond the boundaries of poverty and they never threaten the fantasy of male social control. Only in La Fille Elisa is Elisa's enforced silence read by the prison warden as mute rebellion, since she refuses to answer his questions. But ultimately her silence maintains the woman as an object quelched by a punitive and dominating system of regulations. Germinie Lacerteux establishes a connection between the heroine's education, social class, character and her inability to deal with the blows of fortune as causal agents (in Briquet's

sense) leading to her illness and eventual madness and alcoholism. So, too, with La Fille Elisa. In that novel, in fact, the heroine is much more objectified, and Elisa's feelings are rarely described in the first half of the novel. Rather, her actions and behavior are delineated with in an expansive narrative field, where social relations, objects and people are minutely described. Unlike the many case histories of hysterics and asylum patients, the naturalist literary text treats the social environment and the hysteric's "nature" as elements of a plot -- as elements that have meaning for character, and whose development proceeds from those explanatory elements. In these novels, the heroine herself has a narrative, even though it is subject to the laws of male desire and narrative order.

II. The confession of desire in the novel

The Goncourts' Germinie Lacerteux is illustrative here, because that narrative describes Germinie's inner struggle, not just her symptoms. Her symptoms do not overtake the narrative, but supply its material. Germinie Lacerteux was based on a true story of the Goncourt frères' own long-time maid, Rose Malingre. The two brothers were shocked, when, after she died of pleurisy and peritonitis, they found evidence of her "double vie." Their seemingly honorable maid had lived "... toute une existence inconnue, odieuse, répugnante, lamentable, ... "; had indulged in "... orgies nocturnes"; and had apparently been consumed by shame,

mortification and fear lest her masters find out her secret ignominy (Goncourts, 1862, 272). The maid's split life became the basis for their scandalous novel, Germinie Lacerteux. The fictional Germinie is able to keep her "real" life separate from the life of her old employer, Mlle. de Varandeuil, just as had the Goncourt's own maid.

Germinie's descent into hysteria, alcoholism, theft and prostitution is narrated sympathetically, and the authors make it clear that Germinie's decline is the result of her too sensitive nature, a nature, which, as Briquet might have told it, was made for love and children. Indeed, it is the thwarting of the maid's desire for love, and the death of her own infant that pushes Germinie beyond her capacity to cope with the environment around her. Her impoverished childhood in the country, her parents's death and her subsequent move to Paris to eke out a squalid living with her siblings, her early rape and subsequent encounters with male lechery left their mark on the girl. In spite of the sympathy that goes into the account, though, the milieu and characters are hideous and sick. The working class is allied with illness, debauchery and the hospital in the works of the Goncourts; every heroine becomes ill -- the working class as a whole is ill (Thaler 105).

As in other Goncourt narratives, similar themes of silence, mystery, mutism, secrets, suffocation, and speech are part of the texture of the heroine's life in Germinie Lacertuex and La Fille Élisa (Thaler 105, 106). Language

(or its suppression) is extraordinarily powerful in the lives of the characters. In Germinie Lacertuex, the heroine loses her confessor and thus can no longer narrate her life; in La Fille Elisa, the prostitute reads, like Emma Bovary, exciting novels and is overcome by desire. She is punished in the second half of the book with total silence enforced in a prison convent. In the Goncourts' narratives, women must articulate their desire through language; they must confess their emotions; they need someone to whom they can recount the narrative of their own life. They need a confessor, someone who will listen to the "secret and delicate intertwinings" of the soul that are held ready to be spoken by a woman of the people.

Ils [the bourgeois readers] ne savent pas ce qu'est la confession, ce qu'est le confesseur pour ces pauvres âmes de pauvres femmes. Dans le prêtre qui l'écoute et dont la voix lui arrive doucement, la femme de travail et de peine voit moins le ministre de Dieu, le juge de ses péchés, l'arbitre de son salut, que le confident de ses chagrins et l'ami des ses misères. ... il y a toujours en elle un peu du fond de la femme, ce je ne sais quoi de fiévreux, de frissonnant, de sensitif et de blessé, une inquiétude et comme une aspiration de malade qui appelle des caresses de la parole ... (Germinie 90).

[They (the bourgeois readers) do not know what the

confession and the confessor mean to the pitiable hearts of poor women. In the priest who listens to them and whose voice comes sweetly to them, the working woman, full of pain, sees less the ministry of God, the judge of her sins, the arbiter of her health than the confidant of her pain and a friend in her misery. ... In the depths of woman, there is always a little fever, of shivering, a sensitivity, an illness in it, an uneasiness and something like an aspiration of the sick who calls out for the caress of a word. ...]

Germinie Lacerteux's narrated story -- that is, the story of her downfall -- begins only after the parish priest has distanced himself from Germinie and she can no longer confide in him. The necessity of talking and having a story, of being the subject of a narrative, is imperative for the young woman. The confession, even though a religious form, is, in actuality, her own original and continuous narrative. She confesses at least once a day, and continues on her own in the chapel if the priest is not available. Talking keeps madness distant from Germinie, in part because it signals a relationship and because it allows her to construct a subjectivity outside of her menial tasks.

The confession is one path that Foucault describes as important in the West's construction of sexuality (Foucault, 1980). For it is clear that Germinie does not confess just anything, but that she articulates her emotions, her desire

and sexuality. The confession is not just a culturally sanctioned way of constructing a sexual discourse, it also creates a subject for a narrative -- and a sexual subject at that.

The Goncourts invent a sympathetic figure of a woman who, like the readers of their day, might have had plenty to confess. However, the construction of a subjectivity within that confession is contradictory. The narrative takes the reader into the life of the woman who becomes a hysteric as the narrative progresses. Her personal tragedies are significant in the depiction of her life, in a way that the clinical case studies of the time do not relay to us. Yet the subject of the confession, as it is structured in the novel, contains a gap. And this gap points to an vacillation in the representation of women that the Goncourts share with many artists of the time, and indeed, with the doctors and scientists as well.

In the confession, a woman -- and that means a "creature" with a sensual body -- can give herself up the transcendental immateriality so desired by nineteenth century artists.⁴ In her confession, Germinie is able to yield herself up to a passion not of the body, and to experience "those immaterial melancholies and depressions" (Germinie, 90). These "sweet sadnesses" are the material of the romantic artist, the hysteric, of the contemporary fictional character Emma Bovary, and they are what Baudelaire, paradoxically, usually found so lacking in the

woman. "Woman", for artists such as Baudelaire, "... does not know how to separate the soul from the body; she is simplistic, like an animal" (Baudelaire in Bernheimer 71). Like Sybil Vane in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, a woman who does try to transcend her materiality (through dance or the stage, for example) ultimately fails. Her aestheticized form is only a momentary escape from the confines of her materiality. The male artist, on the other hand, is inspired by woman's sensuality to create aesthetic forms -- if he does not become ensnared in the body.

The confession, however, seems to hold out a possibility of transcendence usually denied to women. In her speech and supplications she becomes the "spiritual breath" of which Derrida writes, the speech that will last longer than the body that speaks it (Derrida, 1974). In her confessions, a "mystère" envelops the body of Germinie, and its after-effect, like an aura, stays with her. The narrator's description of Germinie's confession imparts both a hypnotic and a transcendental quality to her actions. She kneels as in a dream, and the physical trappings of the confessional box seem spectral and transcendent. A spiritual pleasure -- a "delicious anguish" -- accompanies her desire for confession. Almost as if she were herself the aesthete of the decadent novel, Germinie derives exquisite enjoyment from the anticipation of the spiritual confession, a pleasure that is not of the body, but of the soul.

The confession occupies a dialogic space, and thus the priest's spoken interaction is part of the confessional field. Not only is the confessional the only time that Germinie relates to a man that is not explicitly sexual (at least initially), but the power of language allows her to reframe and understand the past in a way that she had been unable to do without language.

The movement of language between interlocutors' is what Judith Ryan calls an "alomanisch" relationship, a word taken from Hugo von Hofmannsthal. The dialogue actually creates and transforms the particular subjectivities and the positions that each interlocutor hold. Each new confession leads to a reaction in the listener which transmutes the listener, the narrative, and the response.

The confession involves more than just giving Germinie the opportunity of experiencing and describing her own body. Part of Germinie's pleasure in the confession was the priest's voluptuous voice, and she responds to the almost palpable physicality of his words. Moved by the magical aura of the voice and words, her words deviate from God and spirituality and turn towards the priest. Her own confession deceives her, as the narrator notices. She begins to speak and think of physical love for the priest who has accepted her disclosures. Germinie's confession of her history begin to create a new subjectivity as she constructs herself as a sexual being in a narrative that assumes the form of a present confession of love.

The subject matter of Germinie's confession reverts to the "scène de violence" of her past rape at the hands of a bar owner. As she relates the past as a sexualized history, the priest observes that her story of violent resistance is mingled with a sensuality just as strong as the struggle (93). Germinie's confession of the past became associated with present desire for the priest. The words that she speaks move beyond the spiritual pleasure of renunciation and religious experience. In order to recapture the past as present narrative, the confession brings with it the intrusion of the body that had experienced the past.

Thus the confession, which began by creating a spiritual space for woman and for the deflection of materiality, ends up by becoming a site of physical desire. Words exchanged between the confessor and penitent, begun with Germinie's need to speak and her desire for narrative mastery, are ultimately re-directed towards the priest. The priest, a man who has suppressed physical desire, flees from it when he understands what is happening to Germinie (and perhaps to himself). The spoken confession creates desire in the confessing body, with the woman represented as a creature unable to overcome her animality.

Foucault's assertion that the confession is one means of constructing a discourse on sexuality is applicable in the above passage, and should be expanded in this case to cover the construction of the female subject in this narrative. The veracity of the woman's discourse is

constituted by the relationship between the confessor and priest, and the power to judge the discourse is wielded by the priest (Foucault, 62). The Christian confession shares a similarity to an ars erotica, Foucault argues. In both, the novice searches for spiritual love and union guided by a master along a path of initiation, and one's inner experience is intensified (62). Perhaps inadvertently, the confession creates a sexual subjectivity even when one is not necessarily desired, but, by the nineteenth century, the ruling ideology insists on constructing one. The subject of the narrative tries to create a truth about herself as spiritual subject, but the dominant voice of the narrator/authors can see truth only in the sexual subject, a subject that skews any attempt to transcend the materiality of woman's body. The working class woman -- in fact any woman -- can only end up subverting her desire for transcendence. The male prerogative -- the confessor, the novelist -- still sees the woman as flesh that must fail, as an untamed body that cannot remain disciplined.

And, as Foucault notes, the "ritual of discourse" that is the confession (of self as truth, as sexual) takes place within a power relationship (61). The priest has the power to absolve or punish the confessor's sins. The priest, as representative of authorial power, has the power to stop the flow of discourse that constitutes Germinie as sexual subject and narrated object. He can halt her as creator of her narratives and desires, as recorder of her own

reminiscences. This he does. With this suppression and prohibition of speech (which the novel does not narrate), the "real" narrative returns to the hands of the authors. They now create Germinie's narrative; they construct the story of her life for her. The novelist outside the text and the priest within the narrated story both preside, ultimately, over the discourse of the woman's subjectivity - now become objectivity. It is almost as if the narrative were in danger of becoming unfocused, that even imaginatively, the woman would somehow threaten the novel's narrative order.

The Goncourts link the confession and Germinie's narrative obsession with her sanity. (Whether they are satirically commenting upon the power of the religious confessional in relation to its secular corollary, the medical evaluation, is unclear.) What remains clear however, is the fact that with no one to speak to, Germinie slowly loses her way. Although her employer, Mlle. Varandeuil, functions as an authority helping to control Germinie's descent into madness, Germinie cannot divulge to her what is happening. And for obvious reasons: the power and status relations between them are, in the end, much too unequal. The masters cannot become the confessors of their domestics. The example of the Goncourts themselves and their maid, Rose, points this out as well. Had the brothers really expected their maid to tell them everything about her life outside of their sphere of influence?

Sarah Kofman argues that Freud, like the confessor, is in a position to extract a secret from the hysteric. This love secret (for example, her phantasy relationship to a prohibited object [such as Germinie's love for the young Jupillon]), creates a collusion between the two. Psychoanalysis gives women the right, in fact, the obligation to speak of sexual matters, but only to the analyst, Kofman argues (42). If she is hesitant, the physician, however gently, attempts to "tear" the secret from her. Like the confessor, the analyst "... gives absolution, as it were, by a continuance of his sympathy and respect after the confession has been made" (Freud, 1896, 282).⁵ The Goncourts say, "Seul, il s'inquiète de ses souffrances secrètes, de ce qui la trouble... [It is he alone who is disquieted by the secret troubles which upset her]" (91). Unlike the analyst that Freud compares to a confessor, Germinie's priest cannot remain unmoved by her. He leaves her after he listen to her. She begins her downward fall into hysteria.

III. Reading, speech and sexuality

The depiction of hysteria and madness is much different in La Fille Elisa and, in general, that novel has a much more complex structure than Germinie lacertuex. However, like Germinie, Elisa's descent into total madness seems to be precipitated by the loss of language and the prohibition of speech. Further, two critical "moments" that fatally

affect Elisa are the result of reading. This novel is one in which heroine's use of language as well as her being used by it, creates, essentially, a prison from which she cannot escape.

The first half of La Fille Elisa is almost pure description. The young girl's life as a prostitute is narrated objectively, with very little dialogue. Elisa is the object of narration, not its originator. She does not speak nor comment. Elisa is sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and incarcerated without the reader's knowledge of the crime or its causes. Only in the second half, in the convent prison where speech is prohibited, does the narration begin to describe the inner life of the heroine, and it is only at this point that we are given a narrative description of the murder act. The narrative here is retrospective, offering a look back at the murder scene. Far from being a fortuitous reflection, it is prompted by a letter, written in blood, from her now-murdered lover pledging his eternal love. Elisa had taken this letter to prison by hiding it within the elaborate thickness of her hair. While reading the letter, she begins to reminisce, and the narrative finally disentangles itself to describe the murder.

Elisa's act of prison reading parallels the first description of reading when she was still an adolescent and had just been sold to a brothel in the country. Both acts of reading prompt the heroine into an action that will

affect her life profoundly. The first acts of reading significantly influence the direction of Elisa's immediate life, but more subtly set up a internal and psychological series of expectations and self-characterizations. Reading perhaps even creates an identify for Elisa as that of a sensitive woman. From the reader's perspective, it forges an identity of her with the hysteric.

While at the brothel, Elisa reads from the library of the patron's son. Echoing standard criticisms of doctors and luminaries in the nineteenth century, the Goncourts describe the dangerous act of reading. Novel reading, for a "woman of the people" is a dangerous act, and the novel has an "action magique" on the ignorant perspective and emotional life of such a woman (La Fille Elisa 63). It was also believed that reading created a hypnotic state in the overly sensitive woman, and in this condition the reader would be more susceptible to the phantasies and desires that the novel aroused in her. Drawn into the "confusion et de la mêlée de ses sensations irréfléchies", Elisa (or any woman) was unable to separate herself from the characters about whom she reads. A naive woman reader is "incarnated" into "la peau poétique et romanesque" of the heroine. Stories of extraordinary self-sacrifice and abnegation, of chastity, even of prostitution for love take the place of Elisa's prosaic individuality (63). Elisa is enlivened by the stories she reads, and soon creates her own fictional universe of love and redemption. Reading became a "fury"

and "rage" in her; she lived in a fictional world of "grand, noble, and pure action," in a space where her own life seemed tawdry and uninteresting (64-65).

The Goncourts, like other intellectuals as well as the medical profession of the nineteenth century, believed reading to be ill-advised for women, because the woman's system, inclined to hysteria in the first place, may be shocked and overly influenced by the sensations of which she reads. The Goncourts, like Flaubert, provide an alarming literary example of the ills of reading. Certainly, a literary relationship exists between Elisa's growing boredom and romantization of love and the sexualized, romantic response of Flaubert's Emma to the stifling country life in which she finds herself. Both Elisa and Emma, like the stereotype of the hysteric, were particularly predisposed to day-dreaming, with a "romanesque" nature that was unable to separate fiction from real life. (This was seen as the hysteric's propensity to lie, an especially important point of the physician Jules Falret's understanding of the hysteric.) (Matlock, 154).⁶ In this context, it is clear how Madame Bovary (1857) was considered to be a hysteric *par excellence*. Emma Bovary's "hysterical" symptoms -- her daydreams, sexuality, her "incontinence" and duplicity -- threatened the newly consolidating bourgeois ideology and life in a way that the prostitute Elisa's imaginings did not. Elisa's contact with bourgeois morality was one of reaction, in the brothel and while incarcerated. In both

spheres, however, she was already silenced and already an object of subjection.

Elisa, like Emma Bovary, falsifies her adventures. Elisa leaves the pastoral setting and follows a soldier of dubious reputation from town to town. Although she does not really love the man, she is proud of her self-sacrifice, a pride that was fueled by reading. Street walking, vicious beatings, and total degradation become her life at the vicious hands of this soldier and others like him. Only when she suspects that her lover might be a snitch for the police does she leave him. When she leaves him, her scorn is projected onto all men: Elisa, like a wild horse, is now "méchants à l'homme" ["vicious to men"] (70).

Dangerous she is, even when she falls in love a few years later while employed at her last brothel far from the luxury of town. The love she feels for her "douce parlant" ("sweet-spoken") soldier is not enough to change her nature, already brutalized and subjugated, so often sold to other men. The physical and emotional hardship of her life had made Elisa into what she was to remain. The Goncourts provide a sociological description of Elisa's future madness -- the sordidness of her life, her captivity by her profession, her daily degradation -- that created in Elisa "... l'être infirme et déréglé représentant, dans la femme primitive modifiée, le type général de la prostituée" (the sick and deranged being representing, in the ... primitive woman, the general type of the prostitute" (77). More

important, perhaps, she had become a "psychological being", a creature formed by primitive attitudes and fears, old hopes never realized, psychological wounds never healed (78). This "psychological being" cannot escape from her mental prison, which is an internalization of the depraved external conditions and reactions around her. Elisa, the prostitute, will only degenerate into hysteria and further madness. In a shocking way, the Goncourts narrate the story of a woman who brutally kills her lover, a narrative subject not often read about except, perhaps, in melodramatic stories.

Charles Briquet, a doctor at the Charité Hospital in Paris, in an effort to emphasize the moral dimension of hysteria, argued in his Traité clinique et thérapeutique de l'hystérie (1859) that hysterics did not suffer primarily from or because of sexual problems, and that sexuality, even among prostitutes, was not the cause of hysteria. Briquet, unlike Falret, located hysteria in the specific moral and social conditions of lower class women's lives (Evans, 16). The Goncourts seem to give literary life to his conjectures. Besides the sociological aspects of one's life, Briquet claimed, the more important predisposition to hysteria lay in the female personality itself, that is, in a woman's sensitivity (Matlock 146; Evans 16). In fact, Briquet claims that "La femme est faite pour sentir, et sentir c'est presque de l'hystérie" ["The woman is made for feeling, and to feel is almost hysteria"] (Evans 17). Hence every woman

is susceptible to hysteria, since hysteria is just an exaggeration of the female's natural innate emotional receptivity. Women can be driven "hyper" sensitive by egregious economic and social situations that they are too sensitive in the first place to deal with (Matlock 148). The affects produced by reading and the disjunction between reality and fiction experienced by Elisa, will be part of the conditions that predispose a woman to hysteria and other mental disorders.

Even though Elisa is a prostitute, she is asexual, even anti-sexual, representing a mode of behavior that contradicts many popular assumptions about prostitution and female sexuality. It is not surprising that Elisa has a repugnance for male sexuality after the experiences of being sold to men and the human baseness that she has encountered. The narrator describes her repulsion as an "hysterical" aversion to male sexuality, and it is accompanied by other hysterical symptoms, both physical and mental. She is overcome by trembling and crying spells which she can not control and which leave her enervated and fatigued. "Répulsions singulières" and small, distracting facts of her life make her ill. Her own body feels alien to her (97-98). Moreover, she is depressed, and when not, is "ennuyée" (bored) signifying "...un état vague de souffrance, de trouble occulte de l'organisation, de tristesse morale -- une disposition hypocondriaque de l'âme blessée à voir la vie en noir" ["a vague state of suffering, a sublimated

disturbance of organization, of moral dreariness -- a hypochondriacal disposition of a wounded sensibility to see life darkly"] (98). There came to her, finally, an "insurmountable repugnance" and a "l'horreur physique de l'homme."

In this state of hysterical sexual aversion, Elisa murders her lover in the cemetery of the Bois de Boulogne. As she and her lover walk through the park, Elisa holds a knife in her hand to cut flowers. She accidentally stabs her lover when he leans towards her in a moment of gentleness. With a vision of clarity where nature seemed "crystallized," Elisa is overtaken by a "vertigo, a need to kill, by a fury to assassinate" (128). She continues to stab him. Her clear gaze indicates a hypnotic or hypnoid state, and she possessed a fury that is not normally in her nature.

The story of the murder is told in retrospect, from the narrator's point of view. The narrator is outside of Elisa's history as a whole. He relates the facts of Elisa's life, but also reconstructs a narrative that the woman had been incapable of doing. The murder scene is only revealed after Elisa reads a particular letter numerous times and finally destroyed it in prison. The existence of the letter, one from her now-murdered lover, condemns the "détenue" to continuous pain and perpetual loss. Reading the letter prompts Elisa to destroy the only articulated and legible evidence she has of her emotional state and of the fact that she had existed. The destruction of the letter

parallels the destruction of her lover, and by annihilating the letter, Elisa internalizes the prohibition of silence, which is the command to silence herself unto death.

Ne jamais parler! Ne jamais parler! ... La parole!
 N'est-ce pas la manifestation d'une existence
 d'homme ou de femme ... Mais elle était femme, un
 être dont les sentiments, les sensations,
 l'impressionnabilité d'enfant, bon gré, mal gré,
 jaillissent au dehors, en une loquacité
 gazouillante, un verbe diffus, des paroles,
 beaucoup de paroles. Ne jamais parler! (114).
 [To never speak! never speak! ... Speech! Is it
 not the manifestation of a man's or a woman's
 existence. ... But she was a woman, a being whose
 feelings, sensations, child-like
 impressionability, sometimes good, sometimes bad,
 gushed out in a prattling locaciousness, in
 verbose verbs, of words, many words. To never
 speak!]

Besides comparing the woman to a child, both of whom were considered to have little or no control of their emotions, this passage reflects a perception that women have access to a depth of feeling that must verbalized. Without speech, those feelings are repressed, and, the passage suggests, the woman's existence ceases. Reading her lover's letter leads Elisa to conscious action, which, paradoxically, is the action that leads to silence and the

subjective feeling of death. Silence becomes a form of rebellion for Elisa; she wants to speak but she can no longer do so. When she is brought before the warden and the mother superior and asked about the meaning of her silence and her unwillingness to seek pardon for her small prison infractions, she can only plaintively cry, "Oui je veux, mais je ne peux pas." These are essentially her last words.

After this confrontation, silence and the internalized prohibition of speech affect her body and her intellect, as the narrator notes. Deprivation of speech annihilates the whole person; not only can the condemned woman not communicate with others, but she ceases to communicate with herself. The woman is reduced to a body with little movement, a subject-less self.

Without speech, Elisa degenerates rapidly into imbecility. The body no longer obeys and work is impossible. She is locked in a prison ward with other women who have also ceased functioning in a world with others. Their detention room is strewn with human excretion. There is no longer a semblance of cleanliness or order in the prison -- even the prison's most basic rules no longer apply to these mad women. The women sit motionless, catatonic, or they walk rapidly with no goal. In a horrible irony, they are empty of the memory of the crimes that they have committed. As a last insult, they have lost what the narrator notices even among the other prisoners -- they have lost "la coquetterie du madras". These women have ceased to

be women, to be sexual. Thus they no longer exist for themselves or the world.

The mad women are reduced to pathetic penitential children asking for forgiveness. Ironically, the confession that would have helped Elise create a self for herself is used by the male warden against the prisoner to create a self for him. With her life diminished to that of a child with memories of lost innocence, Elisa regresses into the past and remained until her death. She never spoke another word, even when the ban against her was lifted.

IV. Effects of love

If we return to Germinie Lacertuex, her confession proceeds, partly at least, because of her love for the priest. Perceptively, the Goncourts suggest, as did Freud, that the hysteric has a "love secret", but cannot admit it consciously. Not only does Germinie love the priest without knowing it herself, but as the novel progresses, she does take a clandestine lover. She adores a boy younger than herself with an almost incestuous love. She tries keeping it a secret from everyone, but the shopkeepers and neighbors soon know; only her aged employer never finds out. The boy's mother, the owner of a dairy store, exploits Germinie's love and exacts free labor from her in the shop. The boy, Jupillon, grows up in the rough streets of Paris, rubbing shoulders with thieves and prostitutes. For him, Germinie is a curiosity, an object of lust, ridicule, and a

source of money. "L'amour n'avait été pour le jeune Jupillon que la satisfaction d'une certaine curiosité du mal, cherchant dans la connaissance et la possession d'une femme le droit et le plaisir de la mépriser" ["Love had not been anything other for the young Jupillon than the satisfaction of a certain base curiosity, seeking in the knowledge and possession of a woman the right and pleasure to despise her"] (121). Unlike Germinie's love, for Jupillon, woman was nothing more than "... une image obscène; et une passion de femme lui parassait uniquement je ne sais quoi de défendu, d'illicite, de grossier, de cynique et de drôle, ... [Woman was nothing for him except an obscene image; and passion for a woman appeared to him to have only something forbidden, illicit, disgusting, cynical and curious about it"] (122). Jupillon's image of Germinie accords with the accounts of Baudelaire and other artists of prostitutes -- images of lust and disgust, bodies to be used for both the sensual and transcendental sensations that they could provoke in the artist. The woman was neither represented nor experienced as subject or a person.

Germinie's nature is rent by jealousy, love and lust. She will do anything for her boy-lover. She follows him into the ballrooms of the working class, depicted in paintings by Degas and Toulouse Latrece, where she is even laughed at by the other women for her passion. Her episodes of hysteria and illness begin when her illicit union with Jupillon produces a sickly child which dies just a few

months after its birth. Germinie falls into a hysterical attack when she reads of her child's death in a letter from the child's wet nurse. The description of Germinie's hysterical attack is exact, showing the authors' interest in observation and reporting. This description of the attack resembles those of "Charcot's" hysterics in their so-called "attitudes passionnelles": falling on the floor, Germinie's limbs contract, stretch and kick violently; her back and neck undulate wildly; her head rolls backward and her face reddens.

The detailed description of the hysterical attack, like those experienced by Elisa, was more than likely the result of observation at Charcot's well-attended seminars, which the brothers visited. And in fact, Charcot apparently approved of their depictions of Germinie's hysteria and their reconstruction of the hysterical milieu (Bannour, 125). A more subtle symptom is also depicted in Germinie's attack. The hysteric's facial expressions are transmitted into bodily movements: "... et dans son visage persistait cette même expression de douceur mélancolique et d'anxiété sentimentale qui semblait mettre une souffrance d'âme sur la souffrance de chair de tous ses traits [... on her face remained that same expression of sweet melancholy and sentimental anxiety which seemed to put the suffering soul into the suffering of the body with all its characteristics"] (Germinie 147). Charcot found this "transference" fascinating -- expressions suggested to the

hysteric under hypnotism could be transmitted to her body, revealing a relationship between emotion and somatic control or disequilibrium.⁷ The hysteric becomes a "statue expressive," rendering a tableaux vivants (Didi-Huberman, 1982). In the narrative of Germinie Lacerteux, the hysterical attack marks the point of extreme anguish in the heroine's emotional life, and is a explanatory sign of her eventual decline.

This hysterical episode, descriptively similar to the classical hysterical attack, is, however, more an expression of the losses that Germinie has suffered than any true hysteria -- it is closer to "... la crise de nerfs vulgaire" (Satiat, 31). Yet the narration creates a story in which the sentimental nature of the woman, in combination with her pitiable surroundings and her life in it, will lead inevitably to hysterical symptoms as the only way in which she can express the agony of her life.

Soon Germinie is overcome by terrible jealousies and, in order to keep Jupillon out of the military, takes on debts which she can never pay back on her miserable salary; she takes refuge in alcohol and steals from her mistress. Her double life becomes tortuous for her, guilt and desire lead to drunken, "obscène" hallucinations and paranoia. She severs her relationship with Jupillon, but finds a lover who is even more brutal. She breaks with him, and falls into the arms of the street itself, as the narrator says.

The passionate nature of this woman, when brutalized as

it is, succumbs to masochistic sexuality, mendacity, alcoholism and finally, death. The specifics of her death were caused by Germinie's own morbid sexual curiosity: waiting outside the room where Jupillon had gone with a woman, Germinie contracts her last and fatal illness.

Although Germinie is over-sensual by nature, and influenced by reading novels, she also represents woman as "toute chair," as carnal body, hysteric, prostitute, and worse. Initially, Germinie is a brutish parody of femininity, with an almost "simienesque" quality to her. Her profound sensuality is desirable yet dangerous and animalistic; in fact, she possesses a "monstrous" sexuality (Respaut, 49). "From this ugly woman escapes an eager and mysterious seductiveness." A man feels the effects of her presence, and, "[a]n aphrodisiac charm leaves her, which attacks and attaches itself to the opposite sex. She emits desire and gives it a tumultuousness" (*Germinie*, V, 33). The monstrosity of her sexuality eventually overtakes and destroys the pleasurable. What is narratable becomes less and less enjoyable as the figure of such seductive sensuality provokes an anxiety in the narrator[s].

De chute en chute, la miserable et brûlante
 créature roula à la rue. Elle ramassa les amours
 qui s'usent en une nuit, ce qui passe, ce qu'on
 recontre, ce que le hasard des pavés fait trouver
 à la femme qui vage. Elle n'avait plus besoin de
 se donner le temps du désir: son caprice était

furieux et soudain, allumé sur l'instant. ...et elle s'en allait par les rues, battant la nuit, avec la démarche suspecte et furtive des bêtes qui fouillent l'ombre et dont l'appétit quête. Comme jetée hors de son sexe, elle attaquait elle-même, elle sollicitait la brutalité, elle abusait de l'ivresse, et c'étais à elle qu'on cedait (226, my emphasis).

[From downfall to downfall, the miserable and eager creature wound up in the street. She collected lovers who were used up in one night, whoever she passed or met, whoever happened to come upon a woman wandering the streets. She no longer needed to give herself time for desire: her whim was furious and sudden, burned up in an instant... and she went along the streets, battling the night, with the suspicious and furtive gait of a beast who scurries in the shadow and whose desire searches for it. As if thrown outside of her sex, she attacked herself, she sought brutality, she abused drunkenness, and it was this to which she succumbed.]

Just as woman's body renders her incapable of transcending it, even in confession, so too it upsets the narrative. The body of the woman is monstrous, her sexuality irrepressible; she is even metaphorized into a wild, furtive animal that must be killed off or disposed of

in some way in order for the male to retain mastery of the narrative. Woman's sexual desire is a consuming force; it burns up, it uses up men, it attacks itself. If left unchecked, women's sexuality might "consume" the narrative.

Pleasure in sexuality as well as its excess (that is, its unfulfillment) leads to masochism in this narrative. Sexuality turned onto the self destroys the integrity of body and mind, at least, this is how the narrator understands a woman overtaken by sexual need. Lulu, in Chapter VII, is also represented as a masochistic seeking her own death, while conversely, the physicians' attempts to quiet the hysterics in the stilled photographs in front of the camera of Salpêtrière reveal a sadism. Sadism and masochism coexist in the narrative of the prostitute Elisa in La Fille Elisa. The prostitute's life -- the life of a professional sexual being -- takes up only about one-half of the novel. The sexual tension is usually described when the prostitutes are together, as when Elisa combs the electrically charged hair of her friend, Alexandrine. A homoerotic sexuality and tenderness takes place that is much more erotically charged than the heterosexual sexuality between prostitute and customer, or between the women and their boyfriends. Their sexual relationships with the customers, the soldiers from the near-by garrison, are not described, although the brothel is described as a humid, almost tropical space, full of troubling sexuality and apprehension. As if the narration of the sexual act would

be too disruptive to describe, especially given the sexually-charged atmosphere that has been set up, the narrative abruptly ends. The story and its conclusion are logical outcomes of Elisa's life, but, like the accelerating anxiety evident in Germinie's narrative, the story of the woman's sexualized body provokes an end to the narrative. The conclusion of the novel effectively desexualizes and dehumanizes the woman, and her representation at the novel's conclusion is that of a imbecile, capable only of provoking pity, not desire.

When a woman such as Elisa loves a man, it ends in his murder. A woman, especially one such as Elisa, with her brutalized past, novel reading and romanticized longings, and who is, moreover, sexualized through prostitution, is almost destined for a bad end, the narrative implies. Indeed, the soldier that Elisa stabs is described as a rural *naif*, simple in his adoration and longing. Such a man cannot judge the nature of a woman. She must be punished in spite of the poetic justice that her murderous action represents. In spite of her hysteria, in spite of what she had suffered at the hands of other men, in the end, the narrative goes as far as it can to exterminate her. Elisa promotes too much apprehension within the narrative to be allowed to live.

So, too, the narrative of Germinie Lacertuex is uneasy, and there, the apprehension is also evident in the narrative style. Under pressure from its own metaphors, Germinie's

narrative tries to avoid the disequilibrating effect of the woman's body on its representational ability by accelerating. Critics have noted how the novel moves more and more quickly towards the end in relation to Germinie's increasing madness. My point is that the need to get the woman's body out of the way, to still the tumultuous effects of her sexuality on the narrative itself must happen quickly. The description of the social and rural environment takes the place of Germinie's sexualized body. The narrative refuses to halt and cannot actually describe her sexuality after a certain point. She is beyond her own sex; it is as if the narrative creates an alibi for its inability to describe. But if the realist narrative does not describe, what does it do? It ceases; the story ends, and with it, the female object that initiated the narrative in the first place. The story quickly leads to the heroine's death.

Even Zola, who represented the most sordid lives and the most debauched scenarios, resorted to violent metaphors when describing Germinie Lacertuex. Her qualities ultimately have the power to derail the narrative (as do those of Nana as well). In his admiring description of Germinie, Zola emphasizes her emotional nature, but even more, he speaks of her as beast, a body in all its physicality and sensuality.

Imaginez une créature faite de passion et de tendresse, une femme toute chair et toute

affection, capable des dernières hontes et de derniers dévouements, lâche devant la volupté au point de quêter des plasirs comme une louve affamée, ... Placez cette femme frémissante et forte dans un milieu grossier qui blessera toutes ses délicatesses, s'adressera à toute le limon qui est en elle, et qui, peu a peu, tuera son âme en l'étouffant sous les ardeurs du corps et l'exaltation des sens. Cette femme, cette créature maudite sera Germinie Lacerteux (Journal 279, my emphasis).

[Imagine a creature made of passion and tenderness, a woman completely flesh and affection, capable of the worst shame and extreme devotion, thrown in front of a voluptuousness to the point of seeking it like a starving wolf, ... Put this woman, trembling and strong, in a brutal milieu which will wound all her delicateness, which will address itself to the ooze which is in her, and which little by little, will kill her soul by suffocating it under the body's ardor and the exaltation of the senses. This woman, this damned creature, would be Germinie Lacerteux.]

Zola's admiration of the representation of Germinie Lacerteux is straightforward, and even his language echoes that of the Goncourts themselves. As an object of narration, such a figure as this hysterical and sexualized

working woman is laudatory and worthy of description, as would be his own narrative subjects, Zola seems to imply. Yet her humanity is killed by the passion of her body and the excess of her sensuality. It is not just the environment of poverty and need, it is not just negation, shame and social inequity that will be the end of Germinie: it is her own body, her furious desire that will end the narrative. Germinie does not survive the narrative. Only the old employer, Mme. Varandeuil, a woman who has given up her femininity, who lives on the memories of her past in the days of the Revolution and Republic and who no longer desires anything but death, survives. She has relinquished her feminine nature and is characterized as masculine. ("Ses dehors étaient tout masculins" ["her appearance was completely masculine"] (353); she had a "flamme de mâle dévouement et de charité masculine" ["passion of male devotion and masculine charity"] (30). Female devotion and charity, because enclosed within a woman's body, leads to a miserable existence and death.

So, too, the real survivors in La Fille Elisa are not the prison "detenues", but the mother superior, cut off from her own sexuality, and the warden, who sadistically dehumanizes the women by denying them speech. When speech is fully censored, the body dies with it. Woman, as far as she is represented in these two novels, cannot survive without speech to mediate the body's excessive desire. The male principal survives; the feminine, with its timorous

attempts at speech, is destroyed.

CHAPTER V: ENDNOTES

1. Brooks' argument corroborates my own in Chapter I that some of the public's shocked reactions to Klimt's Beethoven Frieze was due to the fact that he depicted upper class women in a sexualized manner, a culturally prohibited act.
2. See Peter Brooks, "The Mark of the Beast: Prostitution, Serialization and Narrative," in Reading for the Plot, 143-170.
3. This intertwining of the body and its exchange is cynically represented in the Die Reigen ("La Ronde"), by Viennese playwright, Arthur Schnitzler. There, too, one prominent anxiety induced by the prostitute is the way in which the sexualized body can infiltrate any social and economic class. Social hypocrisy is "laid open" by and in the prostitute's own body, and the glue of power relations is sexual desire. The effect of desire on the narration is also skeptically laid bare by Schnitzler, who adds a series of dashes to substitute for the narrative of sexual transaction.
4. Religious discourse has traditionally provided women a means to access their own personal subjectivity through a dialogue with God. Such discourse has provided them with the opportunity to use language as a vehicle of novel thoughts and experiences. For feminists, the religious tradition has been an important means in which to explore women's writings, as for example, St. Theresa's Confessions or the poetry of Anne Bradstreet.
5. Qtd. in Kofman, 41.
6. Jules Falret qtd. in Matlock, Scenes, 154.
7. Charcot qtd. from Oeuvres Complètes IX, in Georges Didi-Huberman, Invention de l'hysteria, 198, 202. Whether Charcot considers this a question of somatic-to-somatic "transference" or psychological-to-somatic transference remains unclear.

Chapter VI: The narrative of decadent prostitution

In this chapter I discuss ways in which the prostitute's body, specifically, is figured in a few decadent texts at the end of the nineteenth-century. The relationship between prostitution and hysteria is not unwarranted, as we have seen in the last chapter, and the metaphors used to describe both feminine "conditions" are similar. As Bernheimer says, à propos of Charcot's famous "léçons de Mardi", the hysteric and prostitute occupy a privileged space in the male imagination of the period (Bernheimer 252). In this chapter I will analyze two "high" decadent texts, *Là-bas* (1908) by J.K. Huysmans, and the other, "A Woman's Revenge," (1874) by Barbey D'Aurevilly, both of which maintain the hysteric as a backdrop to the prostitute's sexual excess.

My discussion of these two texts shows how the prostitute figures as a fuel to male desire as well as to anxiety. In order to control the text, the narrator utilizes two or three of the following strategies. He immobilizes the figure of the woman. For example, he fetishizes the sexualized body into one of death and decay, or alternatively, into a bejewelled figure, reminiscent of Klimt's portraits. If this strategy fails, he further transforms the prostitute's body into that of a maternal figure. Oedipal anxiety, generated by and within the text is usually enough to stop the power of the narrator's

desire. If it does not, the figure of the hysteric is again resurrected.

Hysteria is usually sexualized, and from this perspective, is easily equated with prostitution. Underneath the surface of the prostitute, hysteric or woman is posed the question of the unfamiliarity of female essence and desire. The body surface is just one surface onto which male anxiety is projected, and this surface is both necessary to hide what lies beneath, and itself a surface that must be transformed into something else.

I. Underneath the costume

The woman's metaphorical body, viewed alternatively as hysteric or as prostitute (or as both together) was like literature itself: a creative artifice, an illusion. Karl Kraus compared prostitution to the language of the "feuilliton" in its seductive falsity. Or was her body a "truth", even an inspiring void, as Flaubert put it? (Flaubert in Bernheimer 1.) Woman, as representation, paradoxically incites and then prohibits desire, thereby problematizing male identity -- the narrating voice. The image of the prostitute's alluring facade was a force of contradictory impulses: desire and disappointment; intimate body contact and its demystification by monetary exchange, and ideal of love and the void of loneliness (Flaubert in Bernheimer 2). Flaubert said "I love prostitution for itself, independent of what is underneath" (2). In spite of

the narrative impulse that the prostitute engendered, underneath her imagined surface was the fright of disease, castration, excrement and decay (Flaubert in Bernheimer 2). In their secretiveness, both prostitute and hysteric undermined the male artist/scientist's belief in his knowledge and control of identifiable disease and illness, and more broadly, his mastery of the world. Thus the "secret" of the hysteric might have to be "torn" from her, as Freud says (Studies 282), allying himself with the priest and detective. This secret was one that Charcot and his students also attempted to master and to know, as we have seen in Chapter IV.

The facade of the prostitute, hiding something beneath, is both fluid and immobile. The male narrator must stabilize the imagined sexual fluidity so that he will not "fall" into the void of self-loss. The prostitute's body and the mask of her "true nature" -- of costume, makeup, theatricality -- point to Nietzsche's insistence on the woman's lack of depth: What if there is no "underneath" underneath? The void or decay were equally feared. Weininger, speaking in Vienna for his male contemporaries, wrote, "Woman, fear of chaos, the chasm."

Fears of contamination multiply with the century, and medical knowledge increasingly gives itself over to theories of decadence and decay. Uncontained sexuality, especially women's sexuality, is increasingly equated with degeneracy

in nineteenth century novels and mentality. Moreover, what was "scandalous" to some writers, according to Bernheimer, was that the genitals of the prostitute, unless scarred by syphilis, were completely free of the marks of her trade. Signs of degeneracy might be hidden beneath the literal surface of her sexual organs. The genitals of the women who contaminated the social fabric and infected its male members (!) were identical to "... the most virtuous married woman" according to a contemporary (Bernheimer 24). That is, the female sexual body (and, most frightening, woman's degenerate or syphilitic genitals), kept its secret hidden within the body itself. Part of the prostitute's documentation included a "dispensaire de salubrité," which was the examination by a doctor of the prostitutes' sexual organs (16). To guard the male against infection, prostitutes should be kept "under surveillance." This expression shows that the "underside" of the prostitute, both as a literal surface and as a metaphorical designation, concealed something important for the male observer. As if what he could discover would be found on the outside, or even the inside of the woman's body.

Medical literature and knowledge depicted female sexuality as a contaminating fluid, overflowing civilized boundaries and polluting healthy bodies. An intense medical debate during the mid-and late- nineteenth century centered on the containment of female sexuality, especially where it

concerned prostitution. Parent-Duchâtelet, the prominent French public hygienist and social engineer, speculated that sexual continence, recommended especially for women, was dangerous to society, because sexual energy, when repressed, could overflow its ordered boundaries.¹ The brothel and prostitutes were necessary for the physiological outlet of male sexual excess. Prostitutes filled a social function by serving as refuse collectors for the managed overflow of sexuality (Matlock 126; Bernheimer 16, 19). On this account, hysteria and prostitution were the unhealthy results of restrained excess in women. Parent-Duchâtelet's understanding of prostitution and his positioning of it within the boundaries of social health and sanitation reflect an anxiety regarding boundaries and bodies. He equated the sewers of Paris, their decay and decomposition with the sexual "channels" of prostitutes (Bernheimer 16). Parent-Duchâtelet was a foremost pioneer in sanitizing and disinfecting public waste facilities, and he fought to overcome prejudices about the spread of disease, especially syphilis. Yet he also saw a moral and physical parallel in the sexual organs of prostitutes and the "waste" they accumulated. Like the physical sewage plants necessary for public health, the prostitute was necessary for public safety and sanitation, but each should ideally be managed and hidden from public view. Her sexual excess should ideally be contained behind walls and

constantly under surveillance (Bernheimer 16, 19).

Zola's prostitute, Nana, for example, in her sexual excess, has no regard for social boundaries or for personal limits, and is explicitly linked to the demise of the Second Empire. In one analogy, Zola compares Nana's pernicious beauty to a golden fly rising from the swamp and detritus of social decay. Wedekind's Dr. Schön echoes a similar sentiment about Lulu's influence in his household: "Der reine Augiasstall. ... Die Pest im Haus." (A real pig sty. ... A plague in the house" (Wedekind 76). Women bring with them decay and death; they seduce men away from their "civilizing" and civic responsibilities. "By virtue of their sex, woman cannot fail to bring about man's ruin. woman brings to man either organic ailments (syphilis, general paralysis) or functional difficulties (neuroses)" (Kofman 30). In a world that seemed out of control, women were blamed for introducing a degenerate element into the social fabric. Psychically and socially, women contaminate men and culture through their sexuality and beauty.

II. Body as Fortress

Earlier in the nineteenth century, critics of the Balzacian novel expressed a fear that the "seductive" ideas to which Balzac gave ample literary expression were in danger of "overflowing" their literary bounds. They were capable of actually corrupting and influencing women readers. That is, the excesses of the novel spilled over

into the women's emotional life. This criticism is nothing new -- women readers were centuries-long held to be unduly influenced by literary works. In an unarticulated phenomenology, the boundaries of the texts themselves were seen as permeable. We have seen, in Chapter V, how textual figures, such as Flaubert's Emma Bovary, and the Goncourt brothers' characters, Elisa and Germinie Lacertuex, were all tragically influenced by reading. What could then contain a woman's desire that was invoked by reading? In the literary imagination, it became, in some cases, the figure of the woman herself in the text. She had to contain the desire that emanated and flowed within the text -- she was usually killed, married off or reformed, disfigured or banished. (And, of course, this "end" of woman was also an educative devise.) We have seen this in all of the works looked at thus far. Thus her representation paradoxically invokes and then controls (punishes) desire. Both the nineteenth century literary figure of women and the twentieth century sister and mother, (as Klaus Theweleit sees them) are figures of sexual desire, and they set boundaries to sexual and political desires even as they elicit them.

Both frightening as well as fascinating, the prostitute's body, in its fluid sensuality that spills over the boundary of the body, provokes the aesthetic male's interest. His interest, however, is ambivalent: the

prostitute disturbs the supposed objectivity of the decadent writer. For the decadent writer, the female body marks the site of real difference between the sexes. Her body figures as the limit between male and female, preventing the mixture of identities between bodies. If the narrator's sexual identity is compromised, or if his excitement threatens to throw him into the void, his objectivity is imperiled. The dandy is, after all, himself a poseur; he must maintain his self-boundary within carefully prescribed behaviors and roles. Thus the limits of the female body must be carefully identified and preserved so that no "contamination" occurs to/on the male.

One literary defense against female sexuality was the imaginary representation of the male body as fortress. In Male Fantasies, Theweleit describes how the German soldiers of the 1920's *Freikorps* viewed their own bodies as fortresses erected against female sexual fluidity. The fluidity of female sexuality might signify merging and loss of autonomy for the male author and a culture obsessed with distinguishing itself from the female. Appropriation of the feminine ("feminine" writing, the female as subject of narration, dandyism, etc.) occurs only on condition that the male can return to a position of male authority and authorship. Only by marking the feminine as such can the difference between the genders be preserved and thus kept apart. "As if the nature of "male" and "female" sexuality

had any real significance, as opposed to the relationship existing between them," Theweleit remarks elliptically in his analysis of some aspects of Freudian theory (Theweleit 221).

Theweleit points out that the "good" sisters or mothers in the macho novels he analyzes wear a "mask." The mask does not originate with the women, but from an idealized projection of the men onto the women. Since they cannot have their mothers or sisters sexually (the incest taboo) the men project their own denial onto the women who appear chaste to them and who desire no one else (i.e. they must be true to their sons or brothers). The men have constructed a facade of virtue for women that ultimately springs from male jealousy and aggression (Theweleit 111-112). The strength of male desire is made obvious in the strength of their projections. Chastity and purity operate as idealized fortresses confronting male desire. Female virtue masks female sexuality, frequently figured as a fluid, oozing liquid, a wave of wet sexuality. The soldier also effectively stops the recognition of his own forbidden sexual desire by becoming a rigid wall himself, a barrier that stops the waves of female onslaught (prostitutes, sexualized Bolsheviks and Jews).

In the male novels of the nineteenth and early twentieth century that I am examining in this chapter, some of that imagery is pushed even further. The women

themselves are presented as shields. Their clothing, their mask of cosmetics and their performance is a veneer which protects the male against his own desire. The woman "within" is safeguarded from male desire and power just as is the man, who effectively creates an object that will not upset his own boundaries of surveillance. The perception of women's desire has been solidified.

III. Reversal of male affect -- the corpse

Decadent writers such as Huysmans or Barbey construct narratives around the effects of female sexuality, which often turns out to be linked to degeneracy, decay or death. The decadent position was to remain detached from those effects, observing them intellectually. The decadent artist resisted (or was unable to experience) a commonplace sensuality. He either provoked his body and imagination "artificially" as did Huysmans' well-known aesthete, Des Esseintes, or he repudiated the body entirely and imagined a sensuality that transgressed cultural and social norms. In either case, the female body was perceived as a limit and a hindrance to that experience. Like many novelists of the nineteenth-century whose aesthetic imagination was fired by the prospects of a cerebral sensuality, novelists such as Huysmans, Barbey D'Aurevilly, Villiers d'Adam, Peladan, for example, desired nothing if not a transcendence that would transport them beyond physical materiality. Their method sought a sensuality that would paradoxically extinguish the

body's experience. Yet the body persists in its corporeality and sensuousness, and it was the woman's body that was blamed for the disappointment.

Durtal, Huysmans' narrator Là-Bas, finds that when he finally succumbs to his sexual desire for Mme. Chantelouve, the woman who had so fascinated him by her arcane knowledge of saints and sin during their ethereal conversations, he holds her in contempt as nothing more than a common woman. Even as he prepared for her seduction, he felt disgust for the woman who had become just another conquest.

Ah oui, sa désillusion était complète!

L'assouvissement de l'après justifiant
l'inappétence de l'avant. Elle le répugnait et il
se faisait horreur! (187)

[Ah, yes, his disillusion was complete! The
satiety following justified his lack of appetite
preceding. she revolted him, and he was
horrified.] (178).

Durtal felt that she had actually betrayed him, since she was had forfeited their spiritual relationship for a merely physical one. She willingly comes to the narrator's apartment, but further, and more frighteningly, shows her own desire for him in most blatantly. The spiritual Chantelouve acts like a prostitute in the bed (Fischer, 1978).

When Durtal takes Mme. Chantelouve to bed, the woman is

as a corpse:

Il serrait une morte, un corps si froid qu'il glaçait le sien; mais les lèvres de la femme brûlaient et lui mangeaient silencieusement la face. Il demeura abasourdi, étreint par ce corps enroulé autour du sien, et souple comme un liane et dur!

[He embraced a corpse, a body so cold that it froze his, but the woman's lips were burning as she silently gnawed his features. He lay stupefied in the grip of a body wrapped around his, and as supple and hard as a reed. ...]"

This oxymoronic description of vampirism indicates how frightening the reality of a woman's sexuality is to the narrator. Her corpse threatens to annihilate her lover, to freeze him or actually cannibalize him. Not pleasure, but death, awaits the consummation of the sexual act. Her lips were hot, but her flesh is cold, not putrid, as portrayed in A rebours. In Là-Bas, Chanteleuve's body becomes a frozen impenetrable shield.

Freud's description of male castration anxiety in "The Head of the Medusa" finds a place here: like the male's body, made stiff with castration fear by Medusa's stare, so too, imaginatively, the narrator's penis freezes solid, and is unable to function. In contrast to her frigid body, Chantelouve's lips are burning and gnawing, an image which

invokes that of the *vagina dentate* in another metaphoric displacement. The fantasized female genitalia as both desirable and terrifying abounds in Huysmans' work, and signifies sexual desire and its repugnance, due to fear and horror.

The imagery of a corpse-like sexuality abounds at the turn-of-the-century. One thinks of Dracula and his female victims in Bram Stoker's Dracula. Dracula was able to hypnotically paralyze his victims, and he and his seductive devotees menaced men and women with their terrifying and deadening sexuality. We might also imagine Klimt's paintings as being the stiffening of a sexuality into death.

As Theweleit points out in some of his male writers, the Medusa's head can be read as a male reaction to women's castrating potential, not their castrated condition, a threat which Freud "... energetically represses" (Theweleit 201). The erect penis, as a shield to fend off female's threat, can be bitten off by the *dentate*. It must keep its distance from sexuality to survive. And yet it is the woman herself who is represented as stiff; it is she who has the appearance of the erect penis. Displacement of male anxiety onto the object that provokes fear suggests the overpowering force of the psychic threat. A reversal has been effected, a dynamic which saves the male from experiencing his fear as emanating from himself. This, in turn, would suggest weakness, perhaps, or a "feminine" susceptibility to strong

emotion. The dynamics of anxiety and rhetorical play have transformed the female body into a corpse. Madame Chantelouve's body, initially enticing, repulses the narrator. Her body becomes a surface which transforms male desire into fear and effectively stops the sexual act from occurring.

Barbey D'Aurevilly's narrator in "A Woman's Revenge" also tames male desire by neutralizing the figure that originally excites it. The first narrator of the story intrigues the reader by telling us that incest is a particularly decadent sin, thus the connection is established between male desire and an incestuous love object. Not only does the Oedipal imagery work to reverse desire, but the narrative, a story within a story, functions to continually distance the relationship between the narrating voice and the destabilizing effects of the story being narrated.

In this story, the narrator, Tressignies, like Huysmans' Durtal and Des Esseintes, is a "cold, calculating libertine," whose curiosity is piqued by a beautiful prostitute, elegantly dressed. She resembles someone Tressignies had known, and he follows her to her room. He goes with the woman to her room, and after they have wantonly made love, she tells him her own story. She is in actuality a Spanish countess whose platonic young lover was killed and mutilated by her husband. Her hatred was so

great that she left him and vowed to cause him the greatest emotional anguish she could conceive for him: she becomes a common prostitute. In the subsequent years, though, she becomes syphilitic and dies insane and hysterical in Salpêtrière. The description of the woman, her dress and his response to them is worth repeating:

Quand elle eut la tête nue, avec ses cheveux noirs, sa robe jaune, ses larges épaules dont les hanches dépassaient encore la largeur, elle rappelait la *Judith* de Vernet ..., mais par le corps plus fait pour l'amour et par le visage plus féroce encore. ... Ce corps de courtisane ... cette coupe d'amour aux flancs arrondis qui invitait la main et les lèvres, étaient surmontés d'un visage qui aurait arrêté le désir par la hauteur de sa physionomie, et pétrifié dans le respect la volupté la plus brûlante... sa tête respirait quelque chose de si étrangement implacable qu'il ... pût, sans fatuité, se croire Holopherne (237-238).

[With her head bare and her black eyes, her yellow dress, with large breasts eclipsed by her hips in voluptuousness, she resembled the Judith of Vernet. ... but with a body even desirable and with a face even more fierce ... Above the body of the courtesan, this cup of love with rounded hips

that invited hands and lips, was a face which could stop desire by its coldness, and could paralyze the hottest lust into respect. ... She emitted something so oddly inscrutable that he could, without fatuity, believe himself to be her Holopherenes.]

The imagery invoked in this passage is strikingly similar to that used by Huysmans. The prostitute's body, her jewelry, her costuming, entices but also petrifies. She does not even have to completely disrobe: "She could not have been more indecent. .. In the details of her toilet, monstrously provocative, she recalled to Tressignies that indescribable statue in front of which he sometimes stopped. ... This was a dangerous and obscene dream." The narrator is excited by the woman, but must also imagine the body as an immobile structure, one that is open to the gaze, but one in which the effect of desire is not so overwhelming. The woman's body itself is momentarily frozen and used as a defense against desire.

This seems paradoxical: why should male desire be tamed when it is the fear of feminine sexuality that is at play? Perhaps because desire leads to loss of self and to a loss of mastery of the ego and integral body boundaries. Desire for the woman provokes a subjective feeling of death and decay for the male artist. Thus is woman paralyzed and frozen in an image that is repeated throughout the turn-of-

the-century: Klimt's women, too, were fetishes, turned to stone and gems. They, too, were encrusted with jewelry and the specifics of the body were hidden. Like Tressignies' frightening beauty, his portraits were those of a Judith. When Severin first observes Wanda in Venus in Pelz, he gazes at her in the moonlight as an immobile, cold and frozen statute. Immobilizing female sexuality provides the artist a way of establishing control over the narrative or medium.

But the effects are only momentary. The body of pleasure that the prostitute offers contains within itself "... des abîmes tout aussi profonds que dans l'amour (chasms just as deep as love)". Her body conceals within it an abyss, within which the libertine may lose himself. The libertine is pulled into a "sea of pleasure," whose currents threaten to overwhelm him and has the power to interrupt the narrator's control. In fact, Tressignies even momentarily falls in love with the prostitute and believes that she loves him (240-241). But the prostitute dupes him; her ardor has been not been directed towards her client, but towards the portrait of her former husband depicted on her bracelet. Reclaiming his lost control, the narrator listens to another story unfolds.

For Durtal, Mme. Chantelouve is indeed so morbid and daunting that, "... naturally, without profit, he withdrew" (177, my emphasis). The narrator, when confronted with the body of a woman, finds it natural that he cannot consummate

the sexual act; her physicality frightens him. Her cries of desire and her physical movements repulse Durtal. The act itself is without profit for the narrator -- and returning to Brooks' idea of the "value" of the body and its exchange -- for the aesthetic Durtal (and author Huysmans), the body of the woman has little narrative profit, for it cannot be described. Its effects on the narration are so disruptive that the story of sexuality and love cannot be told. In contrast, Gilles de Rais' debaucheries (which Durtal narrates) have more narrative cache, are described in great though repugnant detail, but are more easily narrated by a subject who finds women's sexuality frightening.

Durtal, the narrator in Huysmans' Là-bas, desexualizes women before their sexuality can contaminate him. He represents the decadent artist (or literary subject) who recoils at the prospect of real female contact, and who would prefer an androgynous and non-sexual creative life and companion. He seeks a common dream of the nineteenth century aesthetic, that of androgyny, perhaps further represented by the desexualized maternal figure.

Spiritual desire is safer and less threatening. The narrator's desire to transcend his physical reality is strong:

... il avait voulu s'exalter avec elle, plus haut
que les délires mugissants des sens, bondir hors
du monde, en des joies inexplorées et supernelles!

Et le tremplin s'était cassé; il demeurerait, les pieds dans la crotte, rivés au sol. Il n'y avait donc pas moyen de sortir de son être, de s'évader de son cloaque, d'atteindre les régions où l'âme chavire, ravie, en ses abîmes? (187)

[He had wished to exalt himself with her, to rise higher than the delirious ravings of the senses, to soar out of the world into joys supernal and unexplained. And his dream had been shattered. He remained fettered to earth. Was there no means of escaping out of one's self, out of earthy limitations, and attaining an upper ether where the soul, ravished, would glory in its giddy flight?] (178).

In the decadent imagination, it is precisely the woman who inhibits male attainment of transcendence, and thus she is blamed for his own failure. Onto her is projected male inadequacy. The woman pulls the artist into the sordid physical world of decay, putrefaction and excretion. Existence in this world, as the narrator wearily proclaims, is abominable and impure. Only the imagination is immaculate.

Theweleit provides many examples in Male Fantasies of the way in which eighteenth and nineteenth-century German writers of the classical era used the idea of materiality -- in most cases, the maternal body -- to transcend it.

Sublimation (Freud's "Kulturarbeit") begins, he says, when women and their bodies are sacrificed. "Only by renouncing something does he arrive at some destination: the work of culture" (Theweleit 354). Women are drained of their sexuality; they become wooden images, statutes; they are drained and emptied of desire.

Women's sexuality seems to be paradoxically both fluidly flowing and, at the same time, decayed and filthy. The same flow that is desired is simultaneously repulsive. Thus are women represented as vividly alive, and then desiccated. They are never as they seem: they are masks that arrest male ambivalence. This impulse seems to have a long tradition associated with it. The desiccated image -- the wooden, stiff doll -- is conjured up by the nineteenth-century writer E.T.A. Hoffmann in his story of "The Sandman." The doll with which the narrator becomes enamored is the projection of his own sexual (castration) anxiety, about which Freud comments in "The Uncanny." What links the image of the doll and castration in the discussion of the "The Uncanny" is that Freud brings into focus the "spring" of libidinal energy which is always threatening to escape repressive forces and overwhelm the ego. The draining of this libidinal force, in the image of a dried-up doll, (or robots or machines), or the use of dams that restrain the force of a flowing sexual energy, is a common theme among male writers who seem threatened by either their own or the

woman's erotic power.

The protective functions of masks is parodied by Heinrich Mann in Professor Unrat. Professor "Unrat's" denial of his own sexuality and its projection onto the woman provide a critique of bourgeois morality that is very different from French decadent novels. Mann reverses the usual symbolization of mud or slime as being an attribute of woman's nature, and the woman has a hand in her own creation. Mann critiques both male and female positions in a way that the French novels lack. And, unlike the French writers of this period, Mann does not find feminine sexuality inherently dangerous, nor does he polarize abstraction as a male quality distinct from female sensuality as do those writers. Perhaps this is partly because Mann, unlike the French or Austrian decadents, was influenced by socialist thought, and found another set of relationships between psychological and social reality to provide an explanation for sexuality.

IV. Reversal of affect -- the maternal image

In Barbey's "A Woman's Revenge," the prostitute uses the image of her husband to increase her hatred, and thus the effect of her revenge.² Through this portrait of the autocratic patriarch on her bracelet, Tressignies recognizes the prostitute as a duchess and her husband as a member of one of the royal families of Spain. The duchess tells the libertine that her husband, whose image is displayed on her

bracelet, had slaughtered the woman's platonic lover, and she has vowed to vilify him in the worst possible way she can. Tressignies wants to hear her story, so intrigued has he become.

Dites-la! fit Tressignies, crocheté par une curiosité et un intérêt qu'il n'avait jamais ressentis à ce degré, ni dans la vie, ni dans les romans, ni au théâtre. Il lui semblait bien que cette femme allait lui raconter de ces choses comme il n'en avait entendu encore. Il ne pensait plus à sa beauté. Il la regardait comme si'il avait désiré assister à l'autopsie de son cadavre (245).

[Tell it, said Tressignies, hooked by a curiosity and an interest in the story that he had never felt to such a degree -- not in life, in novels nor in the theater. She was going to tell him of things that he had never heard before. He no longer thought of her beauty. He looked at her as if he had wanted to help in the autopsy of her corpse.]

Just as it had Durtal, the presence of the woman's overpowering sexuality threatens to destabilize Tressignies unless he gains self-control by desexualizing the woman's body. The male intellect must gain control of her body, as well as his own. The narrator distances himself from

sexuality -- the experience of erotic sensuality is replaced by a narrated story. The duchess's story in "A Woman's Revenge" is one of Oedipal rivalry and a young man's death, an effective distancing device. Told by the woman, the narrative displaces sexuality with the narrator's intellectual curiosity. In the process of telling the story, the erotic object loses her beauty. Both Huysmans and Barbey, when faced with the frightening prospect of female sexuality, use the same language; both turn the body of the woman into a corpse. This metamorphosis of the figure shows how strong is the fright and the anxiety created by it.

Barbey's narrative uses more dynamically motivated narrative schemes and transformations. The narrator sees the countess as a whore, a maternal figure locked into an duel with the father, a lover seeking revenge on the father, and invoke an Oedipal or incestuous phantasy built into them. As Tressignies listens to the countess' story, she mutates even further into frightening monster of revenge:

Tressignies frémissait, en écoutant cette femme effrayante. Il frémissait de ses gestes, de ses paroles, de sa tête, devenue une tête de Gorgone: il lui semblait voir autour de cette tête les serpents que cette femme avait dans le coeur. Il commençait alors de comprendre -- le rideau se tirait! -- ce mot vengeance, qu'elle disait tant -

-... (252)

[Tressignies trembled, listening to this terrifying woman. He thrilled to her gestures, her words, her head, which had become the head of the Gorgon: it seemed as if he saw, surrounding her head, the snakes which this woman had in her heart. He began to understand -- the curtain rose -- the word "vengeance", which she said so often.]

The idea of the countess's sexual revenge -- for that is what it is, terrifies the narrator. Her prostitution and sexual infidelity to her husband makes of her a hideous monster, invoking primitive fear in the narrator. It is at this point that the narrator's comment that the modern story is suffused with incestuous themes begins to make sense. For the narrator, although experienced, is young, and sexual contact with this woman obviously brings Oedipal anxiety into play. He enjoys a woman sexually who prefers him to her husband, a powerful and cruel man. Already this sounds similar to an Oedipal phantasy. The duke has already mutilated (castrated) the body of another young lover, and who has not, moreover, even slept with the woman. The narrator is drawn into an intrigue that is truly frightening, yet he is pulled in nevertheless. His sexual curiosity almost consumes him and he loses his objectivity, that which defined him as a "dandy."

Durtal, in his effort to maintain the aesthete's

intellectual distance from sensual desire, invents a new and exotic sin: "cerebral onanism and incest" (171). Invoking the Pygmalion image of the male artist who falls in love with his own creation, he describes his ingenious sin: incest with his artistic creation in a dream. Physical incest would be almost "licit" for Durtal; but this purely imaginative incest is committed solely by the male on his own soul, that is, on his own creative product. In such an act, there would be no impurity of the flesh, no need of a woman and no physical progeny. Durtal imagines a "pure" incest of and by the male spirit. The examples of women with whom Durtal might imaginatively fall in love are those stock female figures of the decadent literary imagination: Herodiad, Judith, Helen, Joan of Arc, all women who traditionally provoke intense anxiety in males for their castrating desire and actions. Sexuality -- here, seen as incest -- leads to an anxiety linked to castration and morbid death.

Theweleit describes such destructive mechanisms in his description of the *Freikorps* soldiers. The difference is that these men literally killed others and committed violent crimes. Yet some of what their written work and phantasies have something in common with the decadents. Especially so, since the decadents' world view, as was that of the *Freikorps*, was one of a dualistic nature. For example, Theweleit argues that the soldiers verbally and visually

"sought out" and "captured" movement (of life, energy, sexuality) in the world. Terrified of the object and their own response, however, they would destroy the object. "We can speculate from this that it is above all the aliveness of the real that threatens these men. The more intensely life (emotions) impinges on them, the more aggressively they attack it; rendering it "harmless" in extreme cases. What they build from this destruction is "the State" (217,218).

So, too, with narrators Tressignies and Durtal. The more enticing and moving the women, the more they seek to remain detached from their own reactions. The fear of their own reactions leads them to create a narration that distances the object and desire from their narrating position. They do this through framing techniques, for example, or by creating a story with an Oedipal theme that must be resolved.

The question of incest is part of the "family romance," and both Huysmans and Barbey D'Aurevilly connect male sexuality to maternal figures. As Tressignies continues to listen to the duchess's story, her words remove her from the prostitute that he had encountered on the steps of the Basse-du-Rempart. The prostitute is entirely "effaced;" a mask falls over her during her story and her true -- maternal -- personage becomes visible. She throws a wrap around her shoulders, signifying literally and figuratively that her body is now to be hidden from the eyes and interest

of the male. Everything about the duchess exudes chastity, purity -- all the effect of the narration that she tells. The sexual woman is replaced by the chaste woman. We are back at Freud's "Two Types of Object Choices;" the woman is perceived either as the degraded prostitute or the mother beyond reach and desire.

What the Goncourt brothers wrote about their maid, Rose, is of interest here because it shows how the maternal figure and prostitute are linked through male sexual anxiety. The extent to which the Goncourts' suspected their maid of sexual duplicity was displaced onto their own mother. Their maid's deception confirmed the brothers' already strong conviction in the natural and constitutional basis of woman's dishonesty.

Notre pensée est remontée à notre mère, si pure et pour laquelle nous étions tout; puis de là, redescendant à ce coeur de Rose, que nous crions tout à nous, nous avons eu comme une grande déception à voir qu'il y avait tout un grand côté

que nous n'emplissions pas. La défiance nous est entrée dans l'esprit, pour toute la vie, du sexe entier de la femme (Journal 274).

[Our thoughts return to our mother, so pure and for whom we were everything; then from there, descending again to the heart of Rose, who we believed we were everything to, it came as a great deception to see that there had been a large part of it we did not fill. Suspicious entered into our soul, for the rest of our life, for the entire sex of woman.]

The suspicion of maternal infidelity or feminine sexual duplicity is represented in Barbey D'Aurevilly's fictional work as the project of paternity. That is, in the family romance, desire for the woman is linked, through Oedipal anxiety, to the father and his revenge. The mother, who seems originally chaste and whose virtuous presence should still the anxiety of illicit sexual desire, cannot stabilize sexual desire or anxiety. In the end, even she does not present a strong enough taboo.

Further, in both Huysmans' novel and Barbey's short-story, the desired women belong to a higher class -- the nobility -- than that of the narrators, although the artists themselves are upper class. The women cannot be "possessed" by the narrators without fear of class or authoritarian/paternal reprisal. As Theweleit points out in

his study of female images and social conditions that helped produce them, upper class women were often imagined as prostitutes and as objects of possession by the talented men who make it to the top. Yet their new status is fragile and both social and Oedipal recriminations lie hidden with the possession of new "territory" (Theweleit 356-365). The territory is the new social position and responsibility, as well as the materiality of the woman's body. We have seen a similar reaction in the audience's objection to Klimt's paintings in "The Beethoven Frieze," where it seemed that viewing the bodies of aristocratic beauties engendered a sort of cultural Oedipal anxiety. The narrators, authors and artists might be endangered by their relationship with a woman in a higher position than himself. Social insecurity becomes, narratively, sexual insecurity. The attainment of social status become confused with sexual transgression.

In "A Woman's Revenge," the countess is driven crazy by hatred and by her love for her slaughtered lover. She is incarcerated in Charcot's Salpêtrière, where she dies disfigured and forgotten. The narrator, Tressignies, finds this out after returning from a long trip abroad, where he sought to forget his longing for the countess, the figure who wielded the powerful fantasy of Oedipal rivalry and death. In the end, the prostitute is transformed into a mother, who becomes a hysteric and dies. The image of the

hysteric, then, ultimately functions as the one which, in this case, interrupts the narrator's desire.

Similarly, Huysmans' narrator, Durtal, confuses the prostitute with the hysteric, and finds them both repulsive. Barbey's allusion to the countess's stay at Salpêtrière is given narrative power by Huysmans, who describes women's bodies in the contortions and writhings familiar from Charcot's spectacular public seminars.

...des femmes tombées sur les tapis se roulèrent. L'une sembla mue par un ressort, se jeta sur le ventre et rama l'air avec ses pieds; une autre, subitement atteinte d'une strabisme hideux, gloussa, puis, devenue aphone, resta, la mâchoire ouverte, la langue retroussée, la pointe dans le palais, en haut;... C'était un cabanon exaspéré d'hospice, une monstrueuse étuve de prositutées et de folles (262-263).

[The women fell to the carpet and writhed. One of them seemed to be worked by a spring. She threw herself prone and waved her legs in the air. Another, suddenly struck by a hideous strabism, clucked, then becoming tongue-tied stood with her mouth open, the tongue turned back, the tip

cleaving to the palate ... The place was simply a madhouse, a monstrous pandemonium of prostitutes and maniacs.] (248-249).

Durtal is fascinated and repulsed by the women's sexualized hysteria, and by the hysterization of sexuality that becomes a debauched prostitution. In this passage, the movement of bodies seems mechanical, driven by a power not of their own making, and strangely inhuman. It is as if the woman's body must be theatricalized in order to externalize male anxiety and fear. Durtal projects his own monstrous imaginings of female sexuality onto the women in this passage. The theater, whether it is Charcot's seminar or the mystical black sabbath, cradles the externalized phantasies of the male decadent.

For Durtal, women are repulsively hysterical, or morbid and corpse-like. He cannot choose between depicting them as products of a scientific world-view, as victims of hysteria, or as the demonic offspring of a Christianity gone astray -- the occult. Peter Brooks, referring to Nana's sex and Zola's obsession with it, says that it is hidden, "occulte" (148). In this instance, it is literally obscured beneath the exaggerated language of the Church or science. The discourse of Catholicism or of science offers a way to control narrative anxiety and to frame what is experientially uncontainable.

In the texts by Barbey d'Aurevilly and Huysmans that we

have just looked at, the narrators, obsessed with female sexuality, nevertheless strive to control it and reduce it to nothing. Its mechanisms remained undetected but are known by its effects only. Language seems entirely unable to represent what is desired by and hidden from the male, and paradoxically, the anxiety creates a story that skirts around the issue.

CHAPTER VI: ENDNOTES

1. Although Freud had abandoned in large part the language of contamination and disease, these ideas are still similar to his own in that the repression or flooding of the libidinal "reservoir" causes illness.

2. Barbey seems to vaguely suspect some of the hostility that will be written about by Joan Riviere in "Womanliness as Masquerade." In order to present an acceptably feminine pose to society, a woman "acts" womanly, but this only disguises her hostility about her position and her need to dissimulate.

Chapter VII. Lulu and the Problems of Hysterical Representation

Wedekind's double-play, "Lulu", with its 21-year history of official suppression (1892-1913), re-writing and emendations was finally produced *in toto* in 1916, during Berlin's relatively liberal pre-war hiatus.¹ More than any other of Wedekind's plays, Lulu questions women's sexuality, especially in its relation to culture and male desire. More generally, it is concerned with the individual's sexual life in opposition to the hypocritical and repressive social world of the late Victorian era. Lulu also problematizes artistic representation; the figure of Lulu herself is caught up in textual ambiguities which are never clearly resolved. Who or what is woman? Wedekind responded to that question in a particular way with Lulu.

I read Lulu's questioning of female identity as framed by vitalist notions of identity. The vitalist perspective, moreover, does not rule out a conception of subjectivity that is formed by hysterical or dissociated states. Lulu's fragmentary states of consciousness and self-representation could then be interpreted by contemporary notions of self-identity. By questioning the more extreme and pathological forms of dissociation, for example, we might gain an understanding of "feminine" consciousness in a more positive, post-modern sense.

Lulu revolves around Lulu's particular representation

and fate. Lulu weds an image of the *femme fatale* to a classical depiction of the rise and fall of a prostitute, with allusions to La Dame aux Camilles, Carmen, La Traviata, Nana, and other prostitutes of nineteenth-century operatic and novelistic tradition (Boa 126). The play questions the representation of women as sexual object, yet it foregrounds a highly eroticized figure to do so, employing the means it is critiquing (76). Wedekind manipulates the popular literary and theatrical image of the dancer/coquette, and locates his own contradictory views of women and their sexuality within this imagery. Is Lulu an ugly warning of the fate awaiting the liberated woman or an indictment of sexual and social alienation?

Lulu is a beautiful young prostitute rescued from the streets by Dr. Schön. Pygmalion-like, he educates the young prostitute, becomes her lover, and then sells her to the highest bidders in the cultured world of Berlin. The play begins in the artist Schwarz's atelier, where Lulu's portrait as Pierrot is being painted by the artist. During the course of the play, Lulu will have have four husbands, including a doctor, an artist, a publisher and a theatrical writer. All of Lulu's husbands die violently. Her first husband, Doctor Goll, has a heart attack when he suspects Lulu's infidelity, and the artist Schwarz stabs himself in the neck, unable to grasp "what" Lulu is. At the epitome of her social success, Lulu murders her benefactor and current husband, Dr. Schön, in self-defense. Her violent action

ends the first part of the play, "Erdgeist." "The Box of Pandora" opens with a group of friends and hangers-on awaiting Lulu's escape from prison, to which she has been convicted for her murder of Dr. Schön. The group's economic and social status sinks considerably in the course of the second play, especially in comparison to the comfortable bourgeois world presided over by Dr. Schön in the first play. The action proceeds to a bordello in Paris, where both money and women are sold; the last act takes place in London where Lulu has escaped with her "family" -- Alwa, her husband and brother, her "father", Schigolch, and the lesbian, Countess Geschwitz. Her last husband, Alwa, dies of alcohol and starvation in the filthy London flat where Lulu herself is butchered by Jack the Ripper.

There are several aspects of Lulu that I discuss in this chapter. After a sketch of the play's complicated production and philosophical background, I place Lulu as dancer/muse within the vitalist tradition that influenced the artistic community at the turn-of-the-century. My primary interest in doing so is to relate Lulu's sexuality and role-playing to an aesthetic movement that emphasizes spontaneity, malleability and sexual energy, rather than to reduce Lulu's sexual nature to psychology. However, Wedekind's representation of Lulu's shifting personality can also be interpreted as a characterization of hysterical/dissociative states, and I thus connect her multiple roles to a post-modern theory of consciousness and

identity. In this connection, I briefly compare Wedekind's Lulu to Kathy Acker's "post-modern" heroine in Don Quixote. This leads me to look at Nietzsche's use of woman as rhetorical figure, as read by contemporary feminist Irigaray. Finally, I come to a new reading of Wedekind's Lulu.

I. Lulu, Early Modernism and Vitalism

A. Background

Wedekind's double play, Erdgeist and Die Büchse der Pandora started out as a single play, Erdgeist, but was early on divided into two sections. Originally written as a five-act text in 1895 entitled Die Büchse der Pandora, Eine Monstertragödie. Buchdrama, it was reworked for the stage as Erdgeist, and originally performed in 1898, in Leipzig. This five-act play scandalized the public and was, moreover, difficult for actors to perform. The drama was not received well in Leipzig, and any success the play did enjoy was because Lulu was seen as a "whip-brandishing proletarian" rebelling against a decayed bourgeoisie (Weidl 185). A later production in Munich also folded quickly.

Continual external pressures with the state censor and internal problems engendered by the play's complicated structure led Wedekind, over the following years, to split the drama into two sections (Weidl 188). The original first three acts set in Berlin were increased to four and came to make up Erdgeist, the first part of the double-tragedy. In 1902, the concluding acts of the original play (the Parisian

bordello and Jack-the-Ripper sections) were placed in the second part of the tragedy, along with the addition of the second prologue (lambasting the censor) and a new first act (Lulu's release from prison). These changes were all incorporated into a new work, Die Büchse der Pandora. Numerous additions and changes were made to this section over the next ten years, until it was finally published with the Erdgeist section in 1913.

Lulu was begun in Paris during Wedekind's long visit, during the years from 1892-94. When Wedekind first conceived the play in Paris, he had in mind a "Schauertragödie" (horror story), with Jack the Ripper as the central figure (Muylaert 137). Just such melodramas were popular at the time in Paris; the Théâtre du Grand Guignol showcased horror plays exploiting sensational events of the day, and the London murderer, Jack, was notorious in the Europe of 1890's (Boa 120). Wedekind's original text portrays Jack as a inquisitive, coldly detached man. Jack's curiosity was subsequently changed into that of a crude bestiality, and his role is restricted to the last scene. In the first editions, however, Jack makes several references to scientific experimentation and thinking. After having placed a bundle (presumably with Lulu's genitals) on the table, he says, "I would never have thought of a thing like that. ... That is a phenomenon. ... The professors and students will say, 'That is astonishing'" (Muylaert 140).² His reference to professors and students

is a reminder that Charcot's spectacular and hysterical scientific presentations were already in their heyday. (Coincidentally, although Wedekind and Freud both visit Paris during the same time period, they miss each other.)

Part of the play's scandalous reception was its use of street language, burlesque and visceral displays of sex and violence. Icons of murder and prostitution allude to Wedekind's interest in theater-varieté, the circus and popular culture, which were incorporated into the new work, Erdgeist. For example, a street artist named "Lulu" performed at the time of Wedekind's Parisian stay; his preface, a parody of a circus act, also points to popular culture.³ The play's brutal and bloody imagery is reminiscent of the young Kokoschka's graphic work, particularly "Mörder Hoffnung der Frau"; even Klimt's "Beethovenfrieze" suggests the uglier elements of sexual fantasy, seemingly at odds with Victorian attitudes (Figures 27-28). *Jugendstil*, the German equivalent of the international *art nouveau* movement, with its emphasis on the organic, the vital and the flowing elements of life also had a place in Wedekind's depiction of the changing and vital female. Abstractionism and the fragmentation of a single perspective into a myriad of forms structured a new artistic understanding of life and subjectivity (Höger, 1979). In terms of theatrical innovations, Lulu is Wedekind's attempt to create a new form, in his attempt to represent the unrepresentable -- woman.

Influenced by Wagner and Nietzsche, Wedekind rejected naturalist "Tendenztheater" and its belief in genetic and environmental causality; his repudiation of the naturalistic manner of acting are all part of his representational schema (Höger, 1979). Although Wedekind himself acted in the play, and his wife, Tilly Newes, was his favorite "Lulu", the problem of finding an actress who could do justice to the literary figure was never totally resolved (Peacock 352). Silvia Bovenschen has suggested that the contradictory interpretations of Lulu arise because of the conflation of the character and a symbolic "Woman". She says, "Perhaps the difficulty about which Wedekind complained is based on the fact that contemporary actresses not only had to play the role of Lulu, but also a whole set of roles, ... What is Lulu, if she played no role?" (Bovenschen 51).

Wedekind disparaged Gertrud Eysoldt's performance, who portrayed a "type" admired by the Berlin artistic community (she was well-known for her work in Berlin with Max Reinhardt in Hofmannsthal's "Elektra", for example) (Muylaert 206).⁴ Actresses either exaggerated Lulu's seductive and jaded side, as did Eysoldt, or they portrayed her as innocent and sensual, unaware of her effect on others (as portrayed by another actress, Maria Orske). A contemporary critic points out this contradiction: "The quick-witted (geistersharfe) Eysoldt and the lascivious (lusterne) Orske would result in a whole -- but this is impossible" (Peacock 353). Even at the play's inception,

then, it seems that Wedekind struggled with the inability to unify disparate representational states of his character. As a "Nietzschean", Wedekind tries to overcome the oppositions between "Geist und Fleisch" [spirit and body], but fails. He sets up an unavoidable disjunction in his own creation that perhaps cannot be resolved.

B. Vitalism, Sexuality and Dance

Vitalism, as an artistic and philosophical impulse, is important in Wedekind's work. For my purposes, it indicates Wedekind's inclination to see personality or individuality as indeterminate, as a mysterious and non-representable force. Vitalism, in one sense, places the individual's identity in question, since it sees individuality as having many forms rather than a particular shape. For the vitalist, sexuality and movement remain the stimulus of life and creativity. Appearance, dance and role-playing are thus components of a particular aesthetic view that finds an embodiment in Lulu. As a follower of Nietzsche, Wedekind represents Lulu as a vital figure, who, as one critic says, "...unifies almost all the typical signs of the "Lebenskult." For example:

her origin ... lies in an indefinite past; ... she stems from the flood ["Gosse"], grows up in an artistic and circus milieu, which remains as her love for dance, ...her youthful, even childlike

traits, health, naive sensuality, joy in the body and her unbroken ability for love characterize her appearance; ... all of which culminate in her fear of death (Martens 111).

Wedekind rejects the enclosure of the living personality within a static form. The vitalist philosophy is in accord with Wedekind's own views about the female dancer, her ability to be muse to the artist, and her accessibility as a sexual and commodified object. Lulu's representation is not just an aesthetic perspective, but one based on Wedekind's own "vitalist" personality. Alwa (perhaps echoing Wedekind's own artistic sense) says to Lulu in "Die Büchse der Pandora": "Bei mir besteht die intimste Wechselwirkung zwischen meiner Sinnlichkeit und meinem geistigen Schaffen. So z.B. bleibt mir dir gegenüber nur die Wahl, dich künstlerische zu gestalten oder dich zu lieben" ["For me there is the most intimate association between my sensuality and my [creative] work. So, for example, in relation to you, I only have the choice of rendering you artistically or loving you"] (Wedekind 126). Lulu, as muse, propels the artistic and romantic interest of the characters. In fact, the play could be seen as an enactment of the muse's effect on male art and life, that is, as the effect of her shifting personality on others.

The poetry of two of Wedekind's Berlin contemporaries, Alfred Mombert and Richard Dehmel, was inspired by the same vitalist link between sexuality and art. Dehmel's

Verwandlungen der Venus (1907) is dedicated to sexuality; in it, Venus, in different manifestations, passes before the imagination of the poet. The love engendered by these forms leads to the "Weltgrund" which is revealed as "lauter Liebeslustgewalt" (the "pure force of sexual pleasure") (L. Ryan 391). So, too, the form of the eroticized female body permeates much of the poetry of Alfred Mombert. For example, he exclaims:

O Fantasie! nackte Göttin --
 du treibst mir zu auf wogendend Silbershäumen --
 entgegen meiner weltgespannten Hand -- (Hermand
 249).⁵

[Oh, fantasy! naked goddess -- /you propel me to
 surging waves of silver foam --/against my
 outspread hand --.]

Creative fantasy and sexuality are implicitly linked to the hand that writes poetry -- or masturbates with the woman in mind -- or both. Women's sexuality is one link between the vitalist impulse and artistic production.

The vitalist component of early literary modernism is especially evident in Expressionism, but it is obvious in the graphic art and design of *Jugendstil* as well. Yet contemporary with the exuberant celebration of form and energy was the more pessimistic, even nihilistic, view of human life that found expression in a scientific perspective first advocated by the physicist Ernst Mach. Mach, the empiricist, set the stage for much of literary and

philosophical discussions about the relationship of the ego to the phenomenal world. The ego is a fictive construction that integrates a whole array of sensations into consciousness. According to Mach, our cognitive and perceptual apparatus give the external world its structure, and it has no cohesion other than our own perceptual schema:

Nicht das Ich ist das Primäre, sondern die Elemente (Empfindungen). ... Die Elemente bilden das Ich. (Mach 140)... ein Ich [ist] nur also eine *praktische* Einheit ... eine starker zusammenhängende Gruppe von Elemente, welche mit anderen Gruppen dieser Art *schwächer* zusammenhängt, ... Das Ich ist keine unveränderliche, bestimmte, scharfe begrenzte Einheit (144-145, author's emphasis).

[The ego is not primary, rather the elements (sensations) are. The elements construct the ego. ... The ego is just a practical unity, a more strongly dependent group of elements which is connected more weakly to other groups of this type. ... The ego is not an unchanging, determined, clearly delimited unity.]

A feeling of alienation and distance from the self was the hallmark of modernism which, at the time, was termed a crisis of personal and cultural identity. The sensations that make up human sensibility, while dynamic (along the vitalist doctrine) were increasingly felt as a threat to the

modernists' sense of order. Hermann Bahr and the young Hugo von Hofmannsthal, for example, were influenced by Ernst Mach's impressionist science. Hermann Bahr liked to fill his articles with long quotes from the original authors; in his "Das unrettbare Ich," he cites from Mach:

Das Ich ist unrettbar. Es ist eine Name. Es ist nur eine Illusion. Es ist ein Behelf, um unsere Vorstellungen zu ordnen. Es gibt nichts als Verbindungen, von Färben, Tönen, Wärmen, Drücken, Räumen, Zeiten, und an diesen Verknüpfungen sind Stimmungen, Gefühlen, und Willen gebunden. Das Ich ist nur eine Name, für die Elemente, die sich in ihm verknüpfen (Ryan 392).⁶

[The ego is unsalvagable. It is a name. It is an illusion. It is a means to order our representations. There is nothing except relationships of colors, tones, heat, pressure, space, time; moods, feelings and will are bound to these combinations. The ego is only a name for the elements which are connected in it.]

Nietzsche's analysis of decadence and nihilism was partly responsible for this feeling of discontinuity. Nietzsche reframed nihilistic tendencies into a dynamic philosophy that encompassed, even celebrated, life's destructive aspects. Yet some contemporaries experienced loss of coherence with little philosophical consolation. Even language and the written words could become the object

of loss and a frightening autonomy. One of Nietzsche's most-quoted remarks was taken almost verbatim from the French author, Paul Bourget, who describes both the self and the decadent literary style in which:

... l'unité du livre se décompose pour laisser la place à l'un indépendance de la page, où la page se décompose pour laisser la place à l'un indépendance de la phrase, et la phrase pour laisser la place à l'un indépendance du mot.

[... the unity of the book breaks apart in giving the page independence, and the page unravels when the phrase becomes independent of it; the phrase falls apart when the word becomes independent.

Flaubert, a great novelist, but also a great hysteric and decadent, carried these ideas to the extreme, according to Bourget, and his analysis links the French modernists to the Austrian ones. Bourget remarks that Flaubert believes the ego to be a screen of phenomena moving across our perceptual field. Form and content are no longer easily distinguishable from one another, and it is "impossible to conceive that a phrase does not express an idea, just as an idea cannot be thought without words" (Bourget 161).

These two seeming contrary sides of the vitalist doctrine, one celebrating a new, independent life, the other overwhelmed by its dynamic incoherency (and both, incidentally, inspired by Nietzsche) found a common aesthetic experience in dance. For Nietzsche, music was the

incarnation of life force, and dance and movement were its human embodiment. Dance is movement without a goal, a joyful experience in itself, and Zarathustra, for example, is presented as a dancer in the preface of Thus spoke Zarathustra. The "tight-rope walker" (Seiltänzer) is also an image used by Nietzsche to incorporate movement and suspension between goals. Lulu, too, is compared with the acrobat and tight-rope walker by her "trainer."

Dance, of course, was a popular art form at the turn-of-the-century, and artists conceptualized it as an organized movement that united spirit and material. Male artists enthusiastically exclaimed how the actress Eleanora Duse or Isadora Duncan, for example, incorporated not only all aspects of the "feminine", but of life itself -- movement: "Bewegung ist Leben" (Hofmannsthal). For artists at the turn-of-the-century, the dancer and the actress contained and shaped the spontaneous life force (Figure 29). The forms that the body can take, the ability of the dance to realize the artist's conceptualization, make up an aesthetics of movement.

Actresses and dancers exaggerated the materiality of the flowing line. Sarah Bernhardt insisted on remodelling her dresses until "they became quite moulded to the line of my figure" (Stokes 9). Actresses were said to be becoming more natural; they floated or glided in organic movement (9). The Italian critic Ristori's analysis of Eleonore Duse's acting included this remark:

... her body ... had serpentine shifts of weight or profoundly languorous gestures and moved in perfect accord with the action and counterbalancing action of her arms, hands, fingers, torso and counterpart activity of her face. And so, perhaps the great actress was able to outclass everyone in her portrayal of characters with *hysterical temperaments* (Bassnett 142, author's emphasis).

Furthermore, since women were considered to be more primitive than men, they were closer to sexual desire, which showed itself in their need for "rhythmic motion." Dance was a "form of excitement in harmony with woman's emotional temperament" (Dijkstra 243). Women's urge to dance lies in her pent-up energy, in her hysterical constitution and tendency.

Dancing women were thought to be sex-crazed, and they were voyeuristically enjoyed. Their hysterical sexuality was a "secret" of paintings and dances at the turn-of-the-century, whether the dancers were young girls or more ecstatically frolicking nymphs (Dijkstra 244). Although dancing women could be exciting, they could also be dangerous, as men have thought at least since Euripides' depiction of the wild, mutilating maedads in "The Bacchae," or from the folktales and dances of the tarantella.

Many turn-of-the-century literary and artistic images of the dancer portrayed woman as dangerous and excessive in

her sexual independence. There are numerous depictions of this: Nora's tarantula scene in Ibsen's "A Doll's House;" Julie's intoxicated dancing in Strindberg's "Miss Julie," which leads to sexual (and class) promiscuity; and Salome's exhilarated movement in Wilde's "Salome." In A-Rebours, J.-K. Huysmans describes in detail Gustave Moreau's "Salome's Dance," a subject that was also taken by Klimt in several paintings, including his "Judith." Des Esseintes dreams of the dancer/acrobat Miss Urania as a frightening carnivorous flower.

In all of these instances, the dancer is not just represented as a celebration of movement, feminine beauty, or sexuality. Rather, in these depictions, and in Lulu as well, the dancer's sexuality becomes increasingly threatening. In her sensual exhilaration, the dance exceeds the dancer. She loses control: the dancer is the hysteric, dancing the tarantula. She surpasses the male artist's desire for stimulation and becomes a threat to it. While the woman's sexuality was often the focus of the artistic interest in dance, this sexuality was often portrayed as an unrestrained energy capable of seducing the artist into a morbid fascination with death and danger. In Chapter VI, I discuss how physicians and society thought that women needed to be physically constrained and kept under surveillance, lest their sexuality run rampant in society.

More than anything, Lulu sees herself as a dancer. Her self-portrayal as dancer is ambiguous, given the imagery of

both vitalism and decadence that constitute her representation. The first act, in Schwarz's atelier, is replete with details and passages about dancing. Dr. Goll, her first husband, rushes off to the theater with the other men to watch the beautiful "Corticelli" dance, leaving his own wife with the artist, Schwarz. After her portrait sitting, Lulu changes back into her dance clothes and the artist Schwarz questions her about her musical education. Lulu can dance the "Casradas -- Samaqueca -- Skirtdance --" and has studied in Paris, where she learned not only corporeal technique, but fashion innovations as well. All of these details portray Lulu as a beautiful, aesthetic object, a dancer full of vitality and sexual allure.

The third act takes place totally in the theater, where Lulu dances to a full house. Lulu echoes the praise from the newspapers: "They're writing ... that I am the most spiritual dancer who has ever stepped onto the stage. I am a second Taglioni ..." (Wedekind 56). Alwa, who has choreographed her dance, tells her that "You came into the world as a dancer" (59). He remarks on her general theatricality: "She was always good at changing costumes, but I was surprised to find such a good dancer hiding in her" (61). Another of Lulu's admirers reflects that "When she dances her solo, she is intoxicated ["berauscht"] by her own beauty -- she seems almost to love herself to death" (62). Dr. Goll mistakes the name of "Dalialama" with "Nietzsche," whose "Übermensch" of Also Sprach Zarathustra

and ideas of "Lebensrausch" [life intoxication] influence the play. "Berauschen" alludes to the exhilaration of Dionysian life force celebrated by Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy, and leaves no doubt that Lulu is being compared to a life force.

In "Erdegeist," (the first play), Lulu is a dancer who encapsulates the vitalist impression of life. Nietzsche's goal of transcending the dualism between body and mind was an implicit aesthetic demand of the dancer. Part of the artist's excitement in watching the dancer was the way in which one could "perceive" the spirit or the artistic form through the body.⁷ Escerny is the play's spokesman for this point of view:

Was mich zu Ihnen hinzieht, ist nicht Ihr Tanz.
Es ist Ihre körperliche und seelische Vornehmheit,
wie sie sich in jeder Ihrer Bewegungen offenbart
(66).

[What attracts me to you is not your dance. It is
your physical and spiritual perfection, as it is
revealed in each of your movements.]

Escerny could well be a spokesman for his age (and for Wedekind as well). Other artists, for example, Hofmannsthal, wrote of dancers, although in different terms: "Wellenhaft glitt sie aus einer Gestalt in die andere, und das Zerfließen, das Hinübergleiten war nicht minder schön, als die horchenden, die fliehenden, die geduckten, die mädlichen, die erstarrten Gestalten." ["Wave-like she slid

from one form into another, and the dissolving, the gliding-over was no less beautiful than the listening, praying, crouching, manadish, rigid forms"] (Hofmannsthal, 1959, 197). Hofmannsthal's view describes how body and form seem to meld into one. It is in dance that self-consciousness is dissolved and dualism overcome, at least for some writers.

C. The Corruptibility of the Dancer

The myth of the dancer as life genius, as an artist able to transcend materiality, was paralleled by the sexual availability of the dancer and actress in the artistic milieu at the turn of the century. Her sexual commodification seems at least as inspirational as her dancing, but led to her being seen as metaphysically corruptible. The tradition of the muse seems to undergo a change in the course of the nineteenth century: more and more frequently she becomes a prostitute and less a Platonic ideal. Baudelaire's Parisian poems of the "Spleen et Ideal" cycle indicate the availability of the prostitute as subject of poetry and contemplation. His "Mon coeur mis à nu" invokes the cynical dualism of that poet: he both praises the metaphysical ability of the dancer to transcend her corporeality, and laments that she is, after, "natural", "that is to say, abominable" (Bernheimer 71).⁸

Wedekind seems not to have held this negative view of the female body (although he struggles with dualism throughout the play), and he himself was enormously attracted to dancers and his conception of female beauty and

form was likewise influenced by dancers (Wedekind, Tagebücher).⁹ In Paris, Wedekind frequently entertained at the burlesques shows, and the prostitutes often accompanied him and his companions to other shows and diversions. He records in his journals how after a night of sex, he and the dancers/coquettes would lay in bed and read novels about other prostitutes: one of them reads the Goncourts' Fille Elisa; Wedekind himself consumes the novels by Zola and other realists (Wedekind, Tagebücher 263). The relationship between artist and actress was also intimate in Vienna. Karl Kraus and his circle "shared" many dancers and actresses, including Irma Karczewska (who played the groom, Bob in Lulu) and the actress Berthe Maria Denk, who was also Wedekind's lover (Wagner 134-136).

The actress/dancer occupied a low socio-economic position in Victorian society. This is partly because of her status as specular object of desire and envy, as well as the fact that the performer was often actually sexually possessed by admirers and patrons. As Stokes comments, the female performer was a marginalized yet emblematic figure. Her position afforded her some independence, he writes, and a chance for "fame and fortune." Yet the performer's position remained linked to the prostitute's. In the end, each could gain wealth only by being bought, either by the public or by member of the aristocracy or bourgeoisie (2-3).

The dancer's/actress's sexuality was part of their muse-like qualities, but in Lulu, Wedekind is more cynical

about the dancer's profession and its commercialization as art and prostitution. In the third act, Lulu accuses Schön of making her into a dancer in order to marry her off, so that "someone would take me away." The aristocrat Escerny tries to persuade her to return to Africa with him, where she can "dance for an audience of one." Schön reminds her that she has no choice but to dance, and she must "dance for anyone who pays the price of a ticket" (Wedekind, 1989, 68). He then accuses her of dancing shamelessly before innocent women in order to upset them, and he says to her that her "shame can be bought with the price of a gold piece" (69). Although dance and the dancer may represent beauty and movement in a pure state, both are susceptible to commodification and the corruption of "natural" talent.

Dance, sexuality, the life force, art: all inform life, but are at odds with bourgeois social order. In Lulu and other plays, Wedekind presents a culture that might itself be hysterical, repressed, and corrupt, since the social order functions because of its hypocritical masking and denial of sexual desire (a parallel view to Freud's at that time as well). The hysterically repressed woman, alongside Lulu's enigmatic vitalist figure, is found in several of Wedekind's plays, from the frightened mothers in Spring's Awakening, to the activist feminist, Elfriede, of Tod und Teufel.

Yet Lulu "is" the sexual being, representing an ahistorical presence of sexual desire. From the perspective

of traditional readings, her sexuality is crippled and deformed by patriarchy, commodification and bourgeois morality. But Lulu's sexuality also obstructs her from becoming anything other than an object for others; her status as desiring/desirable seals her identity as commodity.

The positive view of Wedekind's representation of Lulu points out an unsettling congruence between two systems of representation. The ironic point is that the energistic Lulu, displaying the "Lebensphilosophie" of Nietzsche, also turns out to be a sexualized object who cannot survive her fetishization by male characters.

II. Lulu and Post-Modernism

A. Lulu, role-playing and essence

It seems to me that Wedekind's play is an artistic attempt to capture the sense of a refractory modern consciousness, artistically epitomized by the vitalist trope of woman and her lack of "depth." The language and stylistic innovations of avant-garde artists competed with the early psychological and medical discourse as a way of describing modern sensibility. Medical discourse pathologized and categorized the non-stable personality as hysterical. In Wedekind's text, Lulu's role-playing is represented as a consequence of her lack of self or ego, thus she assumes a diverse set of roles and attributes. There is no "single" Lulu. One could argue that Wedekind does present a woman traumatized by early sexual encounters,

and the popular stereotype of the proletarian sexualized child is part of Lulu's characterization. These encounters could lead to a personality with dissociated or hysterical states, to a woman who plays roles and who has little memory of her past.

Rather than trying to connect Wedekind's depiction of Lulu to an understanding of a pathologized traumatic state, I merely want to point out that Lulu's role-playing, and her implied changeable states of consciousness are common to trauma, hysteria, dissociated states, and are characteristics that Freud, for example, saw in his hysterical patients. From another perspective, these characteristics are increasingly perceived as a hallmark of postmodernism. I see Wedekind's depiction of Lulu as a precursor to what is now being called a "post-modern consciousness," a perception of individual subjectivity that is not rooted in any particular "grand narrative" (to use Lyotard's phrase.) (Wicke 17).

I believe that this is one of the reasons that Lulu's representation is usually troubling to viewers and critics alike. Who is she? What is she? She is a woman, a prostitute, and yet she has no definable personality. While this might be exciting, it is also disturbing. As Frederick Jameson claims in "Postmodern Consciousness," the post-modern subject is "schizophrenic," uncentered, living in "timeless now, mediated by consumer needs, disintegrating in a succession of instants" (26). Like Jameson's postmodern

subject, Lulu lives ahistorically in the present, a modern actress/dancer with chameleon-like features. Lulu does not portray a coherent individual, but rather represents the individual as a series of roles or changes of costume, responding to different types of male desire: she is the ultimate consumer object. Perhaps we could amend Jameson's terminology and call the post-modern subject "dissociative" or "hysterical," with fragmented personality states existing alongside one another.¹

Lulu responds differently to different desires and rhetorical positions, an activity that Hofmannsthal termed "allomatish" (J. Ryan, 1970). This term might be incorporated into a dialogic understanding of subjectivity. A de-centered sense of self/consciousness might imply that the subject in dialogue with another is not static. Each interlocutor changes positions, both subjectively and rhetorically, in relation to the other's responses and reactions. In this way, subjectivity is constantly shifting and becoming.

Lulu presents a series of women to the audience, to her lovers and husbands, as simply as she changes costume and style, but this is all she presents. More concretely, she is represented as a sexual creature, a dancer, a muse -- all standard delineations of woman according to vitalist

¹ How ironic -- the last century termed itself hysterical - and here I am calling identity not "schizophrenic" but hysterical: better to call it dissociated.

tradition. Her representation is further problematized by Wedekind. Her identity as essentially unknowable and uncontainable begins to undermine the idea of representation in general. It is precisely "woman" who represents this difficulty for the artist. Does woman have an essence? Is she the embodiment of "life force," as the title "Erdgeist" [earth spirit] suggests? These questions, which preoccupied Wedekind in the Lulu plays, can be read in a more contemporary fashion. The questions that he asked can be posed in terms of post-modernist considerations of women and subjectivity.

The conception of Lulu as dancer, with its ambiguous characterizations, is linked to Lulu as performer. Seen as a metaphor, performance and role-playing represent the question of "woman's nature." That Lulu is "born to dance," for example, is noteworthy in light of the fact that the hysteric was also regarded as an actress and performer. A Viennese contemporary, Julius Meier-Graefe, wrote of the internationally renowned L  ie Fuller that her artistry consisted in "... allow[ing] herself to be observed" (Graefe 242). Lulu, the performer, like the hysteric, internalizes the spectators' desire and reflects their expectations back to them. The actress becomes what is wanted of her; acting, is, after all, an act. Similarly, doctors in the late 19th century claimed that:

These patients [hysterics] are true actresses;
they know no greater joy than to deceive everyone

they come in contact with. ... The life of the hysteric is nothing other than a continual lie. ... (von Braun 54) .

Actresses and women who portrayed others instead of themselves and who denied their own personality are the models for the hysteric. Lulu is the consummate actress. Characters see her in many roles: Escerny, the displaced aristocrat who appears from the audience watching Lulu dance (in the third act), regards Lulu as "womanly" and "animal-like;" Alwa, brother and artist, finds her "child-like." The first words of Act I, spoken by Schön, Lulu's creator are: "Do you know, I am getting acquainted with a new side of woman" (my emphasis). The artist Schwarz, who eventually marries Lulu, responds: "I have never painted anyone whose expression so continually changed" (11). The play opens with Lulu's portrait-sitting, and her image as Pierrot stands over the scene. As the Pierrot figure she represents art and its embodiment -- the consummate and beautiful actress who is painted at the beginning of the play; she depicts its degradation and commercialization at its conclusion.

The inability to "fix" Lulu's identity is consciously manipulated by Wedekind, especially in his parody of naming, as the following passages makes clear:

Schwarz: Wie ist dir?

Lulu: Als ware ich ins Wasser gefallen...

Schwarz: Ich liebe dich.

Lulu: Ich liebte einmal ienen Studenten.

Schwarz: Nelli ...

Lulu: Mit vierundzwandzig Schmissen...

Schwarz: Ich diebe dich, Nellie.

Lulu: Ich heiße nicht Nelli.

Schwarz: (küßt sie.)

Lulu: Ich heiße Lulu.

Schwarz: Ich werde ich Eva nennen (25-26).

[*Schwarz:* How are you?

Lulu: As if I were falling into water ...

Schwarz: I love you ...

Lulu: I once loved a student.

Schwarz: Nelli ...

Lulu: With twenty-four cuts ...

Schwarz: I love you, Nelli ...

Lulu: I'm not Nelli...

Schwarz: (kisses her.)

Lulu: I'm Lulu.

Schwarz: I'll call you Eva.]

In another passage, Schwarz cannot follow Schön's description of Lulu because he does not understand the reference of Schön's remarks.

Schwarz: Wer denn?

Schön: Wer denn? Deine Frau.

Schwarz: Eva?

Schön: Ich nannte sie Mignon.

Schwarz: Ich meinte, sie hieße Nelli?

Schön: So nannte sie Dr. Goll.

Schwarz: Ich nannte sie Eva.

Schön: Wie sie eigentlich hieß, weiß ich nicht.

Schwarz: Sie weiß es vielleicht (48).

[*Schwarz:* Who then?

Schön: Who? Your wife.

Schwarz: Eva?

Schön: I named her Mignon.

Schwarz: I thought she was called Nelli.

Schön: Dr. Goll called her that.

Schwarz: I called her Eva.

Schön: What she's really called, I don't know.

Schwarz: Perhaps she knows.]

Lulu's father, Schigolch, calls her Lulu, a name which she seems to take as her own, yet she is never decisively named. (Wedekind only uses the terms "nennen" (to call, to name) and "heißen" (to be called, to be) in these sections, never the verb "to be." Lulu never "is" any of these names.) Lulu seems not to care what she is called and her role-playing is ever-present in the play. Alwa notes that Lulu has been accustomed to changing her outfits since childhood; Schwarz says she is "a master of the art." Further, the entirety of Act III takes place at the theater, highlighting the theatricality and role-playing inherent in Lulu's presentation.

If woman is her appearance and plays many roles, then, argued physicians and philosophers, she lacks a central core

or personality. This deficiency is linked to hysteria, the woman's illness *par excellence*. At the turn-of-the-century, Otto Weininger construed "the feminine" -- with hysteria or prostitution as its logical outcome -- as a gendered disease, analyzing it in social and psychological terms, but in the guise of a biological attack on women. Weininger indicated his particular take on women in terms of truth and falsehood (interesting in light of the fact the Weininger, too, was an avid reader of Nietzsche.) "Ontological mendacity," that is, women's in-born inclination to lie, is especially evident in the hysteric, says Weininger (1903). If a woman has no "self", no stable personality, she can neither recognize nor speak the truth.

We can read this non-identity of being -- Lulu's inability to be the truth or to say the truth -- back into the play. Lulu's truth is unknown, even to herself.

After Lulu's first husband falls dead when he finds Lulu and Schwarz in *delicto flagrante*, Lulu is interrogated by the artist.

Schwarz: Sieh mir in die Augen!

Lulu: Ich sehe mich als Pierrot darin.

....

Schwarz: (hält sie zurück). Eine Frage ...

Lulu: Ich darf ja nicht antworten.

Schwarz: (wieder an der Ottomane). Kannst du die Wahrheit sagen?

Lulu: Ich weiß es nicht.

Schwarz: Glaubst du an einen Schöpfer?

Lulu: Ich weiß es nicht.

Schwarz: Kannst du bei etwas schwören?

Lulu: Ich weiß es nicht. Lassen Sie mich! Sie sind verrückt!

Schwarz: Woran glaubst du denn?

Lulu: Ich weiß es nicht.

Schwarz: Hast du denn keine Seele?

Lulu: Ich weiß es nicht.

Schwarz: Hast du schon einmal geliebt--?

Lulu: Ich weiß es nicht.

Schwarz: Du weiß es nicht!

Lulu: Ich weiß es nicht (29-30).

[*Schwarz:* Look me in the eyes.

Lulu: I see myself as Pierrot in them.

....

Schwarz: (holds her back) One question.

Lulu: I shouldn't answer.

Schwarz: (returning to the ottoman) Can you tell the truth?

Lulu: I don't know.

Schwarz: Do you believe in God?

Lulu: I don't know.

Schwarz: Can you swear by anything?

Lulu: I don't know. Let me go. You're crazy.

Schwarz: What do you believe in?

Lulu: I don't know.

Schwarz: Do you have a soul?

Lulu: I don't know.

Schwarz: Have you ever loved anyone?

Lulu: I don't know.

Schwarz: You don't know!

Lulu: I don't know.

Lulu refuses to define herself, refuses to respond falsely. *She doesn't know*: she can respond neither positively nor negatively. Her truth is her uncertainty, and is disturbing to others. Lulu doesn't question her own identity; that is left to the men in her life.

Wedekind uses many techniques, including role-playing, costume changes, the shifting of gender boundaries, (especially in the Parisian bordello scene, where everything and everyone is for sale), to produce the effect of a personality without a core. She and the Countess Geschwitz change places in prison in order to mask Lulu's identity so that she can escape. She continually changes costumes, not necessarily in order to conceal her identity, but rather to reveal new aspects of her personality. Near the end of "Erdgeist," Lulu entertains a number of male admirers in her suite. Their identities are hidden by more traditional theatrical ploys: they hide under tables, behind curtains and dress as servants to avoid being seen by Lulu's husband, Schön. Lulu's personality changes from harsh to appealing. Her responses are disconnected from the pandemonium and affect of the scene. When Schön sees Rodrigo's movement

behind a curtain, Lulu merely replies, "He's an acrobat." Schön accuses her of being a "wretched creature," and Lulu blames him: "Why didn't you raise me better?" Enraged, Schön curses his life with a deceitful woman, saying "I asked nothing in return." Lulu addresses the financial worry in his lament, "I can be your security," and then immediately asks him: "How do you like my new dress?" Economic viability and sexual possession are not to be disentangled. As the scene hurdles to a close before Lulu grabs the revolver from Schön and kills him, she uncharacteristically sits on the divan, exhausted. Her function as beautiful object is at an end.

The logic of pent-up energy and sexuality implied, in scientific theories of the time, that that same energy would be expended quickly. Thus, Dijkstra points out that the "inevitable outcome of all this frantic dancing" was a foregone conclusion: physical exhaustion, which was that of the hysteric or neurasthenic (248). The frenzy of the dancer also implied its obvious link to nymphomania, which, like dance, quickly over-excited and over-used the nerves. The energy available for sexuality could easily lead to real physical exhaustion and even death. While Freud does not link sexual energy to death in this way, he does, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, for example, postulate that sexual energy is linked to death through a turning around of sexuality onto the subject's body or psyche. He, too, saw libidinal energy as a static quantity, capable of being used

up.

Lulu's exhaustion indicates the collapse of the object's efficacy, the depletion of woman's figural usefulness within the text of "Erdgeist." "Shut up and kill me," Lulu says at this point. From this moment on, Lulu's sexual identity is one of crass commercialization, her allure as vital figure is severely curtailed. One level of textual meaning has been consumed. But the double play moves on. In "The Box of Pandora," Lulu briefly rallies and the figure of woman is again energized until she is murdered. At the end of the play, the figure of woman -- Lulu -- is exterminated. What is a woman? Only her genitals remain -- that, and her portrait as Pierrot: woman maintains a function as sexual and aesthetic object.

As we have seen in the works of Barbey D'Aurevilly and Huysmans, as well as in the scientific discourse of Charcot, the woman's figure is often stilled or silenced, in spite of initial movement. The same type of narrative action takes place in Wedekind's text. Part of this impetus comes from the confusing use of the dancer/performer to represent woman. For performance *per se* is an attempt to make a spectacle of the human body, and although nineteenth century theater expected the woman to portray the fluid, organic, "natural" woman, it also demanded that they present themselves as pure spectacle, as statues, as objects to be contemplated and which by their pure "sublime fixity of attitude" could inspire the audience (Stokes 8). Thus, as

Stokes points out, woman as statue posed a challenge to sexual identity, because as a statue she might be "placid, contained and inspiring, or intransigent, permanent, accusing and unanswerable" (8). This ambiguity within the spectacle of the dancer and performer, coupled with the vital energy of her sexuality, created a real confusion about how to represent women, and what (or who) it was that was being represented.

Wedekind's portrayal of Lulu participates in a discourse that does not quite know how to fashion the "feminine." Her lovers believe her to be a seductive, as well as a good-hearted woman, yet, she says, "I am neither the one nor the other; it is ... bad luck to believe I am one of them" (71). She believes in the surface, in style, as might a Nietzschean figure.

Lulu's husbands die because they believe in their own "truth" about woman: "He loves me, but he doesn't know me. ..." says Lulu of Schwarz (43). Their "will to truth" is an illusion that stabilizes their own beliefs and secure their phantasies. It has no bearing on what Lulu is (not): her husbands do not believe her even when she tries to tell them. Man sees the style, clothes and actions of the woman, and believes in it; Lulu sees style as something to manipulate, not as truth.

Contemporary French feminist Luce Irigaray's analysis of woman and truth is based on Nietzsche's reading of the "surface." Her ideas are relevant here, because she

questions the philosopher's use of woman as a trope. Like Nietzsche, she rejects the idea that "essential truth" is what is found "underneath," (the clothing, the skin, language) and like Nietzsche (perhaps like Wedekind as well) rejects depth and stays with the surface as an alternative truth. If woman herself is represented as another "truth", then that truth, according to Nietzsche and feminist Irigaray, would have to be manifold, not a singular essence. She asks, "Could a female imaginary represent itself ... in the form of one universe? Would it ever be volume instead of surface? No" (Ferguson 30).¹⁰

Truth, in other words, is not "one universe," even if that truth, as Wedekind tries to explore it, is an energistic sexuality, even pan-sexuality. In a certain sense, Wedekind tries to expand the "known" universe of essential female qualities by refusing to encapsulate Lulu in a rigid view of the feminine, and his energistic characterization of Lulu might conceivably augment an essentialism based on sexual identity. Yet female sexuality can only be represented by Wedekind in the guise of the prostitute, the dancer and performer -- all forms of femininity implicated in male desire and commodification.

Lulu's "I don't know who I am" poses a threat to a man whose own identity is formed only in relation to its opposite, a woman. Wedekind's text begins with ambiguity: woman is multiple, multifaceted, and she is changeable and vital. However, by the end of the drama, Wedekind's text

culminates in a constricted representation of woman -- whatever else woman may be, she is ultimately defined as a sexual being. Even though Wedekind tries to characterize Lulu as an indefinable substance, a vitalistic force or power, he falls back on biological and sexual categories. Wedekind's Lulu is sexual, but she is never presented as anything but an enigmatic exterior, a woman lacking a self, a woman playing many roles, but without a center. Lulu is a "hole," a Pandora's "box." Her ultimate exhaustion as literary figure comes to an end when Jack the Ripper reduces her to her genitals.

III. A Modern Lulu

I would like to turn briefly to Cathy Acker's 1986 novel, Don Quixote, as a post-modern perspective on the problem of female identity and sexuality. Acker radicalizes (among other texts) Wedekind's Lulu, in her attempt to feminize, hystericize and fragment the representation of women and Lulu. The differences between the two texts of Lulu locate not only real divergences between the modernist and post-modernist texts, but also shows the limits of Wedekind's Lulu as a representation of woman or of a radical identity.

In Acker's narrative, the initially anonymous heroine sets out to find her own truth, and "save the world" in the process. "This is a vision. In English and most European societies, when a woman becomes a knight, being no longer

anonymous she receives a name. She's able to have adventures and save the world" (11). Since Wedekind's Lulu has no name nor subjectivity of her own, Acker might see this as a reason for her inability to take action.

Acker's Don Quixote, like Wedekind's Lulu, has no real past, at least no past that is narratable. The novel begins with "Don" seeking an abortion, and she must make sense of her questionable identity, her subjectivity and even her gender. Although Acker's narrative lacks an originary moment, as does Wedekind's, Acker's Don is motivated to "find herself." The novel is a parody of the male-inspired "Bildungsroman" in a way that Lulu is not. The self that Don Quixote finds, however, is not the nostalgic self portrayed by a Romantic fictional hero such as Rousseau's Jean-Jacques or Sartre's moi, nor is it the naturalist depiction of the sexualized woman's downfall. Rather, the self that "finds itself" is a multiple one, a self that relates its construction to the bourgeois and post-industrialist world in which it finds itself, a self with many identities, more than one gender, with even, one can say, a trans-species identity. Much more radical than Virginia Woolf's trans-gendered hero/ine of Orlando, Acker's Don Quixote overtly questions hetero- and homosexuality, love, and, most of all, the texts that have informed and shaped the reader's and writer's response to these questions.

Don Quixote is made up of a quest for love, and it

appropriates, in its search, male texts that have been taken as responses to women. In this novel, "Lulu" is just one of other parodic incursions into male texts. As the epigraph introduces the section reads,

BEING DEAD, DON QUIXOTE COULD NO LONGER SPEAK.
 BEING BORN INTO AND PART OF A MALE WORLD, SHE HAD
 NO SPEECH OF HER OWN. ALL SHE COULD DO WAS READ
 MALE TEXTS WHICH WEREN'T HERS.

The idea of parody and mimesis has been appropriated by feminists in order to use language against the "master," to point out its limits and the way it excludes women.

To play with mimesis is ... for a woman, to try and reown the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it ... to make "visible", by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible (Irigaray 268).

Acker has significantly altered Wedekind's text, but it is plainly a play on Wedekind. Acker's "Lulu" section highlights woman as sexual commodity and object of patriarchal desire. She exaggerates the economic distortions of desire that fuel the "Box of Pandora," rather than the first play, "Erdgeist." In Acker's reading, Schön wants only to control Lulu and is never interested in Lulu as an individual or as a woman. Schön, the capitalist, has regard only for his possessions and status. When he sees Lulu and his son, Alwa, kissing, the following scene

unfolds:

Lulu: Daddy, what's wrong? What are you
 looking at?

Schön: I neither cry nor speak a word, nor will
 I, until a new sun looks down upon a
 cleaned-out world.

Lulu: I'd feel better if you'd show your
 anger, if you'd take your anger out on
 me. If you'd punish me. If you'd touch
 me. How many times have you told me
 that I am only cause of you; by the
 grace of your tongue I have a name, by
 your money's power I am clothed. Justly
 punish me. Strip me! There's nothing in
 this existence I want. (The two men are
 watching her as if she's their
 stripper.)

Schön: You're a stranger to everything decent;
 your flesh is corruption. I don't know
 why this very earth (his foot strikes
 either concrete or plastic) tolerates
 your presence on it. Always, Lulu,
 you have been a piece of shit. You were
 always unlike every other person. You
 did everything wrong. You are
 genetically wrong. Your very being is
 proof that you should die (88).

In these lines, Acker captures many of the underlying themes of Wedekind's Lulu: the fact that Lulu loves Schön while he uses her; the decadent/naturalist motif of women's genetic inferiority; and the powerful idea that Lulu exists only because she has been bought, educated and given an identity by the patriarch, Schön. Yet Lulu alters herself in compliance with her master and owner, Dr. Schön, just as does Wedekind's Lulu. Lulu and art are both used for male desire; in Acker's reading of Lulu, control and ownership are the motives of both art and sexuality. Acker presents us with Lulu being bought by Schön (a scene which Wedekind does not present) and shows how she is subsequently transformed into a bejeweled and spectacular object. Schön is named "The Creator" and Lulu "The Creation." Lulu is useful to her Creator only as long as she is an obedient, beautiful, but silent subject. As soon as Lulu learns to speak English correctly (with a nod to "My Fair Lady"), she begins to think and question her fate. She forms an identity in loneliness and in speech. Lulu finally comes into a consciousness of her own, kills Schön and is imprisoned.

Unlike Wedekind's Lulu, Acker gives voice to Lulu's forced sexualization and commodification; she gives language to Lulu. Significantly, Wedekind's Lulu is never alone and never speaks alone; she is never given a monologue. Language leads to memory; Acker does give Lulu a brief memory of her childhood, a mother, and a fantastical past in

Spain, where Don Quixote dwelt. "If memories are reality, this world is a prison," she says. She escapes from her prison of memory into the world. "Now I am going to travel."

Through her use of parody, Acker tries to present a woman with no fixed identity, more truly a hysteric than Wedekind's Lulu. Her heroine has much more in common with the subjectivity described by Jameson as schizophrenic than Wedekind's somewhat shiftingly-defined dancer. As the critic Gabrielle Dane comments about another of Acker's novels, "... Acker borrows the chaotic psychic dis-order of hysteria in order to lodge an 'hysterical' protest" against the world of late capitalism" (Dane 250). Her protest against patriarchal language creates a stronger character than Wedekind's Lulu, who is murdered, after all. "Playing around with the Father's tongue, subverting accepted notions of linguistic structure and narrative technique, Acker offers options, employing multiple voices, shifting personas, schizophrenic literary forms and deliberate literary pilfering..." (Dane 251).

Acker plainly tries to appropriate a language, tries to make it her own, make it "feminine." While I do not believe that she succeeds, I do think that her attempt does point to the ways in which different texts and discourses are involved in creating personal and cultural identities. Her Don Quixote, and the Lulu within in, illuminates aspects of Wedekind's text that he, too, seemed to have found

problematic: the relationship between sexuality and its commodification.

If we turn back to Acker's *Lulu*, we can see a significant difference between the two "Lulu" texts. Cathy Acker's text takes us far beyond Wedekind's. Her *Lulu* is never confined to one identity: she becomes a man, a dog; gender and biological sexual identity do not bind her to a specific subjectivity. Like Irigaray's subject, Acker's woman "...has sex organs more or less everywhere," meaning, perhaps, she is never to be identified with sexual identity nor with gender (Berg 65).¹¹

One might say that Acker's novel begins with a representation of a single woman and tries to show how identity is actually diffuse, fragmented, even hysterical. Wedekind's text takes the idea of the "essential" woman and tries to depict her in one figure. How is a woman represented? Wedekind's *Lulu* enacts what men want her to become -- she acts -- but she does not become that individual. In *Lulu*, this leads to the loss of particular individuality, even to the murder of the individual. That is, Wedekind's text is still caught in the modernist experience of subjective and cultural loss and alienation.

In another sense, Judith Butler argues that identity is a performance, not a state of being. Identity is an activity, a presentation that one learns and adopts from one's culture and desire. A post-modern conception of individuality does not necessarily lament the loss of

subjective cohesion, but rather pushes something like Wedekind's conception of vital enactment to an extreme. This does not imply that individuality is somehow false, but rather that it is not necessarily definite and stable. One does not necessarily "don" a personality at will, nor are cultural demands or injunctions always consciously or in/voluntarily assumed or repressed by any individual. It does imply that the individual is a process of becoming and that it takes its shape in response and in accordance with the desire of culture and other individuals.

IV. Conclusion

A post-modern conception of individuality is, in one sense, congruent with states of dissociation, such as Wedekind presents with Lulu. Vitalism, presenting sexuality as its core impulse, could be explored as a heightened sexuality, or even a pathology, when applied to particular individuals or characters. Thus, vitalism, although a decidedly modernist conception of individuality and energy, holds within it implications for a post-modernist discussion of subjectivity.

Both a fragmentary sense of self-identity and hyper-sexuality are part of Lulu's representation, and, I have argued, there is no clear "self" to discern. If one argues for a post-modernist view of Lulu's representation, one might run the risk of siding with a view that begins to extinguish the woman. Post-modernism, some feminist critics claim, valorizes the loss of subjectivity just as women are

beginning to present and identify themselves as subjects (Di Stefano, 1990). One modern feminist asks: "If we are encouraged to embrace fractured identities, we are inevitably drawn to the forbidden question: Fractured with respect to what? ... the post-modernist prohibition against subject-centered inquiry and theory undermines the legitimacy of a broad-based organized movement ..." (76). The disparagement of the coherent, rational ego in favor of a dissociated one(s) might be viewed critically in a climate of politically and culturally repressive impulses. Indeed, that dissociative states, linked to sexual trauma and incest are valorized at all in some quarters, might give us pause to consider the ramifications, if not the motivation, behind such desire.

The idea of dissociated states is not unrelated to the political considerations involved in rejecting patriarchal assumptions about the woman's body -- rape or incest, for example. After all, dissociated states are the common effects of male territorial rights inflicted upon the female body. The woman's body is commodified and sexualized in particular ways by male desire. Wedekind's Lulu certainly exemplifies this: her desire is not heeded; her truth is ignored. One desire, one law is effected -- again the unitary -- and the result is Lulu's fragmentation and non-identity.

Yet as a trope, a figure of truth's radical instability, woman -- and Lulu -- functions positively in

Wedekind's text to undermine traditional literary representations of woman. Paradoxically, however, Lulu's particular representation succumbs to the typical literary end of woman. Wedekind's text cannot but repeat her death and dispersal. Wedekind may question his inability to represent woman, but then his text stumbles upon the problematics that arise from his own patriarchal assumptions of the feminine.

Lulu presents many of the problems of hysteria that I have discussed in the previous chapters. Lulu is desired by the men around her, and she responds to them sexually. Her own desires are formed by theirs, even as she assumes them as her own. Language, self-identity and representation are posed in a dramatic setting, making the theatricality of hysteria explicit. From fascinating object in first play, Lulu ends up a literal fetish for the male characters, affirming their violent, sexual and powerful identity. The patriarchal need to stabilize identity, to literalize "truth" and to see it as sexual all coalesce in this last scene, as Lulu is viciously murdered by Jack.

Perhaps Lulu's "truth" threatens the fiction of a cohesive self, or of a contained heterosexual, male, identity; her truth threatens male power. Perhaps that truth needs to be cut out or repressed by patriarchal culture. And it is, by Jack the Ripper in the "Box of Pandora." Lulu, like the hysteric, is intimately connected to male desire.

CHAPTER VII: ENDNOTES

1. My references to "Lulu" will refer to Frank Wedekind, Lulu: Erdgeist and Die Büchse der Pandora. All translations mine. See bibliography.
2. Kutscher quoted in Muylaert, L'image de la femme.
3. See Elizabeth Boa, Sexual Circus.
4. Wedekind quoted in Muylaert, L'image de la femme.
5. Alfred Mombert qtd. in Jost Hermand, Das Schein des schönen Lebens. My translation.
6. Hermann Bahr quoted in Larwence Ryan, "Jahrhundertwende."
7. Rilke's famous "Spanische Tänzerin" is another example of how movement and body were integrated -- in art. "As on all its sides a kitchen-match darts white/flickering tongues before it bursts into flame:/with the audience around her, quickened, hot,/her dance begins to flicker in the dark room./And all at once it is completely fire." See The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, tr. Stephen Mitchell.
8. Baudelaire quoted in Charles Bernheimer, Figures of Ill Repute.
9. See Wedekind's many references in Frank Wedekind, Tagebücher.
10. Luce Irigaray qtd. in Ferguson, 328.
11. Irigaray, "This Sex which is not One," quoted in Berg, 65.



Figure 1: Charcot lecturing
at Salpêtrière



Figure 2: "Ver Sacrum," 1898

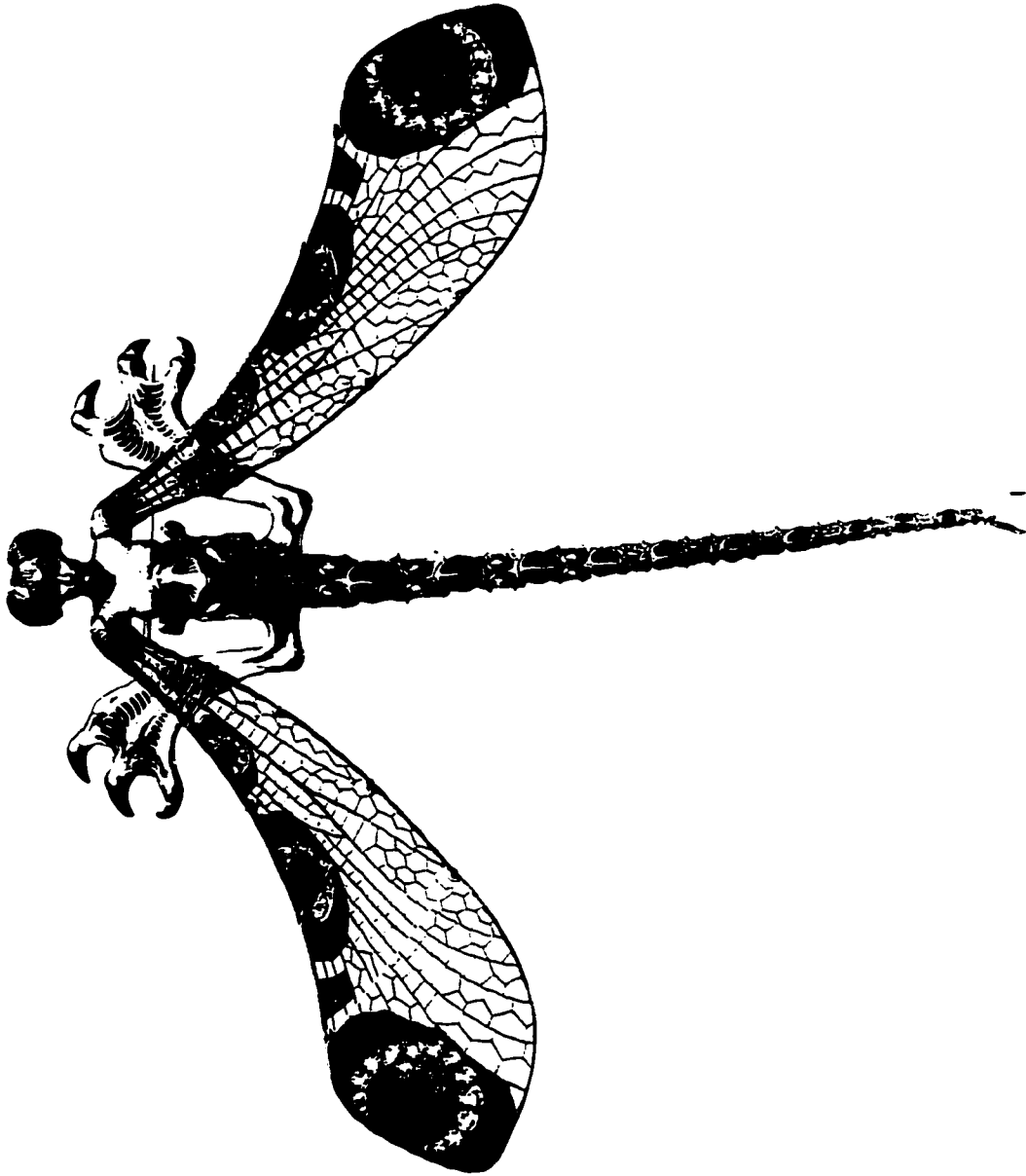


Figure 3: Laiique pendant



Figure 4: Klimt, "Nuda Veritas"



Figure 5: Klimt, "Nuda Veritas,"
1899



Figure 6: Augustine, "Contracture"

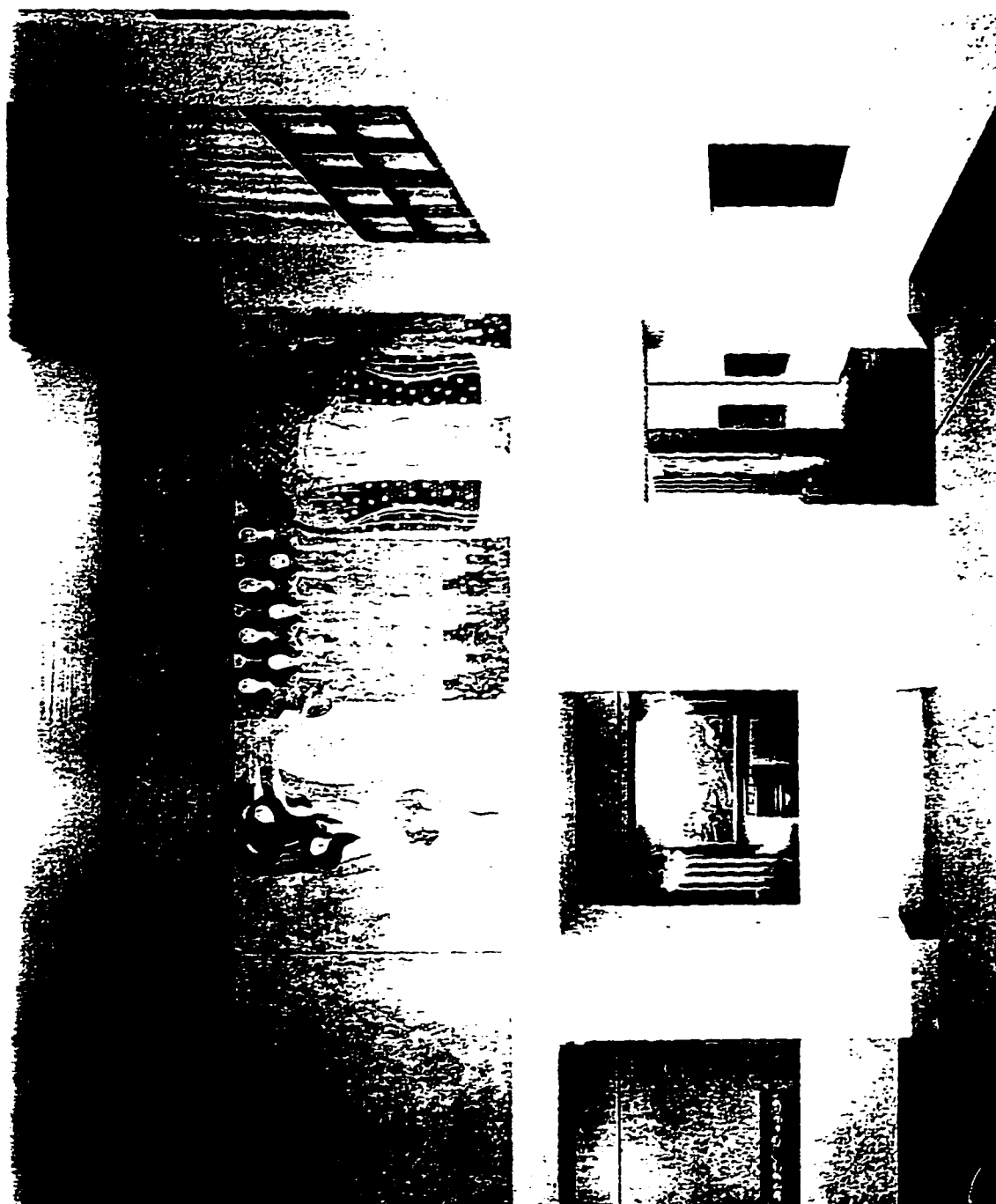


Figure 7: Klimt, "Beethoven Friseur," 1902



Figure 8: Klimt, "Three Gorgons:
Beethoven Frieze," 1902

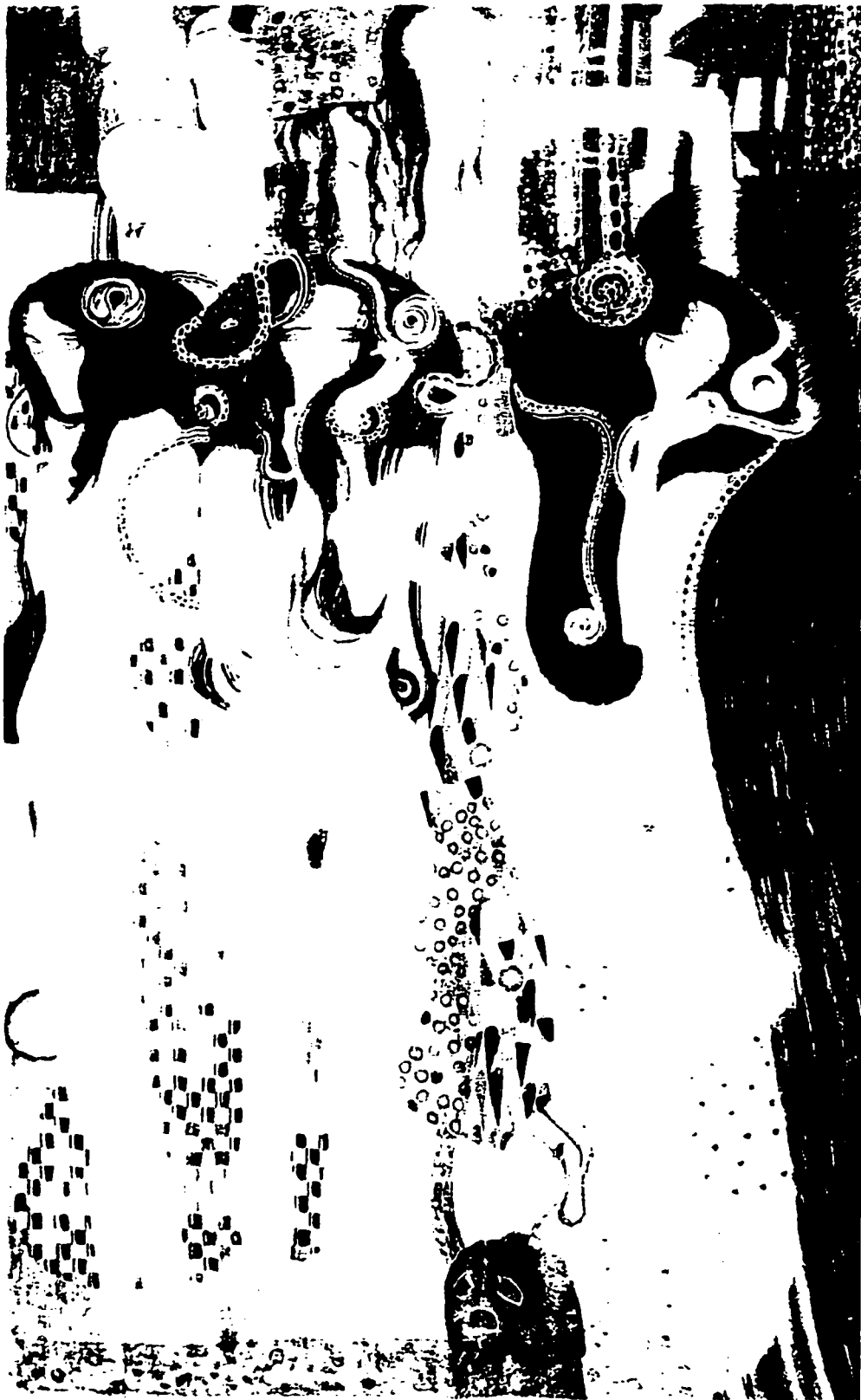


Figure 9: Klimt, "The Three Gorgons"



Figure 10: Klimt, "Water Serpents I"



Figure 11: Klimt, "Gold Fish"



Figure 12: Klimt, "Danae"

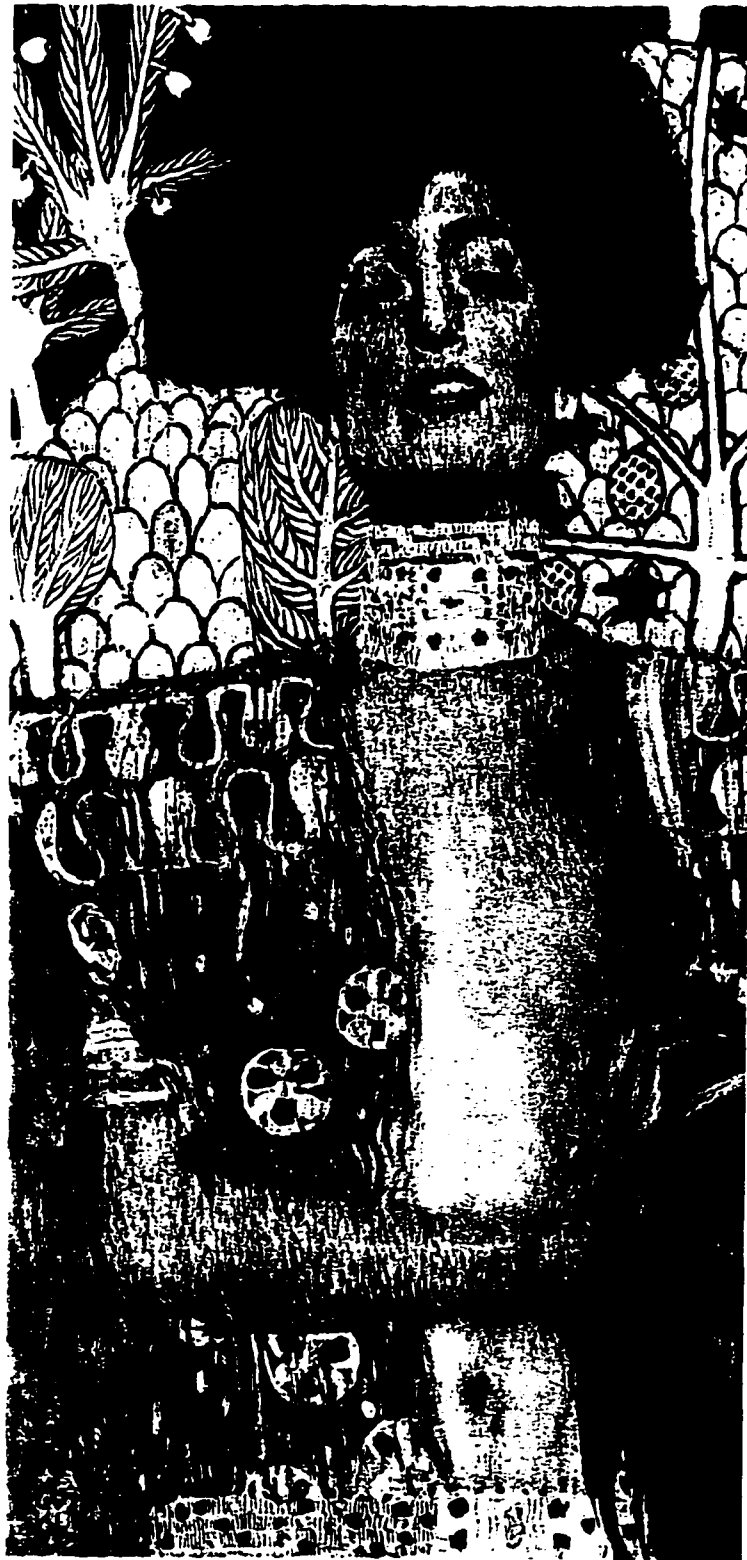


Figure 13: Klimt, "Judith I"



Figure 14: Klimt, "Judith II"



Figure 15: Klimt, Emilie Flöge"



Figure 16: Klimt, "Adele Bloch-Bauer I"



Figure 17: Klimt, "Fritza Riedler"



Figure 18: Klimt, "Anticipation"



Figure 19: Herbert, "Ophelia "



Figure 20: Falkenberg, "Ophelia"



Figure 21: An Ophelia in Surrey
Asylum



FIG. 1



FIG. 2



Figure 22: Blanche Witte,
"Suggestion"
(4 plates)



Figure 23: Augustine, "Ecstase"



Figure 24: Augustine,
"Hallucination"



Figure 25: Augustine, "Menace"



Figure 26: Augustine, "Debut
d'une attaque: Cri"



Figure 27: Kokoschka, "Frauenmord"



Figure 28: Kokoschka: "Mörder Hoffnung Der Frauen"

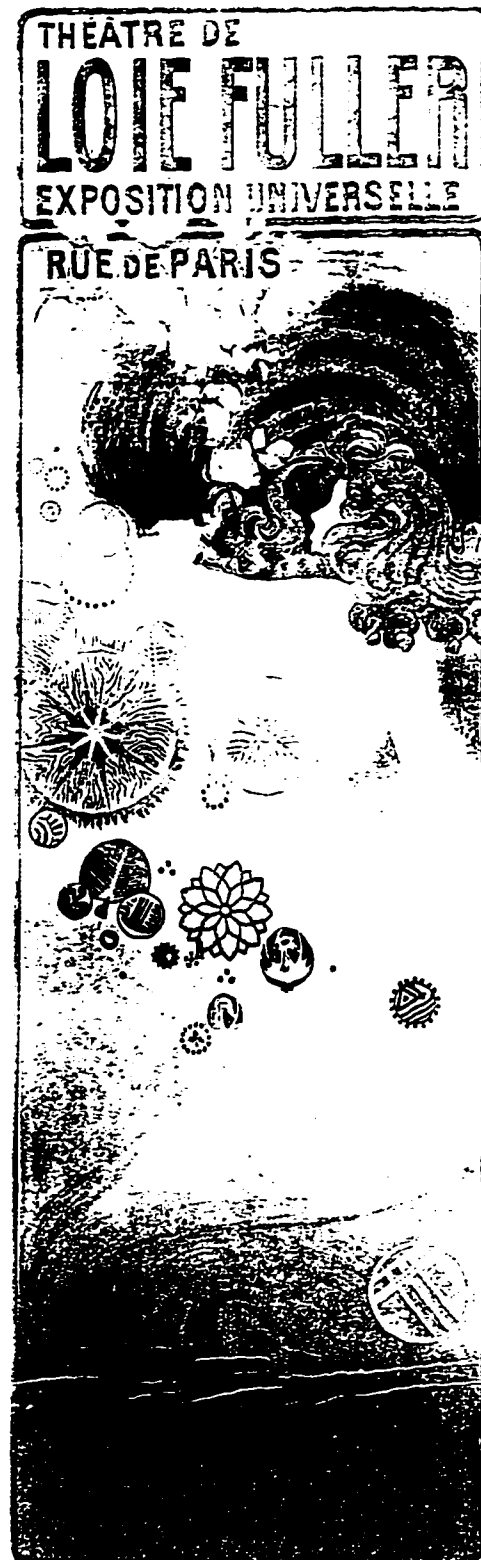


Figure 29: Orazi, "Louie Fuller,"
1900

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