UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

The Architecture of Homelessness:
Space, Marginality, and Exile in Modern French and Japanese Literature and Film

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

by

Jane Ramey Correia

June 2011

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Michelle Bloom, Chairperson
Dr. Heidi Brevik-Zender
Dr. Sabine Doran
Dr. James Fujii

The Dissertation of Jane Ramey Correia is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgements

I would especially like to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Michelle Bloom. Without her guidance, encouragement, insightful criticism, and kind prodding, this project would not have been completed. She has championed my studies from the beginning. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee, Drs. Sabine Doran and Heidi Brevik-Zender of UC Riverside and Dr. James Fujii of UC Irvine, for their time and help editing my chapters as well as for their encouragement and support. I am grateful to Dr. Theda Shapiro, who has been a wonderful mentor and helped guide my studies since I first came to UC Riverside in September 2003; Drs. John Ganim and Michael Foster, who early on assisted me in formulating my project around the topics of liminality and spatial studies; Dr. Thomas Scanlon, chair of my Comparative Literature Department, who afforded me numerous teaching opportunities as well as fellowships to aid in my writing; and Dr. Yang Ye, who gave me the wonderful experience of being a teaching assistant in his comparative world literature class. I also extend my appreciation to Cambridge Scholars Press who is currently publishing an earlier version of Chapter 4 of this dissertation and to Timo Trevisani for helping me translate a German passage by Walter Benjamin. I am grateful to my husband, Ravi, my mother, Ellen, and my sister, Anne, for their unending love, encouragement, and support.

—Jane Ramey Correia

May 17, 2011

To my father, Lionel Correia, Jr., and my grandmother, Julia M. Ramey

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Jane Ramey Correia

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My dissertation, "The Architecture of Homelessness: Space, Marginality, and Exile in Modern French and Japanese Literature and Film," explores the literature of marginality in the age of rampant urban growth and development, initially during the Haussmannization of Paris and during Meiji Japan. Both cross-cultural and interdisciplinary, my project compares the liminal aspects of the architecture of two vastly different metropolises, Paris and Tokyo, through representations in literature and film. In addition, it reaches back in time to mid-nineteenth century and stretches forward to modern day.

The opening chapters analyze works by writers Emile Zola, Higuchi Ichiyō, and Shimazaki Tōson, who captured their respective countries' urban transformation as it was occurring and simultaneously represented the lives of people, especially the lower classes, marginalized by this exponential growth. In these chapters I argue that the liminal space left over from newly built architecture and the space on the edge of

mainstream society becomes "home" to those displaced persons. This process of urbanization and the subsequent marginalization of its minorities irrevocably bind these two nations together.

While my first three chapters concentrate on the rapid urbanization of Paris and Tokyo as represented in literature, in the final chapter, I articulate the way in which homelessness is depicted on film in France and Japan through cinematic analysis of five films: Akira Kurosawa's *Rashōmon* and *Dodesukaden*, Eric Rohmer's *Le Signe du Lion*, Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine*, and Abdellatif Kechiche's *L'Esquive*. I argue that these four filmmakers, in the style of Naficy's "exile cinema," confront this taboo topic in their texts by bringing the problem of urban failure to the public's consciousness.

Rather than mental illness, addiction, poverty, or ill-fated fortunes, I propose that the central problem of homelessness rests with an individual's alienation from his or her community or in-group. Homelessness, urban living, and marginal spaces are not particular to any one city. My project moves away from East-West dualism and area studies to explore global concepts of space, the effects of rapid urbanization at its onset and today, and the problem of homelessness, which has no boundaries.

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Introduction

Liminality

In this dissertation I explore the literature of marginality[1] in the age of rampant urban growth and development, initially during the Haussmannization of Paris and during Meiji Japan. Both cross-cultural and interdisciplinary, my project compares the liminal aspects of the architecture of two vastly different metropolises, Paris and Tokyo, through representations in literature and film. In addition, the project reaches back in time to the mid-nineteenth century and stretches forward to the modern day. I argue that urban life alienates the poor and minorities, and the marginalized are often found exiled to "unbuilt," liminal places, just outside the spaces that people call home. I use the texts of David Harvey and Maeda Ai (spatial studies), Sharon Zukin and Hamid Naficy (displacement and marginality), and Victor Turner and Paul Anderer (liminality) among others to provide the theoretical framework for this project.

The contrast between built and unbuilt places looms large in literature particularly in the late nineteenth century. The space left over from newly built architecture and the space just outside becomes "home" to displaced persons, who were left homeless by a city's newly constructed, uniform façade and highly controlled social environment. This similar process of urbanization and the subsequent marginalization of minorities in Japan

[1] That is, the literature of those living on the margins of society.

and France irrevocably bind these two nations together. In addition, representations of the exiled people – images of people creeping in the streets, of people caught between city and country and between an agricultural past and an industrial future, of vagrants picking through trashcans, of the homeless going to desperate measures to survive as well as to assert themselves – are common to the cityscape of both countries. Zola's novel *Pot-Bouille* (1882) describes the activities of their interiors and the highly rigidified society that entraps its inhabitants. Zola also examines those who live in the large, prison-like tenements cropping up on the periphery in mid-nineteenth century Paris in *L'Assommoir* (1877). Ichiyō's Meiji period (1868-1912) stories "Jûsan'ya" (1895) ("The Thirteenth Night") and *Takekurabe* (1896) (*Child's Play*) champion the struggles of women and the poor in Meiji Japan by depicting their attempts to overcome strict social classes and societal norms. Tōson's *Hakai* (1906) (*The Broken Commandment*) expresses the suffering of the *burakumin,* descendents of the lowest class who worked in animal slaughter and unskilled labor, who are excluded from the Japanese majority.

While the first three chapters concentrate on the rapid urbanization of Paris and Tokyo and marginalization of their inhabitants as represented in literature, in the final chapter, I articulate the way in which homelessness is depicted on film in France and Japan through cinematic analyses of five films: Akira Kurosawa's *Rashōmon* (1950) and *Dodesukaden* (1970), Eric Rohmer's *Le Signe du Lion* (1959), Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (1995), and Abdellatif Kechiche's *L'Esquive* (2005). Homelessness, one significant instance of urban failure, is characterized by an existence in liminal space, on the edge of defined architectural structures, and yet still governed by social norms. Urban

failure begins at forgotten, purposefully over-looked places in the city: in subway stairwells, beneath freeway overpasses, at the periphery of clearly defined neighborhoods. These places of juncture, liminal spaces, provide housing for the transient and homeless. I argue that these three transnational filmmakers, in the style of Naficy's "exile cinema," confront this taboo topic in their texts by bringing the problem of urban failure to the public's consciousness. While the directors approach homelessness from the differing angles of social justice, poverty, and vagrancy, I suggest that they create a fascinatingly similar picture of the homeless and the liminal places in which they live.

The fundamental cause of homelessness is most often an individual's alienation from his or her community or in-group, not mental illness, addiction, poverty, or ill-fated fortunes. The failure of the community to support or even recognize the individual allows the victimized homeless population to grow exponentially and forces society to become increasingly fragmented and disjointed. Yet, the impoverished, the disadvantaged, and minorities are always part of society and can never be erased, even when living in the liminal peripheries and crevices of modern cities. Homelessness, urban living, and marginal spaces are not particular to any one city. My project moves away from East-West dualism and area studies to explore universal concepts of space, the effects of rapid urbanization at its onset and today, and the problem of homelessness, which has no boundaries.

Aesthetic Traditions and Naturalism

While my goal is to stress the similarities between cultures, to bridge gaps, and to break down area studies by tackling the global social problem of homelessness, I would be remiss not to mention that Japan and France come from diverse aesthetic and cultural traditions with deeply different historical pasts. One particular difference that is relevant to this project are the differing forms of Naturalism that occur in France in the second half of the nineteenth century and in Japan at the turn of the twentieth century.

Naturalism in France, during the late 1800s, stresses hereditary and environmental influences on human beings. Emile Zola and his writings are at the forefront of this movement. For example, in his novel *L'Assommoir*, he explores the Parisian faubourgs and the effects of alcoholism and domestic abuse on his characters, as I address in Chapter 2. We see the characters, especially the protagonist Gervaise, repeat the same self-destructive patterns, which Zola suggests is part of her genes and embellished by her environment. She cannot escape her miserable fate. This quasi-scientific naturalism is very different from the naturalist movement in Japan during the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) and Taishō Period (1912-1926).

Japanese naturalism "emphasized the search for the individual self" (Suzuki 2) and often explores an individual's relation to society, specifically in how natural urges and tendencies conflict with social norms.[2] Considered a forerunner in Japanese naturalism, Katai Tayama (1872-1930) was influenced by Western writers and he did appreciate Zola's ability to show nature's "raw" and sublime side; however, Nietzsche,

[2] For more on Japanese Naturalism and the I-novel, see Tomi Suzuki's *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* and Edward Fowler's *Rhetoric of Confession.*

Maupassant, Rousseau, and others interested Katai more. Drawn to the idea of a person's natural essence, Katai saw "man" as being essentially natural while society was unnatural and controlling, restricting man's freedom. Katai's belief in the individual rather than the collective whole was new to Japan after the Tokugawa period and centuries of Confucianism, according to Kenneth Henshall. However, Katai himself had doubts about his beliefs. Since society is composed of natural people, why should it seem so restrictive? In addition, with the deaths of several members of his family, he saw the cruel side of the natural world as well. His writing, therefore, is criticized for not seeming certain in its beliefs.

Katai also read and was influenced by Turgenev and his idea of the superfluous man. He felt a certain affinity toward this tragic figure because he recognized that no one wanted to be him and yet everyone could see a little bit of the superfluous person in himself. Therefore, Japanese naturalism seemed in many ways closer to European Romanticism concerning Nietzsche and Rousseau's emphasis on the individual mind and its communion with nature. Katai wanted to show the truth of the world and believed that it was more interesting and revealing that any fiction. His novels seek to honestly represent the individual in his environment. He believed that the writer's only task was to record the events of his own life faithfully. Moreover, one should write about what really happened, especially if it seems unnatural, rather than trying to create natural sounding fiction.

Just a year before Katai Tayama published *Futon* (1907), Shimazaki Tōson published *Hakai*, or *The Broken Commandment* (1906). In contrast to Katai's goal to

authentically portray *only* personal real life events, Tōson's approach is more varied and complex. While offering detailed personal accounts, Tōson addresses deep-rooted social issues in Japanese society, critiquing the government and social norms. His thoughtful narratives inspire reflection and social change, especially for the plight of the *burakumin*, as I explain in Chapter 3. At this time, during the transitioning Meiji period, modern fiction in Japan contained two possible paths: both socially charged *and* personal narratives such as *Hakai*. Writing about social issues fell out of favor and the *shishosetsu*, or I-novel, which deals almost exclusively with personal accounts, took center stage and continued to gain in popularity through the Taishō Period. Many of Japan's most acclaimed writers composed personal accounts (some to their own detriment) or parodies of the I-novel, including Katai, Tanizaki Jun'ichiro (1886-1965), Mori Ogai (1862-1922), Soseki Natsume (1867-1916), Osamu Dazai (1909-1948), and Oe Kenzaburo (1935-).

Using the only "truth" he knew, Katai portrayed his own life story in his Naturalist novels, especially in *Futon* or *The Quilt* (1906), which is considered to have inspired the I-novels of the 1920s. In the story, Tokio, the protagonist, is bored with his wife, feeling that she is old-fashioned, not intellectual, and submissive. He is overjoyed when Yoshiko, a young, more modern woman, comes to study under him. Katai had the same feelings about his wife, when a young student, Okada Michiyo, came to live with him and learn from him. Tokio and Katai both wish that they could somehow marry their young students, but they cannot follow their natural instincts because they are restricted by society's rules. Katai choose to relate the events of his own personal home life and not in the best of light. Putting down his wife, while revering a young student (a forbidden

love), and showing his problematic emotions to the public showed a certain frankness not known before. Showing the personal struggle between society and the natural desires of the author is one of the central tenets of Japanese naturalism.

Interestingly, Katai's heroes (who represent him) do not overcome society. Katai successfully exposes his unhappiness, a romantic dreaming for life to be other than it is. This idea is quite comparable to French Romanticism and the loneliness and solitude or *melancholie* of its characters. Briefly, in Claire de Duras' *Ourika* the protagonist, Ourika, is immersed in French aristocratic society but she feels extremely isolated because of her black skin. She desperately loves a white man who does not return her love. She must deny her desires in order to survive in French society. However, this denial and her forbidden love leads to an illness and she chooses to retreat to a convent where she can live (and die) in peace. The strength of character and insight that Ourika has is not present in Katai's Tokio. He is a superfluous hero, unable to attain what he desires. The novel ends with him sprawled out and sobbing into the dirty sweaty futon on which Yoshiko used to sleep when she lived in his house[3]. This pathetic scene echoes other similar scenes such as when Tokio is passed out drunk in the toilet or when he is covered in mud and crying on the way to his aunt-in-law's house where Yoshiko stays for awhile. In his quest for his true self, Katai sees only man's helplessness when confronted with societal pressures.

In Japan, Naturalism and the I-novel that grew out of it formed a sharply different fiction than that of Zola's French Naturalism. Zola's Naturalism was situated squarely in

[3] She has since returned to her father's home in the country due to a love affair she had with another student.

Second Empire France and in Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris into a modern, affluent city. Because much of Zola's literature is especially focused on place, environment and social influences are significantly greater parts of his Naturalism. As I describe in the first two chapters, space, namely liminal space, is central in the stories of *Pot-Bouille* and *L'Assommoir* such that the action revolves around Zola's manipulation of space.

Van Gennep's Liminality in Literature

My project hinges upon the concept of liminality as developed by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. While the goal of a liminal passage is to ensure the safe transition from one stable location to the next, when in-between, an individual wavers between two worlds and experiences rootlessness or homelessness. The psychological ramifications of continued exposure or extended living in a liminal location are repeatedly that characters are driven or become insane or die, if they are unsuccessful at rejoining the target community. Failure of transition (from one stable location to the next) isolates the individual and ensnares him or her in a marginal existence. The liminal character becomes a marginal one, permanently on the fringe of society, with little to no hope of inclusion.

Within the pages of this dissertation, I analyze two types of liminal situations: one in which the character is truly passing through a liminal, and supposedly neutral, zone as in *Pot-Bouille*, "Jûsan'ya," and *La Haine*; the other in which the character becomes stuck in the transitional space. These texts include *Dodesukaden*, *Hakai*, *La Haine*, and

L'Esquive. The liminal places in *Takekurabe* and *L'Assommoir* are particular in that they mirror both of these situations to some extent. The locales in the two stories are quickly being urbanized and becoming part of their respective cities, Tokyo and Paris. Moreover, the countries as a whole are transforming; they have new governments, that of Meiji Japan and of Napoleon III's Second Empire in Paris. While the once-liminal environments between city and country undergo drastic transition, the characters become stuck, unable to leave their dire situations.

I have divided this study of liminality into four chapters. In the first chapter I look at the liminal space of the grand stairwell inside one Second Empire apartment house as described by Zola in *Pot-Bouille*. Specifically, I compare how one character, Berthe, exhibits liminal qualities, including nakedness and existence outside of society, during her midnight flight in the staircase. Chapter 2 tackles Zola's *L'Assommoir* and the transitional space of the faubourg nestled in between city and country. Through Zola's descriptions of Haussmann's reconstruction which eventually encapsulated the Parisian outskirts, I study heroine Gervaise's tragic fall and eventual death in a liminal cubbyhole beneath a stairwell. While Gervaise's once transitional neighborhood becomes a stable location and a secure part of Paris, Gervaise is pushed further into the periphery and remains locked in a peripheral world. In both *Pot-Bouille* and *L'Assommoir*, two French Naturalistic texts, Zola emphasizes the effects of environment over and above hereditary influences. Chapter 3 links Japan and France through their public works projects and their rapid urbanization of their capital cities. This chapter also examines the spatial existence during the Meiji restoration as depicted by two authors who concentrated their literary

eye on the marginalized figures of the time. Ichiyō Higuchi and Shimazaki Tōson recognized and created space for otherwise marginalized groups through depictions in their literature. Ichiyō addresses social status and liminality in her short stories, *Takekurabe* and "Jûsan'ya." Tōson attempts to integrate the *burakumin*, the lowest social group, into the community in his novel *Hakai*. Finally, Chapter Four looks at the problem of homelessness, of people permanently trapped in in-between places, in modern day Paris and Tokyo through analysis of five films. Due to the permanence of their in-between situations, these characters are more clearly defined as marginal beings, rather than transitional beings. Marginalization, which is exterior to but never entirely outside the community, consistently results in feelings of loss, alienation, homelessness, and a continued desire to rejoin the group. The desire to rejoin remains from the liminal period when transition was still possible, before the locale had become stable. Characters in both French and Japanese texts repeatedly try to rejoin and assimilate only to fail and sink further into a separate existence.

Van Gennep and Turner's constructions of liminal passages and periods serve as the foundation and starting place for my research. The work of Takeo, Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Emile Zola, and Marguerite Duras underscores the two anthropologists' ideas and better figure their arguments within a literary and filmic space. While van Gennep and Turner's research highlights the rites and rituals particular to liminality, I study the elements of the rites – separation and border crossing, living in liminality, and attempted reintegration – as represented in literature and film.

Van Gennep first coined the term "liminality" in his 1909 groundbreaking study, *Les Rites de Passage*. His text systematically analyzes the rituals that occur at moments of significant change throughout life and the ceremonies that accompany these major changes. He opens his book by noting that whenever an individual experiences a great change in life (gives birth, is born, marries, or becomes a priest), he or she must pass through an intermediate stage, which occupies a sacred sphere. This intermediate or liminal stage is a time of great transformation where the individual sheds an old way of living and prepares for new responsibilities in life. Van Gennep writes: "The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another" (2-3). These transitions occupy the sacred realm and are marked by ceremonies with specific rituals necessary for safe passage from one stage of life to the next. Although van Gennep speaks of sacredness in overtly religious terms, the idea of the sacred stretches to cover special life moments that stand separate from most mundane daily activities rather than only those that involve the divine. His work, therefore, is a detailed study of traversing boundaries, the ceremonies and rituals that accompany changes of place or state, and the notable similarities of the ceremonies in all transgressions of borders.

Never before van Gennep's work has there been a comprehensive classification of these ceremonial patterns, from beginning to end, nor in relation to one another (10). According to van Gennep, he has "tried to assemble here all the ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another. Because of the importance of these transitions, I think it legitimate to

single out *rites of passage* as a special category, which under further analysis may be subdivided into *rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation*" (10-11). He offers three basic examples of these overarching types of rites including funeral ceremonies (separation), pregnancy or betrothal (transition), and marriage (incorporation). Van Gennep details the classification of rites: indirect (prayer) or direct (curse); animistic (personal) or dynamistic (impersonal) rites. During any given passage many different rites can be used. The purpose of *rites of passage* can be individual as in the fertility rites associated with marriage or the protection rites with birth; however, more importantly, the purpose is much farther reaching: the purpose of rites of passage is "to insure a change of condition or a passage from one… group to another" (11). The rites ensure that the change occurs and the passage from one place or condition to another is successful, which implies that the passage may be difficult or dangerous, which underlines the significance of major life changes including birth, marriage, and death. Once the boundary is transgressed, the old life is lost, and, in van Gennep's liminal place, the individual encounters an unfamiliar, unbalanced, in-between state. A liminal place, according to van Gennep, is particularly known for its instability, for its dangerousness, and for the possibility for transformation. Characters in modern literature and film repeatedly encounter these key concepts.

Van Gennep addresses the concept of the territorial passage and the physical crossing of borders: "The frontier, an imaginary line… is visible… only on maps" (15). Van Gennep explains that most often natural boundaries exist between territories such as sacred rocks, trees, or rivers. A boundary cannot be transgressed without enduring

possible supernatural occurrences. Stories of boundary and border crossing are abundant in literary texts. An example of such an event, which supports van Gennep's point, occurs in Chrétien de Troyes' romance *Yvain* dating from the twelfth century. The chevalier Yvain encounters a fountain on his travels. As he travels past it a great storm begins and rages all around him. This magical fountain's storm and the ensuing fight with the great knight of the castle are the markers of the territorial crossing. While the typical themes in the *roman courtois* (stories of the court) include the life of the chevalier, courtly love, magic, the supernatural, and God, *Yvain* also directly addresses issues of boundary. By passing by the magic fountain, Yvain crosses the line into Laudine and her husband's territory. He must fight the knight in order to win entrance to the castle and become part of the new territory. Moreover, after killing Laudine's husband after the storm at the fountain, he marries her and becomes the ruler of the castle and its magic fountain. He must now charge and fight whoever crosses the boundary of the fountain in order to protect his and Laudine's castle.

According to van Gennep, boundary markers extending the length of the territory would not be "natural:" "They are set only at points of passage, on paths and at crossroads" (17). The *octroi* wall around Paris during the medieval period; the Ohaguro moat around the Yoshiwara in Tokyo during the Tokugawa period; the Berlin Wall during the second half of the twentieth century; and the Mexican-American fence are indeed instances of man-made structures marking a boundary in its entirety; however, they are notably rare occurrences. Most often in present day one country directly touches the next, creating only a line of separation. This differs from early history when an area

of neutral ground existed between two countries. While in this neutral zone, an individual "wavers between two worlds" (van Gennep 18). Most of the oceans are considered neutral territory as no one can permanently settle them. Each country's coastal territory stretches only 12 nautical miles into the vast sea. During a plane flight or sea crossing by boat, an individual vacillates between two lands. Great effort has been made by governments to define this in-between passing as concretely as possible;[4] however, no number of socially constructed regulations alters the fact that the plane is crossing a territory owned by no country.

The attempt to govern the in-between arises from a deep-seated psychological fear of the unknown and of instability and from a desire to create a safer environment. The sense of wavering and uncertainty is not easily erased. A certain amount of reflection, acknowledgement, and adjustment must occur when transitioning from one specific socio-political world with certain rules and customs to another. The neutral zone, or liminal space, is essential for this transition.

One modern Japanese writer, Arishima Takeo (1878-1923) neither begins nor ends his stories at a known home. Writing during the late Meiji (1868-1912) and early Taishō (1912-1926) periods, Arishima chooses to leave his characters adrift in liminal space, affording them a sense of freedom as well as an ambiance of anxiety and lack of belonging. Paul Anderer explains in *Other Worlds: Arishima Takeo and the Bounds of Modern Japanese Fiction* (1984): "It is precisely its distance from such a 'country home,'

[4] While flying, the plane is governed by the social rules of the country that the plane is entering: A twenty-year old student can have a glass a wine while traveling to France; however, the student cannot on the return trip to the United States.

its spatial dislocation – a deliberate, often violent, shift of fictional place – which sets Arishima's writing apart" (6). Arishima does step out of the mold of "place-haunted" fiction reigning throughout Japanese history; his stories are never set in a "known and familiar place" (6), and they are often set in an in-between, liminal place such as the ship at sea in the novel *Aru Onna* (1919). In this story, Yoko, the independent, strong-willed protagonist, travels from Tokyo to Seattle to live with her new husband. During the boat ride Yoko feels both trapped in small cabins and free to act as she likes; the trip ends with her affair with Kurachi, who becomes her lover. Upon seeing land in America, Yoko panics and she feels like she is at an abyss. Yoko never successfully accepts moving to America, as witnessed by the affair; the transition period during the neutral zone of the ocean between Tokyo and Seattle does not bring peace to the protagonist and her passing is not successful.

Yoko goes through an internal struggle against her own mind, which she loses (in losing the struggle, she loses her mind). She is lost in her mind and rejected by the predominantly male-dominated society – outside of society. Yoko's "other world" is a myriad of places that all lead nowhere except back to themselves: the maze of the city of Tokyo, the shores of Seattle, the sea and the dark cabins on the ship, her safe house with Kurachi, her lover. Yoko attempts this long circuitous route of self-discovery ending only with a broken mind, in despair, and with eventual death. When she returns to Japan, she no longer feels at home there (it is questionable if she ever did). She seems stuck in a liminal existence without a home.

Homelessness is prevalent and central to Arishima's writings and it requires his characters to be wandering aimlessly and endlessly[5]. The lack of home, of homeland, and of geographical boundaries is what leads to complete disorder. Moreover, without memories from places of childhood, the characters feel ungrounded and lost as Marcel Proust's middle-aged narrator does when he first awakes in the opening of *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913). In fact, it is only in recalling where he is and specific aspects of his childhood that the narrator is calmed and able to start his day. In the end of *Ukigumo* by Futabatei Shimei[6], Bunzō, suffering from a similar lack of sense of home, threatens to leave the house of his relatives. Arishima's characters do not even have a place to leave from, never mind to go to. There is no nostalgic past for them. To explain this point

[5] Marilynne Robinson describes in detail the life of an endless wanderer in her novel, *Housekeeping*; however, two of her characters find it to be preferable. By the end, the cold does not even trouble them. However, they and their lifestyle seem especially foreign to the reader and to most of the other characters in the story. While they are allowed to live this way (mainly because they escape the police), they are not an accepted part of society, especially since a child is persuaded into the life of wandering and homelessness.

[6] Futabatei Shimei's protagonist in his story *Ukigumo* (1887-89) is a superfluous hero. In his novel, using the style of objective realism, Futabatei clearly and honestly illustrates the problems of the Meiji Restoration as the Japanese people attempt to place themselves in this new society. He believes that art must open up new horizons and illuminate the current situation. Because there are many now out-of-work samurai and no more hereditary jobs, there is a competition for a position in the new society. This novel elucidates the contrast between the Edo period samurai values of sincerity, honesty, and restraint with the new attitude of Meiji period of sycophancy, aggressiveness, and hypocrisy. Not that these "negative" values are necessary during this new period, but having them is one effective way to get ahead to be successful in the new bureaucracy, as seen in the character of Noboru. Bunzo, the protagonist, refuses to sacrifice his moral code to be successful at work or in love. He is overly proud and refuses to admit fault. Omasa, the object of his affection, represents the disastrous change from the old ways to the new. During this transition of Japan shedding its traditional values and embracing "modern" Western ones, many young individuals become lost. There is little restraint during this time. Omasa has little respect for anything, is capricious changing her mind easily, is carefree and lacks guidance. Although Bunzo encourages education, her aunt believes only in material wealth, and Omasa is lost in this new world. She has no solid foundation; she wants to be a modern woman but without any specific values, she has no guidance to place herself in the new society.

further, Anderer's analysis of Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, a prominent author during the Taishō and Shōwa (1926-1989) periods, is instructive. Anderer writes: Tanizaki has a "self-conscious concern to arrange everything" (8). For Tanizaki, says Anderer, "any significant breach of artistic decorum is a mistake" (8). The literature of Tanizaki and of most other writers instructs the reader that if one does break with decorum and cultural norms, loss and destruction are inevitable. It is necessary to live a peaceful life within the bounds of known places such as backyard gardens, temples, and country homes[7]. Readers are taught that if one breaks with this tradition, a life of pain and suffering will ensue. The words "loss," "destruction," and also "death" and "defeat" are so closely associated with what is foreign and unknown in literature, it instills the idea that what is foreign is also dangerous.[8] Arishima's writings, due to the suffering and wandering adrift that the characters endure, thus also reinforce this idea of a safe, known, homogeneous homeland.

Spatial decorum is a concern for topographical boundaries. Most Japanese fiction stays within the strict, known, spatial borders of, for example, the country home, a specific urban community, or a sacred mountain stream. The physical boundaries keep the literature hemmed in. Further exploration is never performed. Arishima, Anderer explains, directly confronts this literary rule and challenges it by purposefully setting his stories outside the normal boundaries and repeatedly having his characters cross over them. Unfortunately, the characters in the novels of Arishima as well as Mishima Yukio,

[5] Stories within the Japanese genre of the I-novel, which is the preferred genre of many Taishô writers (and some Meiji writers), are set within known areas with definite boundaries.

[8] This idea of making the unknown into something negative and undesirable re-enforces the Japanese government's idea of creating a unified, homogeneous society, which plays out in Tôson's *Hakai*. See Chapter 3.

Abe Kobo and Endo Shusaku, who transgress or cross over these boundaries and explore new places, always end in defeat and misery. While Anderer is correct that these authors do cross boundaries, the destruction of Arishima's (and Mishima, Abe, and Endo's) characters only strengthens the need for boundaries and encourages Tanizaki's idea that transgression will not end well. The literary and filmic characters of this dissertation encounter similar fates. Similar to *Aru Onna*'s Yoko, who loses her mind due to liminal living and lack of home, Berthe experiences a fleeting bout of insanity as she races up and down the grand staircase in her apartment building in *Pot-Bouille* (Chapter 1); Gervaise's wedding party in *L'Assommoir* wanders aimlessly around the Louvre (Chapter 2); and the youth in *La Haine* are adrift in the unknown territory of Paris for one night after missing their last train home to the banlieue[9] (Chapter 4).

Van Gennep's desire in his book is "to demonstrate that this symbolic and spatial area of transition may be found in more or less pronounced form in all the ceremonies which accompany the passage from one social and magico-religious position to another" (18). Gennep concentrates his analysis on the transitional period in ceremonies and the similarities between the transitions. What I find significant in his analysis is the noted similarities in all transitions and their psychological aspects, whether the liminal period is as thin as a line or as vast as the ocean. The neutral zone might shrink until it is only a threshold, a portal, "the gate in the walls of the city quarter" (20). This portal into a new world holds much significance. In *Rashōmon*, the Heian period (794-1185) tale from *The Tales of Times Now Past*, the short story by Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1915) and the filmic

[9] The *banlieue* is the area surrounding Paris. It is marked by large housing projects (called *cités*), poverty, and violence.

version by Akira Kurosawa (1950), the large entrance gate into the city marks the division between chaos and order, between the unknown and known, between danger and security. The gate was one of the physical entrances to the city, a civilized and well-ruled area. Outside the gate was chaos. The gate in all three versions of the story represents an in-between place.

Akutagawa's short story is faithful to his time period, the Taishō era (1912-1926). His character who approaches the gate is an aide to a samurai who has been dismissed. With the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1868, samurais no longer had a place in society and no way to make money, leaving their aides in even greater dire situations. This aide at the Rashōmon gate has nothing and he pauses at the gate in a torrential downpour to contemplate his future. Having nothing is one characteristic of a person in an in-between place, as Victor Turner discusses and which I discuss presently. Moreover, the horrid weather keeps the characters off balance, as it does in Arishima's writing. The aide realizes that he has two decisions: to live a moral life and die or to start stealing and live.[10] Contemplation and reflection often occur in times of transition as this aide is contemplating a new life. Liminal places can offer freedom, time and space away from structured society and its rules, allowing independent decisions to be made and new modes of living to be developed. The Rashōmon gate marking the border between chaos and order is an ideal place to contemplate the aide's future life and means of survival.

[10] In both Akutagawa's story and in the original Heian version in the book *The Tales of Times Now Past*, the character at the gate encounters an old woman plucking the hair off a corpse. This does not occur in Kurosawa's version.

In Kurosawa's film, as in Akutagawa's story, there is a torrential downpour and a commoner comes to the gate to find shelter from the storm. The gate is even more impressive in Kurosawa's visual depiction than in Akutagawa's description. On film, this gate overwhelms the camera. It is also in disrepair and the commoner even rips some of the wooden boards from the walls to create a fire. He also mentions that there are most likely dead bodies on the roof of the gate, faithful to the Heian period story and illustrating that the border territory is a place of disposal of unwanted, impure bodies. It also marks an in-between place for Kurosawa, as here the commoner hears the story of the woodcutter and the monk's version of the rape from the short story "In a Grove." (The woodcutter and the monk are also seeking protection at the gate.) The gate, a place of uncertainty, reflects nicely the uncertainness in the stories of the characters, as I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4.

The Rashōmon gate, like all gates, physically marks the border between domestic (Kyoto) and foreign (outside of Kyoto) spheres. Van Gennep explains: "The door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling, between the profane and sacred worlds in the case of a temple. Therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world" (20). Van Gennep notes the importance of rites that occur as one crosses a threshold – rites of purification (washing, blessing) and incorporation (sharing a meal). These rites allow easier entry into the new territory. Crossing the border is only part of the process; preparing to cross and assimilating upon reentry are equally significant. Van Gennep explains a three-part process which occurs in the journey from one place or position to the next: the preliminal stage, which include

rites of separation; the liminal stage, which include rites of transition (or of the threshold); and the postliminal stage, which include rites of incorporation. In the rites of incorporation the physical union between the newcomer, the stranger, and the new place and people signify the end of the liminal passage and the beginning of a new chapter of life. The stranger has often waited for some time and passed through the transitional period before he or she is welcomed often by eating or drinking with others in the new location. When the liminal period is extended for a longer period of time, the three-part process is sometimes reduplicated, creating mini pre- and post-liminal parts (van Gennep 11).

In his chapter on "Individuals and Groups," van Gennep notes that the stranger has come from somewhere; he once had a home, (although this idea was not true in Arishima's fiction). When leaving his home, his known world, the pre-liminal rites of separation occur. Van Gennep suggests that usually this stage creates a gradual break from the home, and notably, the traveler is never completely separated from his or her homeland while on the liminal passage or even in the new society. A letter from home, a staff, or an amulet of protection may keep the voyager connected to the home, according to van Gennep, whereas in present day, the traveler might more likely be marked by an accent, dialect, style of dress, or particular mannerisms, which are difficult to completely abandon. While this connection is problematic if complete union with the new place is ever desired, it may prove to be grounding and offer security during the dangerous passage. It may also not allow the traveler to ever completely transition until the memento from home is given up or let go. This liminal journey, on which the traveler

embarks, is a spiritual journey: "A rite of spatial passage has become a rite of spiritual passage" (van Gennep 22), as the traveler is transformed during the journey in preparation for the new location or social position.

The postliminal rites of incorporation are particularly significant in our globalizing world: as boundaries between nations become less defined, it is increasingly important that individuals and companies from different nations are able to work together. To this end, we have created organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), and have enacted treaties, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In modern literature and film, many characters are not able to let go of their original home in order to assimilate to and connect with a new place. The youths in *La Haine* are marked by their clothing and attitude and are incapable of understanding and communicating with young women in an art gallery. Even characters who are able to surrender themselves to their new target culture – for example, Gervaise, who dreams of being a businesswoman and eventually succeeds in running her own laundry,[11] or Midori, who changes her style of dress[12] to better fit in with the other children in the neighborhood – are forced to live at the bottom of the social ladder. Until the target community fully welcomes the newcomer, he or she remains adrift, wandering lost, stuck in liminality even while living in a more permanent location. Gervaise's poor faubourg consumes her and she cannot gain access to Paris proper. Midori will never be able to change her designated position as a courtesan at the brothel. The inability to make

[11] When Gervaise succeeds in running her own laundry, Zola writes: "The Rue de la Goutte-d'Or was all hers, and the streets near by, and the whole neighborhood" (122).

[12] "Midori had bristled when the other girls made fun of her, calling her a country girl for wearing a lavender collar with her lined kimono" (Ichiyô 260).

a complete connection with the target group forces the character to remain in a permanent in-between state. As the liminal space gains permanence – the faubourg in *L'Assommoir*, the slum in *Dodesukaden*, and the banlieue in *La Haine* – it looses its liminal quality as "transitional" and becomes a separate defined place while retaining its poor, marginalized status. Those individuals living in permanent in-between places find themselves trapped with a miserable quality of life and unable to break free from it.

Turner's Liminal Living

Victor Turner continues Gennep's work and focuses his analysis specifically on the liminal period of the rites of passage, what he calls "betwixt and between," and its characteristics. In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, he remarks that firm, structural positions are the basic model of society (93). Therefore, he regards "the period of margin or 'liminality' as an inter-structural situation" (93), between two different structures and without any specific structure of its own. In van Gennep's work, he refers to liminal passages in changes between stages of life, social positions, physical entries and exits, and even borders between countries. Turner sees all these examples as structural states. He takes great care in his definition of "state," explaining that his use of it is in a rather inclusive way, including "legal status, profession, office or calling, rank or degree" (93) in its meaning and referring "to any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized" (94). Moreover, a stable state "has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and 'structural' type, and is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards" (94). The structurally stable states are subject to

the laws of government and the society's customs and traditions; what occurs within the bounds of a given state much conform to that society's rules and norms. The same is not true for liminal periods, which "slip through network of classifications that normally locate states or positions in cultural space" (Turner *Ritual* 95).

Using Turner's definition of a stable state, in conjunction with my research, the slum in *Dodesukaden*, and the banlieue in *La Haine* are clearly defined and subject to governing laws and ethical standards. The faubourg in *L'Assommoir* is subject to the government's rules; however, it is not clearly defined until the end of the novel, as it is in the process of being annexed by Paris and redeveloped by Haussmann, and is therefore liminal. Similarly, Daionjimae in *Takekurabe* is a liminal place because the story is set during the upheaval of the Meiji period. In fact, this area is transitioning from country to city during the story as well as having some freedom from governmental rules and laws (at least at the outset of Meiji) because the new Meiji government is still in the process of being formed; therefore, it is neither clearly defined nor strictly governed. In a general sense, this conception of liminality applies to the cities of Paris and Tokyo during their urbanization and reconstruction.

Periods of transition, becoming, and transformation (in rites of passage) are detached from the normal bounds of society; they are outside of society (although they may occur within its bounds) and do not resemble the stable state that existed before the period of liminality nor the stable state that occurs after re-consummation into society. Like van Gennep, Turner sees three parts of the liminal process: separation, margin, and aggregation, what van Gennep had called preliminal (separation), liminal (transition), and

postliminal (incorporation). The margin stage is one of detachment from a fixed position or "set of cultural conditions" with ambiguous characteristics. This cultural realm has few or a limited number of attributes of the preceding or following realms.

In order to observe the significance of a special event, societies customarily ritualize all moments of transition in life: birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Turner focuses his study on rites of passage that have well-developed liminal periods, specifically the initiation rites into social maturity or into cults. He explains: *"Rites de passage* are found in all societies but tend to reach their maximal expression in small-scale, relatively stable and cyclical societies, where change is bound up with biological and meteorological rhythms and recurrences rather than with technological innovations" (*Forest* 93), and therefore, he chooses to study the rituals of social transitions of the Ndembu of Zambia in Central Africa.

While the specific ritual practices are outside the scope of this dissertation, the attributes of the liminal space are relevant. Characteristics of the liminal period of the initiation rites are strikingly different from those of daily life. People passing through the liminal period and the ritual of transformation are invisible to the rest of the society; they are simultaneously "no longer classified" and "not yet classified;" therefore, they are associated both with birth, as if they are newborns or embryos, and with death. In one group Turner studied, the person going through the initiation rite, or neophyte, might be buried, asked to lie in a burial position, not move, etc. The ritual is associated with the biology of death, with menstruation, loss, and negativity: "They are allowed to go filthy and identified with the earth, the generalized matter in which every specific individual is

rendered down" (Turner *Forest* 96). This proximity to the earth reflects a lack of materialism and a simplification of lifestyle, one that is outside the bounds of normal societal activity.

Similarly in Emile Zola's novel *Nana*, the eponymous protagonist (Gervaise's daughter) and her friend, Satin, cross into a milieu (prostitution) that is not recognized. They are in a liminal place, wavering between two worlds. The two women occupy an aspect of society that is simultaneously welcomed and unwelcomed and therefore they are marginalized, allowed to be invisible.[13] Moreover, they too, like the neophytes, are filthy and Satin lives in a messy, dirty, two-bedroom apartment, which Zola describes by saying she has abandoned her housework (256). Satin's messy room does not impede her indiscretions with men because they only come in the darkness of the evening hours and she and her home maintain their invisibility. Filth is often an attribute associated with liminal, undefined, unruly places. In *L'Assommoir*, Gervaise's laundry becomes a large pile of filth as she gives in to idleness and laziness. The slum in *Dodesukaden* is literally lined with trash and the actors wear dirty, ripped, misshapen clothes. The yelling and cursing in *L'Esquive* creates a linguistic sense of dirtiness.

The Ndembu neophytes are simultaneously neither living nor dead *and* both living and death. They exist within the paradox, and their status is ambiguous, not unlike

[13] They are only invisible until they break the rules and make themselves seen. Normally, a liminal space should have no rules; however, as the rituals of the Ndembu are socially constructed so is the unrecognized space of prostitution in society. As with anything liminal, it is impermanent (such as with the lack of rules). Moreover, prostitution is a very real and thriving part of society and certainly governed by general principles of discretion and secrecy. Therefore, I think Turner and van Gennep would agree that liminal places are more freely governed, rather than free from all rules, as any known space, recognized or otherwise, is socially constructed.

the prostitutes in Zola's novels. Nana returns to prostitution to make money while married to Fontan. Between the beatings she receives from him and her "dirty" exploits with men, she too exists in a paradox between life and death, searching for happiness and peace while always somewhat miserable. According to Turner, "Liminality may perhaps be regarded as… a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (*Forest* 97). New thoughts, customs, and ways of living can be generated during this time. Although Turner refers to achieving greater levels of social position, Zola reminds us of the more visceral possibilities.[14]

Liminal beings, like Satin and Nana, "pollute" since they are entirely unclean and unknown; they are different than those in the stable, socially respected space, as liminality essentially deals with the "unstructured." Turner cites Mary Douglas, who studies the concept of pollution in her work on *Purity and Danger* (1966): "The unclear is the unclean" (*Forest* 97). The possibilities in the liminal space are unbounded, infinite, and limitless to Turner. The neophytes are structurally invisible, physically visible, ritually polluting, and commonly secluded (98). They need to be hidden, removed to a sacred place, disguised, and separated from social reality to keep scandal away. We see this occur in Marguerite Duras' screenplay, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), when the character "Elle" suffers from her own induced anguish and is hidden in her basement by her parents until she has recovered and can reenter society.

[14] On the other hand, Ichiyô's protagonist in "Jûsan'ya," as I discuss in Chapter 3, decides to live as if dead and ignores the possibilities of the road in the liminal journey homeward. In her liminal reprieve from her abusive husband, she chooses a metaphorical death and closes herself off to any other possibility.

The German soldier She ("Elle") loved at the end of World War II when she was eighteen is killed. She is tormented by his death because she (1) loved him and thus misses him, (2) is scared she will forget him, and (3) is angry that he died and she can no longer be with him. These emotions of grief are distinctly felt. Duras explains them through the description of her torment while locked in the basement of her parents' house. Duras portrays the basement as small and damp and cold both during the summer and winter. She feels that she herself has died after her lover's death while she is in the basement. The only way she can deal with the pain is to scrape at the walls: "Les mains deviennent inutiles dans les caves. Elles grattent. Elles s'écorchent aux murs… à se faire saigner" (Duras 88). [Hands become useless in cellars. They scrape… They rub the skin off… against the walls (Seaver 55).] Miserable and hidden in the basement with bloody, scraped hands, Elle demonstrates some of the facets of those in liminal spaces: she pollutes (her cries and the blood on her hands); and she is separate from everyone else (hidden in the basement).

As miserable as this time is for her in the basement, it is time apart from the rest of the world. She has time to herself to grieve. Her family is upset since she is particularly young and in love with a German soldier (now dead). They keep her locked below, out of sight, out of the world, until she has healed. She can scream in the basement until she has poured out all her grief. She understands that a great deal of time passes while she is in the belly of the house: " …L'ombre gagne déjà moins vite les angles des murs de la chambre. Et que l'ombre gagne déjà moins vite les angles des murs de la cave. Vers six heures et demie. L'hiver est terminé" (Duras 98). […It took the

shadows longer now to reach the corners of the room. And that it took the shadows longer now to reach the corners of the cellar walls. About half past six. Winter is over (Seaver 63).] This last line is significant: often winter is associated with depression or feelings of sadness. The days are short and cold with little light. In spring, when life returns with new buds and new growth, people often feel refreshed and renewed. This process of renewal is part of the growth that occurs during the liminal stage. Her parents feel that she is becoming better. She has stopped screaming and crying so much: "On dit: "Elle devient raisonnable" (Duras 101), [They say: "She's becoming reasonable" (Seaver 66)], and they let her out of the basement. She is able to overcome her grief – her mental anguish in the physical space of the hole, a liminal place between death and society – a dark damp cold basement. Trapped there, isolated and in some ways protected from the outside world of social norms, the passage of time slowly heals her as she does begin to forget and let go of her dead lover. Moreover, this transition from grief to re-assimilation into society marks a turning point in her life: "C'est là, il me semble l'avoir compris, que tu as dû commencer à être comme aujourd'hui tu es encore" (Duras 81). [It was there, I seem to have understood, that you must have begun to be what you are today (Seaver 51).] This time spent in the basement, in the liminal place, begins to define the rest of her life and she is altered by the experience.

Moreover, from the point of view of what is structured (the point of view of Elle's parents), those in liminal situations, writes Turner, "must appear as dangerous and anarchical, and have to be hedged around with prescriptions, prohibitions, and conditions" (Turner *Ritual* 109). Anything that falls between classification boundaries

must be regarded as dangerous and polluting. Turner's use of the word "must" is troubling in that there is no space for another interpretation. Our ancient brains perceived whatever was unknown as a threat and this model of living kept us alive. This primal reaction to what is foreign or different that was once helpful is now destructive, creating more borders and boundaries between cultures. The young women at the gallery ultimately are turned off by the youths in *La Haine* and view them as foreigners, outsiders that are contaminating their fun. The matrons of the restaurants in *Dodesukaden* are scared and disgusted that the dirty beggar boy might pollute their restaurants. I would argue that this demonstrated fear of the unknown and of contamination is the drive behind such close-minded reactions.

The liminal beings are viewed as dangerous to structured society; however, they possess nothing (as I noted previously with the samurai's aide from *Rashōmon*) – no home, status, position, property, or rank – to demarcate them structurally from everyone else and nothing to define them as part of known society; they are even considered sexless, according to Turner. In addition, when in a group, they are all completely equal with regards to gender, position, etc. (Turner *Forest* 98). Deep friendships might form, and they band together: "Between instructors and neophytes there is often complete authority and complete submission" (99).[15] In the liminal space, where an individual has

[15] For Turner, a neophyte is a *tabula rasa* on which knowledge and wisdom is inscribed (*Forest* 101-102). White the neophytes are exposed, both naked and vulnerable, they are capable of conceiving of new ideas and alternative ways of thinking. All previous habits, thoughts, and feelings are erased and a sense of coming anew abounds. During this period, the neophytes would be told stories of the beginning of times, myths, secret rites, and rituals of their people.

nothing, companionship becomes essential and relationships become easier to form and less saddled with societal pressures than in more structured, non-liminal space.

Companionship and Communitas

In a second book on liminality, Turner concentrates on the idea of *communitas*, which he uses instead of "community," to describe the unstructured, undifferentiated community among the neophytes. He sets *communitas* in contrast to community, which exists in structured, hierarchical societies with defined politico-legal-economic ideologies. He explains that the differences between them represent two models for human interrelatedness: one of comparison, judgment, and inequality and the other of homogeneity, equality, and communion. Community only represents an area of common living whereas *communitas* is a "communion of equal individuals" (Turner *Ritual* 96). *Communitas* gives "recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be *no* society" (97). In Chapter 4, I look at this concept of *communitas* in more detail, and especially in relation to homelessness. The group of woe-begotten beings in *Dodesukaden* creates a community ostensibly outside of the normal grasp of society and with some amount of acceptance of one another. The two downtrodden homeless figures in Rohmer's *Le Signe du Lion* form a *communitas* again outside of community and one of accepted equality.

The liminal period blends homogeneity with comradeship and lowliness with sacredness creating *communitas*: "Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low" (97).

In setting up a binary difference between the high and low, Turner's association of low with sacredness seems biblical resembling the verse: the meek shall inherit the earth. Their power comes from their humility. In one of the Ndembu of Nabmia's rituals, the general community speaks evil against the chief-elect going through his rite of passage. The chief-elect must sit quietly and humbly and receive the abuse. He must even at times laugh along with the others who are saying defiling words about him. These neophytes have greater ultimate power than those in ordinary society, and being set outside of the mundane world, they become a myth, without history and with certain abilities. Members of despised or outlawed ethnic and cultural groups play a great role in many myths and popular tales. Ghost stories and fantastical tales are created from unknown things outside "normal" society.

In exploring the idea of the outsider, Turner cites Henri Bergson: the preservation of an in-group's identity rests on its ability to "protect itself against threats to its way of life, and renews the will to maintain the norms on which the routine behavior necessary for its social life depends" (*Ritual* 110-111). Anything outside the group becomes inferior and can be used as a scapegoat for anything that is awry. However, the outsider can also act as the mediator for the society, like a Shaman priest, who is often considered as having a mystical relationship with the earth and who is not aligned with any one political group. Outsiders and the marginal groups of society are necessary to define the normative social group. Turner notes the beat generation, Allen Ginsberg, and the sexually free hippies who stressed personal relationships rather than social obligations (*Ritual* 112). Their mode of spontaneous living is rooted in the present rather than the

structured society with its traditions and customs, which is rooted in the past. Turner believes that: "No society can function adequately without this dialectic" (129). Michael Bourdaghs also explains this necessary dialectic in his text *The Dawn that Never Comes*.

The complexities that Bourdaghs reveals are also present in Turner's studies of liminality. From the point of view of structure, the liminal person is an exile or a stranger, and calls into question the whole normative order. However, there is a grudging cultural recognition of this group of people outside and yet still part of the social structure, as is true with the *burakumin* in Meiji period Japan, which Bourdaghs discusses and which I explore in Chapter 3 in relation to Tōson's *Hakai*. As much as the normative group attempts to exile the outsiders, a certain part of them desires to have the characteristics of the outsider's life – a freedom from cultural norms, a more open perspective. Moreover, in times of drastic and sustained social change, it is *communitas* that becomes central. According to Turner: "The social need for escape from or abandonment of structural commitments seeks cultural expression in ways that are not explicitly religious, though they may become heavily ritualized" (Turner *Dramas* 260). *Communitas* is therefore something that is sought by each individual in society and it arises in liminality, stressing equality and comradeship (Turner *Dramas* 232). The active seeking of community appears in *Dodesukaden*'s slum as well as in banlieue literature and films such as *L'Esquive* and *La Haine*. The poor or lower classes have the function in society of "representing humanity" (234); because they have no status or qualifications, they are able to represent everyone. Turner invokes Claude Lévi-Strauss who explains that social structures are independent of one's consciousness and cannot be overtly recognized,

although they govern the individual's actions (236). Society constructs unconscious categories and social classes within an unconscious social structure. Therefore, "major liminal situations are occasions on which a society *takes cognizance of itself*" (240) [his emphasis]. In moments of change, society can reflect on its structures and actions and momentarily stop thinking in terms of binary oppositions and stop allowing deep structural rules to govern ideas (241).

During these liminal moments, when *communitas* is possible, a relationship like Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship develops in which immediacy of understanding, compassion, and intimacy is central. In Buber's text, *Between Man and Man* (1961), he writes: "Community is being no longer side by side (and, one might add, above and below) but *with* one another" (51, 127) [his emphasis]. *Communitas* sees and understands the whole person.

Turner's version of liminality combined with *communitas* is significantly different from van Gennep's transitory rituals. For Turner, liminality brings freedom from society norms and structures and a chance for real communication with others. This idealized view of liminality certainly is one actualization of liminal space. However, the marginal figure, on the periphery, homeless, and part of no community, is another. Liminality can be a place without rules and pregnant with freedom and social change; however, the communes and monasteries, places of *communitas* outside structured society eventually create their own structures detracting from their original aims and the chance at true I-Thou relationships. As seen in monastic and religious traditions around the world, transition can become a permanent condition resulting in ultimate

homelessness and feelings of loss, as the liminal space is not one of security and stability. With freedom from structure comes instability and uncertainty making it difficult to remain in liminal places. Berthe, one of Zola's characters in *Pot-Bouille*, experiences the stress and insecurity of passing through a liminal space when she becomes caught in a stairwell. The instability of the situation triggers feelings of panic and desperation.

Chapter 1

Liminal Stairwells, Exposure, and Shame:
Haussmannian Apartment Buildings and Zola's *Pot-Bouille*

"Homes establish roots." — Michelle Perrot

"Fear lent wings to his feet." — Virgil

Introduction

In *Pot-Bouille* (1882) by Emile Zola (1840-1902), transgression of the rigid spatial boundaries coincides with transgression of social boundaries instilled by the middle class through exposure of their less than "virtuous" actions. In the first chapter Zola carefully sets up the social dynamics and the rules of the new apartment building, while simultaneously breaking down the respectable appearance of the house, revealing deception and sordid behavior supposedly not appropriate for the bourgeoisie. Perhaps the most overt scene of border transgression, which occurs openly in a liminal space and which I will discuss in detail later in this chapter, is that between Octave and Berthe when the two are caught having an affair by her husband August. Berthe becomes frantic and panics, caught between her lover and her husband. Unable to cope with straddling two spheres, she darts into the corridor and dashes up and down the staircase nearly naked in only her chemise. For a moment, she is homeless: the rigidity of the

architectural boundaries (the closed doors, the pristine stairwell) entraps her, expunging her from acceptable society and the safe confines of her middle class home and into a realm of public scandal as well as into the liminal margins of a less-known world. The marginalization of her character from society occurs in in-between spaces within the new architecture, which represents the foundation of the new Parisian society of the mid-nineteenth century. The Second Empire, a burgeoning modern society, replete with social norms and large amounts of propriety, was built by Haussmann to meet the desires of the bourgeoisie. At its core, according to Zola, Second Empire society seeks to purify its world and ostracize those who do not meet the strict standards of virtue and modesty.

In this chapter, I first consider Emile Zola's representation of Second Empire society and the space that controls and manipulates the lives of the new bourgeoisie. Next, I tackle the structure of the new apartment buildings and life for those living within them. At the chapter's climax, I analyze Berthe's position as a marginalized and temporarily homeless character. In addition, numerous secondary characters, marginal to both the story and the apartment house, are also displaced and exiled for even lesser indiscretions than Berthe's. Through Zola's use of space, he creates upheaval and change. As a dénouement, I consider how this disorder of space serves the important role of alienating unwanted aspects of society.

Second Empire Critic

The wide streets, public parks, and continuous wall of apartment buildings in Haussmann's new Paris gave birth to a massive consumer culture, enforcing capitalism,

class struggles, and lingering urban poverty and prostitution. Emile Zola captures Paris in its greatest moments of change. In depicting the duality of the apartment house, Zola peers into the lives of individuals of the time and shows eruptions of improper behavior that burst from the house. He represents consumer culture and its voracious appetite and portrays the working poor living in their marginalized, blighted areas, their humanity and misfortunes. Erich Auerbach writes of Zola in *Mimesis*: "He is one of the very few authors of the century who created their work out of the great problems of the age" (512). He pokes holes in pristine appearances, seeks out the morally questionable from all angles, and illuminates the darkest corners of society. Auerbach notes his purpose as "to comprise – as Balzac had done, but much more methodically and painstakingly – the whole life of the period (the Second Empire)" (515). Zola seeks to create and articulate a complete picture of the human experience and its humanity or lack thereof in France's Second Empire.

With his naturalism,[16] Zola seeks to distance himself from the Realist movement of the time. He intends to unmask society, exploring the suffering of people beneath the veneer of modern life as he rips the neutral Haussmannian façade off the apartment building in *Pot-Bouille*, revealing the infidelities and deprivations of typical "proper" bourgeois society. Keeping with his analytical, scientific tendencies, he portrays the

[16] Following in the footsteps of Hippolyte Taine, Zola saw his work as "scientific," although today "sociological" might be the *mot juste* (Bloom 2). He believed that human beings and nature are closely intertwined and that nature is the more dominant. Through endless labor and hours spent toiling, people are subservient to nature. One's social status, environment, and genes predetermine one's lot in life. The body's impulses and instincts are controlled by nature and his or her heredity. Zola believed very deeply in the laws of heredity and viewed them as fateful forces that control our lives.

apartment building's residents from many dimensions and angles, creating a full picture and profound understanding of this section of society. Similarly, each of his novels grabs a different segment of life and bares its insides to the world. This phenomenon occurs particularly within the *Rougon-Macquart* series, Zola's twenty-novel collection, written between the years of 1871 and 1893, and set in the socio-political scene of the Second Empire, in which his express desire is to methodically study human life.[17] He examines numerous aspects of social life including poverty and alcoholism in *L'Assommoir* (1877), prostitution in *Nana* (1880), the bourgeoisie in *Pot-Bouille* (1882), the new department stores and fashion in *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), and a coalminer's life in *Germinal* (1885), each offering a thoughtful and detailed critique of Second Empire society. In *Pot-Bouille,* the text studied in this chapter, Zola articulates the harm of such tightly defined space and the inability of people to live within exceptionally strict boundaries.

Controlling, Constructed Space

Zola conceives a new way of imagining urban space and creates a vivid and meaningful relationship between his characters and the space they occupy as few writers had done before. Space becomes three-dimensional in his writing (Mitterand 183), such as in the apartment building in *Pot-Bouille*, the department store in *Au Bonheur des*

[17] In addition, each of the novels has political significance because Zola weaves the events of the historical period of the Second Empire into his narratives: Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état* is the backdrop for *La Fortune des Rougon* (1871)*,* Eugène Rougon is Napoleon III's Minister of State in *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon* (1876), the conditions that made the 1871 Commune possible are depicted in *L'Assommoir* (1877), the Haussmannization of Paris is featured in the apartment building in *Pot-Bouille* (1882) and in the department store in *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), on the day the war with Prussia begins, Nana dies of smallpox in *Nana* (1880), and *La Débâcle* (1892) describes France's military defeat in the Franco-Prussian war.

Dames, or the tenement in *L'Assommoir*. Space is a concrete matter with its own personality and its own temperament. Mitterand explains that it exists as an *a priori* condition to the story: "Zola construit, compose et transforme son espace Romanesque comme condition *a priori* de l'invention d'un personnel et d'une action Romanesque" (201). [Zola constructs, composes, and transforms the space of the novel as an *a priori* condition of the invention of the characters and the action of the novel.][18] The space he designs then gives birth to the story and affects every aspect of the lives of his characters: "Houses and buildings constitute the centre of many of his novels" (Nelson 130-31).

Zola's Naturalism concerns two contributing forces – that of heredity and environment. In *Pot-Bouille* and *L'Assommoir*, hereditary aspects, while part of the story, play a secondary role. It is space – specifically the power of architectural structures, the social norms they represent, and the ambiance they create – that controls the characters within. In this chapter and the next, I argue that space is a much greater force for Zola than even he acknowledges. Jules Lemaître notes in his essay "Emile Zola" that each of Zola's novels has a central place that serves as the theater for the unfolding of the drama (Baguley 49-50). For *Pot-Bouille* it is the apartment house on the Rue de Choiseul where virtually the entire novel unfolds. The house is a force in and of itself; it controls the scene and devours its inhabitants. Similarly, the tenement building in *L'Assommoir* exerts the same force on Gervaise and the other inhabitants.[19] In *Nana*, it is Nana herself. The characters are trapped by the space in which they live, and Zola rarely allows his characters to leave the given boundaries. Berthe in *Pot-Bouille* is chained to the

[18] This translation is my own.

[19] I will examine the effect of the tenement in greater detail in Chapter 2.

apartment building; Gervaise in *L'Assommoir* cannot leave the confines of her tenement; Lantier in *Germinal* is shackled to the mine.

For a character to transcend his or her spatial boundaries is a rare occurrence in Zola's novels. Zola respects the boundaries and borders created by social class, location, and heredity, believing in the difficulty of altering a predetermined life. Only certain liminal characters (such as prostitutes and migrant workers) can break through and transgress these boundaries. For example, Octave, a young man from the country in *Pot-Bouille*, moves to Paris and becomes part of the new bourgeoisie. In this story, Zola's transgression of the spatial boundaries coincides with the transgression of social boundaries and exposure of the less than "virtuous" actions of the rising middle class, which I discuss in this chapter. Likewise, Gervaise's second son, Etienne, in *L'Assommoir*, finds an apprenticeship in a mining town, which becomes the setting for the novel *Germinal*. Transgression for the poor in Zola's novels results only in entering another confining world.

Nana, Gervaise's daughter, Anna Coupeau, is another such liminal character. Zola relates her story in *Nana* (1880), depicting her ability to use men to climb the social ladder as she travels throughout Paris from slum dweller of dire poverty with alcoholic parents on the Rue de la Goutte d'Or as a child to prostitute and cabaret dancer in the theater district to wealthy courtesan in a fine apartment building desired by some of the most affluent and politically powerful people in Paris. However, her social climb is in appearance only as the continued act of selling her body never allows her to surpass her depressing roots.

Most often in Zola's works, space is terribly closed in and suffocating, and half of the twenty novels of *Les Rougon-Macquart* occur in the microcosm of the city of Paris: *La Curée* (1871), *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873), *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon (*1876), *L'Assommoir* (1877), *Une page d'amour* (1878), *Nana* (1880), *Pot-Bouille* (1882), *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), *La Bête humanine* (1890), and *L'Argent* (1891). Paris is further divided into one of three neighborhoods: (1) the aristocracy and nobility's posh areas, (2) the bourgeoisie, the affluent and ambitious, living on Haussmann's newly built boulevards, and (3) the workers, either stationed in the parts of Paris still untouched by Haussmann's projects and unclean, or pushed away to the peripheral areas. Whether it is a few streets near an individual's home, a mine, a train, or an apartment building, space becomes a coffin physically entrapping what lies inside. For Zola, the meaning of space is defined by its setting in time, e.g. the Second Empire, and therefore, any particular place is a product of its socio-politico-historical situation.

The Rising Middle Class and Their Apartment Buildings

People, drawn by the public works projects and the promise of work and by the hope of an easier, better life, flocked to Paris, creating a large shift in population and jump starting Paris's urbanization. In addition, the railroads being constructed during this period contributed to the mobility of the entire country (Pinkney 154). More than one million people were living within the city limits in 1851, and an additional half million were living in the suburbs (151). A short time after the 1848 Revolution with its lagging economy, Paris, the new city, was flourishing. Haussmann's projects had breathed new

life into the city. Diverse commercial opportunities and new commerce and businesses sprouted up: metal traders, wine merchants, dried goods merchandisers, hoteliers, and restaurant and bistro owners (164). Someone who had been a waiter during the July Monarchy might borrow money during Second Empire and attempt to set up his own shop, restaurant, or hotel.

The burgeoning economy was bringing wealth to a greater number of people, and the rising middle class thrived. The end results of Haussmann's public works catered to the ruling upper middle class (Saalman 25). The rich, aristocracy, and old nobility had always lived in palaces and grand estates. The poor could survive, finding some sort of housing, often living in tiny apartments in large tenements. Howard Saalman believes that the lower classes had always been served by the city (46), however poorly. They had lived in the old city for centuries and continued to live, breath, work, die in the densely packed inner city areas or they had been displaced to the periphery to live in crowded buildings there. However, until Haussmann, the middle class had not had a residential environment to call their home. They found an ideal existence in Haussmann's apartment buildings. Saalman writes: "The urban bourgeoisie in general and the upper middle class in particular… profited by the Haussmannization of Paris" (113). This rising middle class helped ensure the success of Napoleon and Haussmann's public works projects, as they financed and erected many of the apartment buildings in which they would make their homes. The new city allowed the petit bourgeoisie to create their lives afresh and encouraged commerce and enterprise, as they become great consumers furnishing their apartments with the most ornate material goods they could afford.

This *nouveau riche* or *petit bourgeoisie* were self-made individuals, often merchants, owning stores or hotels and enjoying fine dining and the theater. They helped build (not literally) the apartment buildings that lined the new grand boulevards. The National Assembly granted an indirect subsidy to private builders in the form of "a twenty-year exemption from property taxes and doors and window taxes on all buildings erected on the new section of the Rue de Rivoli" (Pinkney 51). Following the strict regulations of height and appearance, the newly erected apartments exhibited a uniform façade across Paris – high French windows and cast iron balconies (Giedion 769).

The apartments, manufactured in straight, long lines down each street, allowed no open space to disturb the continuous façade (755). Regardless of the additions of trees, parks, and other green space, Giedion believes: "[The apartments] stand in the midst of airless routes of heavy traffic, cut off from natural surroundings and exposed to every noise and disturbance" (769). Even if some of the avenues were filled with noisy traffic with non-descript and faceless buildings of modern industrial cities, just around the corner from the grand boulevards, small streets filled with specialty shops continued to exist. Patisseries and charcuteries, stores for old books and plain cotton goods still thrived as these services and goods were part of Parisian life and important to everyone, rich or poor. Even today, a few of Baudelaire's arcades in the second arrondissement are flourishing and are filled with *flâneurs* window-shopping outside of small store fronts.

Parade streets (wide-open thoroughfares) and façade architecture (Pinkney 213) came to signify the Second Empire. Modern-minded, commerce- and transportation-oriented, upper middle class, entrepreneurs lived in the apartments on new thoroughfares:

> [They] existed both for their own sakes, as places to live and shop according to new standards of upper middle class affluence, as a kind of stage for elegant living, promenading, and socializing in outdoor cafés and restaurants, and also as connecting corridors between what an up-to-date mid-nineteenth-century man such as Napoleon III considered key points of the city (Saalman 14).

The narrow arcades and the intermingling of the interior with the exterior (Benjamin 68) give way to the wide boulevards and department stores. For Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*, the interiority of the street is exchanged for the exteriority of the department store, which is a public space of consumption, materialism, and commercialism. The *flâneur* slowly disappears into the fabric of the modern, commercial world, roaming through the sterile, capitalist deserts of merchandise rather than the labyrinth of the narrow streets of the city. Whereas the narrow streets of old Paris created an intimate, even private space, the boulevards and department stores in new Paris enhance anonymity by creating public, commercially defined space.

The importance of one's home gained in significance as the city grew, becoming more impressive and prosperous during the Second Empire. As newcomers and entrepreneurs strived to make a name for themselves, feelings of insecurity and desires for compensation necessarily surfaced. Benjamin explains:

> Since the days of Louis-Philippe, the bourgeoisie has endeavored to compensate itself for the fact that private life leaves no traces in the big city. It seeks such compensation within its four walls – as if it were

> striving, as a matter of honor, to prevent the traces… of its possessions and requisites of daily life, from disappearing forever (77).

The rising middle class sought solace in their homes, decorating their first or second floor residences with great flourishes and pretentious decorations. Benjamin suggests that they cling to their possessions, which represent their lives, and ensure their prosperity and social standing. For Benjamin, interior bourgeois space guarantees security. He writes: "For the Makart style, the style of the end of the Second Empire, a dwelling becomes a kind of casing" (77).[20] The homes of the middle class form a protective shell, or a casing, around their lifestyles. Bachelard writes similarly about the house in *The Poetics of Space*: he compares the house to both a shell and a nest, which gives the illusion of security. The same is true for the bourgeoisie: a home, a secure interior space of one's own, creates the fantasy of a stable, private world. In fact, the more possessions an individual owns, the more defined (and thus safe) the space is.

The apartment buildings in which the bourgeoisie lived became the center of their lives, both separate from the city and a microcosm of the city as a whole (and just as

[20] Not being proficient in German, I wanted to double check the translation of "casing," since part of my argument hinged on its meaning. The original German of this line is: "Dem Makartstil – dem Stil des ausgehenden Second Empire – wird die Wohnung zu einer Art Gehäuse" (45). Whereas the English translation claims the Makart style is "of the end" of the Second Empire, the German calls it "ausgehenden," which implies fading or vanishing; therefore, "the style of the fading Second Empire" would be more accurate. The word about which I am most curious, "Gehäuse" does translate to casing, container, housing, or even shell, and the overall sentiment that the house acts as a casing to ensure the security of the inhabitants and their possessions is accurate. The French translation of this line uses the word "coquille:" "Avec le style Makart – le style du second Empire finissant – l'appartement devient une sorte de coquille" (Lacoste 71). "Coquille" translates to English as "shell" as in a scallop shell. Although the English translation of "casing" is more accurate, the French translation's use of "coquille" is not inaccurate and actually works better with Bachelard's ideas about a house, which further enhances my understanding of the middle class's desire for security and privacy.

public). Their interactions with their neighbors were anything but secret. The concierge lived on the bottom floor, the wealthy and upper middle class on the first and second levels, those still striving for success above them, and the servants and the poor lived in tiny hovels in the attic. Giedion offers an excellent depiction of the intermingling in one such apartment building:

> *Boulevard Sébastopol, 1860*: an apartment house of normal type with shops on the ground floor, a mezzanine floor, three main floors, and two attic floors. The three main floors have the same plan. They are apartments intended for upper middle-class tenants. The tree-windowed bedroom for Monsieur and Madame takes up the space at the corner. To its left is the living room, to the right the dining room. Further along to the right are the other bedrooms. There is a nursery which receives almost no light. The kitchen and the servant's room look onto a narrow light-well… The attic floors are the most densely overcrowded parts of the building. Here bed is placed next to bed, in the most confined space possible, for the accommodation of servants, night lodgers, and the lower classes generally (767-8).

The stores on the ground floor often encroach on the mezzanine in workshops and doorways to other commercial endeavors. The three main floors are given over to apartments for the financially secure while the attic is filled with slovenly hovels. This intermingling was occurring across Europe throughout the nineteenth century. Whereas

in earlier time it was quite natural for home and production quarters to mix, the industrial world had the capacity to separate them.

Factories could be constructed away from residences and parks. Giedion extends his earlier critique of the "inhuman" – noisy, airless, and endless – streets to the apartment buildings as well. He believes strongly that the mixture of functions of production and living in one building is inappropriate: "It is absurd in an age of industrial production to permit residence, labor, and traffic to intermingle" (769). The resources existed to create peaceful homes away from labor and industry.[21] However, the separation of home and factory or industry occurred only for the middle class; the impoverished often lived in the shadows of the factories, as both were stationed on the peripheries of the city, which I will address in greater detail in Chapter 2.

The mixing of social classes and the creation of microcosms within a singular apartment building was characteristic of the Second Empire. However, space was a precious commodity and became strictly defined during this period. Each layer of the apartment building was designed for specific aspects of society. Moreover, the *étage* on which one lived defined his or her economic status and predetermined an individual's path in life. Edmund Texier's *Tableau de Paris* (1852) contains a perceptive depiction of "Five Levels of Parisian Life." Drawn in 1852, the cross section of the apartment

[21] However, the exodus from the city to secluded suburban living did not occur until a later time. Giedion's arguments from his Harvard lectures of the 1930's are certainly dated. Modern movements in the United States such as the Local Food Movement, or buying clothes and material goods produced only in the United States, desirable urban living, as well as the ever increasing number of home offices shows a great desire to mix all aspects of life. The desire to purify the surroundings of a dirty city, lacking enclosed sewers and the most basic cleanliness standards, has given away to the overly germ-phobic, sterile society of today.

building is designed almost as a modern day comic, each floor characterizes its inhabitants pictorially by their economic status with a long spiral staircase adjoining the scenes.

The onlooker's eye enters the scene at the entrance of the building, in the center of the *rez-de-chausée*, where several residents are climbing a long staircase. To the left is the concierge's kitchen; to the right is the parlor of the concierge. He and his wife are dancing while a young girl plays the piano. The second level, or *premier étage* is the abode of a very wealthy couple. They are surrounded by opulence and luxury; the wife lounges on a fainting couch and the husband is yawing in a chair, his arms stretched to the ceiling. On the *deuxième étage* lives a young, middle class family with three children and a nanny rocking in a chair. The house is tastefully decorated. The *troisième étage* contains two small rooms. An older couple with modest decorations is playing with their dog. The other room is empty except for the two people within it. The young man is either being evicted or welcomed by the concierge.

The top floor contains three tiny rooms bunched together. The first is of an artist painting a model, the second could be the pathetic dwelling of Gervaise near the end of Emile Zola's novel *L'Assommoir*, and the third is of an impoverished family. The mother is in tears with three children; the father is despondent; their room is nearly bare. The greater the number of stairs people climbed to reach their beds, the poorer and more disadvantaged they were. For these people, the city was not as kind as it was for the bourgeoisie. Hidden behind the uniform façade, a diversity of socio-economic statuses

intertwined. Nothing was private behind the walls of the building, and each person evaluated and judged the other.

While Texier creates a snapshot of one moment in Parisian history in his drawing, Zola captures the entire transformation of Paris while it was occurring. The opening paragraph of *Pot-Bouille* places Paris in the midst of Haussmann's re-creation. It is a cold and gloomy day in November 1861 when Octave Mouret moves from his country home to Paris's newly built and fashionable second arrondissement. In the Paris that greets him upon his arrival, traffic is brought to a halt, people are swarming the streets (which are described as narrow and dirty), and the bustle of commercial activity is intense. Progress is hindered and time is nearly stopped (Marcus 167). Bettina Knapp writes: "The city is the antithesis of a nomadic existence. It represents stability, a willingness on man's part to live together in civil obedience rather than in anarchy" (46). However, Zola's Paris is anything but civil. It is the epitome of chaos and lack of stability. Zola uses this disruption to push the narrative along, while simultaneously it is the very lack of order that makes the narrative so compelling.

Three of Napoleon III and Haussmann's expressed goals were to free the city of traffic, widen the narrow roads, and clean the densely populated central areas; however, Zola's description of Paris is in striking opposition to the Second Empire's vision. Zola depicts Paris as an intense urban environment with density and dirtiness common to most cities. It is not that Haussmann was not successful, but rather that as much as he destroyed, he still left much of the city intact. Behind the large boulevards lined with new businesses were clusters of narrow roads also filled with new shops and markets and

swarming with people. The increase in activity brought business and commerce to Paris's lagging economy, which was now booming (Pinkney 164, Jordan 293). Although Haussmann cleared the slums, businesses, consumers, new apartment buildings, roads, and the *petit bourgeoisie* were quickly filling the holes.

Octave has come to Paris to conquer the city;[22] however in this beginning, the city is conquering him, consuming him. The overwhelming, bustling life of the city makes him dizzy (*l'étourdissaient*, *Pot-Bouille* 17). Zola takes Paris, with its new buildings and roads, and anthropomorphizes it into a living being. Knapp writes that Zola ritualizes the transformation of Paris, gives the city a temperament and human qualities, and in doing so "imposed mythic and epic qualities onto the city of Paris" (48). Sharon Marcus notes: Paris's "availability for limitless consumption [leads] to its eventual enclosure within the person who consumes it" (168). Paris does indeed become a living entity, one that can control and consume those within its walls. Octave, like many, seeks to ingest the city while it devours him, and thus, he becomes one with the city, embracing its values of materialism and consumerism.

Following the opening of *Pot-Bouille*, Zola continues the internalizing movement and concentrates his story on the interior of one newly built, Haussmannian apartment building. Like Paris, the building, which is both a microcosm of the city and located within the city, is a force in itself (Lemâitre 50). Zola focuses his narrative eye on the building, its construction, and what it sees, more than on any particular character. Octave Mouret is not the protagonist. He is a "detached spectator" according to Nelson; the true

[22] … which he will succeed in doing in Zola's following novel, *Au Bonheur des Dames*.

central character is the apartment building itself (131). The central role of the apartment house in the novel highlights Zola's emphasis on space (physical structures within a particular environment) and its ability to influence our lives. Both in *Pot-Bouille* and in *L'Assommoir*, as I explain in the next chapter, Zola privileges environmental and spatial factors over hereditary aspects. While Zola emphasizes the two-fold nature of his Naturalism, environmental and hereditary influences, these two novels clearly articulate that the environment in which a person lives exerts greater control over a person's life path.

Marcus underscores that *Pot-Bouille* lacks description about the city, and it appears not to be about Paris at all considering the desire to keep domestic interiors and urban landscapes divided (169). However, Zola interiorizes the city within the apartment building, merging the two and allowing one to represent the other. The very center of the apartment house, the inner courtyard, represents the crowd in the street with the servants yelling back and forth at one another, throwing their kitchen slops into what becomes essentially their sewer (177). The city is brought inside and enclosed within the building, and the apartment house is reconfigured as "an absolutely private space" with all family members sequestered within the home (166). As much as Haussmann sought to widen the streets and allow for greater transparency in the activities of the city, this "urban project" was also intent "on securing privacy by enclosing space and protecting it from view" (167). Michelle Perrot calls the home "the quintessence of privacy" (342). In such a public space as a city, with a dense population, such as Paris or Tokyo, private space becomes highly cherished.

The act of interiorization causes the house to close in on itself, suffocates the characters and creates an environment of decay and stagnation. For Haussmann, Napoleon III, and social hygienists, a secure interior would be an asset to a clean and safe city. However, Marcus writes:

> Zola's novel depicts interiorization itself as a problem. The novel relentlessly shows the impossibility of complete interiorization, focusing on the external limits that necessarily bound any interior; dramatizing the explosions and implosions that result precisely when interiorization approaches its purest state (166-7).

It is this part of Marcus's argument that is of particular importance to this project and that I wish to highlight. The external limits are essential to the novel as they create liminal, peripheral spaces where many of Zola's characters are forced to live, unable to remain imprisoned within the house's self-inflicted, rigid spatial boundaries, which create such a claustrophobic and interiorizing environment. The space of the home, while private and protected, was also "seething with internal conflict" (346).

Zola dynamically represents life inside, complete with varying socio-economic levels living in the same building, new business existing nearby, and a rising middle class struggling to survive socially in the new, bustling city. Zola's novel depicts not only the apartment building but also its residents, as the house ultimately becomes their construction, made into what the bourgeoisie wishes it to be. The house's persona is created and defined by its residents. The reader comes to know the residents through their interactions with each other and with the space in which they live, behind the elegant,

frontage of the apartment. For example, in Chapter 2 of *Pot-Bouille* we learn about the Josserands who live on the fourth floor (the same floor as Octave) and specifically of crude Madame Josserand's attempts to marry her daughters by dragging them to parties around Paris. Chapter 5 describes the Duveyriers' first floor residence and their evening reception and concert to which not all the apartment buildings' residents are invited. Nelson notes that *Pot-Bouille* is a caricature in which Zola deliberately distorts reality and exaggerates the truth of the bourgeoisie (142). Zola photographs all their failings and measures them against their own bourgeois ideals present in "polite" society of this time, offering a scathing critique in this satiric novel.

The Apartment House and its Residents

Zola's opening of *Pot-Bouille* vertically depicts the new apartment building situated on the Rue de Choiseul, in the fashionable second arrondissement just off Haussmann's newly carved Rue de Rivoli, as Achille Campardon slowly ascends the main staircase with Octave Mouret, explaining who the residents are and more importantly instilling the strongly held idea of what the bourgeoisie is to the outside world. Owned by the Vabres, this four-storied house with elaborate stonework and a heavily ornamented front entranceway seems quite impressive to Octave, a young man of twenty-two, who is arriving in Paris for the first time from his home in the country town of Plassans, about to become the newest member of the new bourgeois class.

As fresh and new as the building appears (its façade is contrasted with the drab ones adjacent to it), Zola quickly cheapens it, expressing the haste with which many

buildings were erected while Haussmann was expanding the streets and creating sewers and running water. The entranceway and the main staircase are made of marble and adorned with brass rods, red carpets, and mahogany handrails, which sound elegant enough. However, Zola complicates his initial description of splendor, which inspires awe in Octave, by explaining the marble to be "panneaux de faux marbre" (20)[23] [sham marble paneling] and the cast-iron balustrade with mahogany handrails is supposed to look like "vieil argent" (20) [wrought silver]. The overall atmosphere is one of "luxe violent" (21) [gaudy splendor (5)], which surprisingly continues to please Octave and all the residents in the building. The appearance of the building is evidently more important to Octave and the other residents than the building's materials. The deceptive, false appearance of "Second Empire vulgarity" (Nelson 131) of the apartment building is intended to deceive the public, the reader, and certainly the petit bourgeoisie themselves.

The residents are pleased with its ostentatious appearance as if they are trying to compensate for their less than proper acts (which such wealth usually shuns) occurring behind the walls. In addition to the overdone decorations, the staircase is heated to a "chaleur de serre" (20) [hothouse temperature (5)]. Campardon explains: "Tous les propriétaires qui se respectent font cette dépense…" (20) [all self-respecting landlords go to that expense, nowadays (5)], and there is water and gas on every floor. He says that the house is "très bien, très bien" (20) [very fine] and that it is "habitée rien que par des gens comme il faut" (21) [lived in by only thoroughly respectable people (5)]. An attempt at

[23] All citations from *Pot-Bouille* in the original French are from the Librarie Générale Française edition, published in 1998. Translations of citations in English are from Percy Pinkerton's translation of *Pot-Bouille* published by Everyman in 2000. If there is no page number following an English translation, then the translation is my own.

extravagance, the hothouse temperatures actually create a suffocating, claustrophobic effect (Nelson 132). Moreover, the building forms an entire enclosure, especially around the grand staircase, which has a confined and airless atmosphere. The hot, tightly sealed atmosphere further isolates the stairwell from the exterior world and adds to the tone, notes Nelson, of furtiveness and suppression (132).

The building is not elegant, but gaudy and overdone. The decorations are made to appear to be of richer materials than they are. The house is not merely warm, but overly hot from the excessive heating. The concierge, Monsieur Gourd, is overly judgmental, forthright, and guarded. Nelson notes: "The theme of appearance and reality thus lies at the centre of the novel" (134). The building's appearance attempts to mask the sordid reality. Even if the appearance left nothing to be questioned, the characters themselves force the issue of respectability endlessly. Campardon continuously and tirelessly expresses the goodness of the residents and the impressiveness of the house. However, his linguistic assertions propagate a false, imaginary image. For example, on the ground floor, the concierge is described as "un homme digne" (19) [a dignified-looking man (4)]. He wears a "calotte de velours noir et les pantoufles bleu ciel" (20) [black velvet cap and sky-blue slippers], which greatly impresses Octave. In addition, Monsieur Gourd is reading the *Moniteur*, which at the time was the semi-official newspaper of the Second Empire, showing his support for an authoritarian regime that maintains order and structure. This man has an air of self-importance and authority. He sees his position as the keeper of the order of the building and Campardon, of a similar mindset, exclaims of the concierge and his wife that they are "des concierges convenables!" (20) [most

respectable people (5)]. Campardon insists that they are a proper honest household; however, he protests too much and his linguistic insistence on properness visually and physically are proved false.

The constant assertion through language falls short as Zola's repetitive visual image portrays a much stronger picture of the actual world of the bourgeoisie – one in which the material of the building and the righteousness of the characters are a sham. Zola's use of descriptions of the building emphasizes the power of architecture to convey reality. His visual images are stronger and leave lasting impressions overpowering what Campardon or anyone claims to be true. Campardon informs Octave: "Tous bourgeois, et d'une moralité! Même, entre nous, ils raffinent trop" (23). [All middle class people, and so awfully moral. Between ourselves, I think they rather overdo it (8).] Perhaps here, Campardon is speaking on behalf of Zola. Goodness and elegance cannot be forced and the reality of the situation comes through in the physical structure. The architecture reflects reality.

In the description of Campardon's *maison*, the wood is also only paneling, not solid. Moreover, it is cracking after only being built twelve years before. Some of the paint is peeling off showing the plaster beneath. Campardon comments:

> Vous comprenez, ces maisons-là, c'est bâti pour faire de l'effet…
>
> Seulement, il ne faudrait pas trop fouiller les murs. Ça n'a pas douze ans et ça part déjà… On met la façade en belle pierre, avec des machines sculptés ; on vernit l'escalier à trois couches ; on dore et on peinturlure les

appartements et ça flatte le monde, ça inspire de la considération (24-25).[24]

The physical attributes of his home reflect and disclose Campardon's own faults hidden within his four walls, just beneath his proper appearance, as Zola reveals his affair with Gasparine, his wife's cousin. Morality and respectability are closely correlated to each other and are key terms in defining the middle class, along with faux, gaudy, and showy.[25] The showy, fancy façade of the apartment building with its velvet carpet and mahogany railings is nothing more than a mask, creating an appearance of respectability hiding and covering debauchery and sordid activities in which everyone takes part.

The Silent, Impenetrable Stairwell

Zola describes each floor through the voice of Campardon and through the curious eyes of Octave, who does not explore the city of Paris but rather investigates the interior, the "nooks and crannies," of the apartment building (Marcus 171). Each floor houses a certain resident or family who owns and belongs to that space, simultaneously dominating it and being held captive by it. As they ascend the impressive staircase with its faux ornamentations, Campardon gives descriptions of each of the tenants on each

[24] [Indeed, these kind of houses are only built for effect. That's not been up twelve years yet, and it's already cracked. They build the frontage of handsome stone, with all sorts of sculptural flourishes, give the staircase three coats of varnish, touch up the rooms with gilt and paint; that's what flatters people, and makes them think a lot of it (8).]

[25] In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Jean Baudrillard explains that since the Renaissance products and references no longer refer to anything; objects are not fake but "hyperreal" (126), which he believes creates an instable world. In relation to Zola and his portrayal of apartment living during the Second Empire, the middle class attempts to imitate the wealth and imagined lifestyle of the nobility with little true understanding of it. Their (re)production ostensibly creates an instable hyperreality.

floor: the Vabres and the Duveryriers, Madame Juzeur and the Campardons, the Josserands and the Pichons. The servants live in tiny, unheated stalls above the fourth floor, which they access through a separate back staircase connecting the kitchens together. By the time the two reach the fourth floor: "Octave se sentit pénétrer par le silence grave de l'escalier… C'était une paix morte de salon bourgeois, soigneusement clos, où n'entrait pas un souffle du dehors. Derrière les belles portes d'acajou luisant, il y avait *comme* des abimes d'honnêteté" (22).[26] [Octave felt penetrated by the awesome silence of the staircase… There was a deadly calm, the peace of a middle-class drawing-room, carefully shut in, admitting no whisper from without. Behind those fine doors of lustrous mahogany there *seemed to be* veritable abysses of respectability] (6). Silence is essential to the middle class as it is equated with discretion, secrecy, and hidden affairs. Octave's initial impression is of impenetrable silence and immobility, of an introverted family life "whose jealously guarded privacy implies a cloistered and monotonous existence" (Nelson 132). The closed doors and introversion are equated with a hidden life and a walled existence inside each apartment. Nearly all action occurs indoors, within the apartment building.

The most notable word in the above passage is "*comme*" as the staircase's significance rests in its ability to represent the image the petit bourgeoisie wishes to present to the outside world – one of calmness, elegance, and respectability. The staircase is silent, elegant, and lined with impressive mahogany doors behind which one *imagines* there exists elements of the highest morality. The staircase creates an imagined reality. Its

[26] Italics added.

elegance, silence, and heat imply morality, honesty, and respectability without ever presenting any factual evidence of it. Therefore, the outward appearance that the stairwell presents is essential to protect the image of the petit bourgeoisie, which leads to much of Zola's plot hinging on the physical structure of the stairwell.

This central artery of the apartment building is at the heart of the story and serves as a conduit for much of the action of the novel. The novel opens with Campardon and Octave climbing its stairs, which connect each *étage* and its social class to another. Upon reaching Octave's room, Campardon warns that no rowdiness and absolutely no women should be brought to the building because of its respectability. He acknowledges that disreputable things occur throughout the rest of Paris; they are just not allowed in the respectable building of the middle class with its virtuous residents. Moreover, behaving in a certain manner would show that Octave understands and respects the social constructs and societal norms of the time and class that the staircase demands. Octave listens to Campardon's advice and does not bring young women home to the apartment building but instead he seeks them out within the building's four walls, which is to say he does as all the other male characters in the novel do.

The staircase is a liminal space between the interior of the apartment home and the exterior of the city of Paris. The plot revolving around this liminal space deems the outside world almost completely insignificant and effectively brings the liminal to the center. The staircase acts as a metaphor for the outside world; occurrences in the staircase equate with acts in the public sphere. Behind closed doors, inside the apartments, each resident can do as he or she pleases. However, the staircase is public – from here, the

concierge can watch (and judge) life in the building; we hear the disapproving voice of Campardon; and all the residents can interact openly traveling between each other's apartments. While essentially inside the building, the apartment's stairwell[27] is very much outside the home, and is therefore outside private, familial space.

Through his description of the building, Zola articulates the current social constructs, namely virtue, responsibility, and respect, which are present in society and which reign over this building. The staircase serves as a method of surveillance, a form of Foucault's panopticon; it forces its inhabitants to follow its social laws within its transitory space. This building and its tenants are quite closely watched and trapped by the rules constructed by their own desire to differentiate themselves from their servants and the lower classes. As the paint peels and the paneling cracks, showing its raw, essential plaster beneath, so do the tenants let slip their indecencies and indiscretions into visibility, spoiling their perfect appearances of respectability. However, sometimes the boundaries have been created too firmly, even uncompromisingly, so that the border does not just crack, letting a little of the truth through, but bursts open revealing in its entirety all that the bourgeoisie wishes to keep hidden, all that they fear will destroy their appearance of respectability and drop them lower in their social standings to which they cling so dearly.

Explosions of Depravity

[27] The rise of the apartment building is particular to the Second Empire period when Haussmann reconfigured Paris. Therefore, the liminal space of the stairwell is especially relevant to this time period.

In one provocative scene in Chapter 14, Zola lays out his truth of the middle class and overtly shows what lies beneath the carefully constructed façade. Breaking through the wall of the façade fractures the strictly defined etiquette of the middle class. Zola articulates a double-crossing of boundaries – the arbitrary socially constructed boundary of the norms of the middle class and the physical boundary between the public and private spheres. By allowing the private sphere to flow into the public sphere, what could have been an indiscretion unknown to the public world and therefore safely hidden (such as Campardon's affair with Gasparine), becomes an overt attack on the bourgeoisie and their social norms and exposes the transgressor in a public in-between space, that of the stairwell. Significantly, while both Berthe and Octave are active agents (transgressors) in the affair, Berthe suffers a much greater public disgrace.[28]

The scene begins with Octave and his lover, Berthe, cloistered together in his room, breaking Compardon's strict rule of not compromising the house. Her husband, August, has learned of the affair and storms Octave's room hollering "Ouvrez, je vous entends bien faire vos saletés… Ouvrez ou j'enfonce tout !... Ouvrez ! … ouvrez donc !"(355). [Open up, I hear you very well doing your dirty things… Open up or I'll break it down completely! Open up! … do open the door I say!] The noise he creates grows in volume and Octave and Berthe begin to worry that he will wake the entire building, causing the scandal they hoped to avoid: "Cela devenait intolérable, cet

[28] Berthe is exiled from her home and temporarily exists in the stairwell. Octave, after the affair is over, is forced to leave the building. He permanently looses his home over the affair. Although he lands on his feet, the loss of home (or momentary homelessness) he experiences is strikingly similar to Berthe's experience. In this chapter, I concentrate just on Berthe and her immediate misery in the stairwell.

imbécile réveillerait toute la maison, il fallait ouvrir" (355). [The noise grew unbearable, the idiot would soon rouse the whole house; they would have to open up (281-2).] August's entreaties in the stairway consist of his openly yelling for anyone to hear and report. Misery and mania due to his wife's adultery drive him to this momentary insanity, freeing him from any sense of respectability and appropriateness of conduct. Raw emotion has overridden any care for societal rules and boundaries.

He breaks down the door, screaming: "Monsieur, vous violez mon domicile… C'est indigne, on se conduit en galant homme" (355). [Sir, …you are violating my home. It's disgraceful and ungentlemanlike (282).] His good breeding is at least partly intact as his address to Octave is polite and formal even in his anger. However, the Zola's use of the verb "violer" is striking. *Violer* in French is defined[29] as doing violence to or penetrating into a sacred place; it also translates to rape when the violence is done to a person. August yells only that Octave is violating his home. This penetration into the sacred space of one's home in Second Empire society is most certainly a grave offense as to break through the walls of his home steals not only his wife from him but also his security and privacy, which was fiercely coveted. Paradoxically, it is August who has perpetrated the physical penetration into Octave's home, not the reverse.

While the two men yell at each other, Berthe slips away, in only her chemise, down two flights in the servant's stairwell only to find her kitchen door locked and to remember that the key is in her dressing gown in Octave's room: "D'un bord, elle gagna

[29] Le Robert Micro defines *violer* as "I. 1. Agir contre, porter atteinte à (ce qu'on doit respecter), faire violence à… 2. Ouvrir, pénétrer dans (un lieu sacré ou protégé par la loi)… II. *Violer qqn*, posséder sexuellement (une personne) contre sa volonté" (1412).

l'escalier de service. Mais, lorsqu'elle eut descendu les deux étages, comme poursuivie par les flammes d'un incendie, elle se trouva devant la porte de sa cuisine, fermée, et dont elle avait laissé la clef là-haut, dans la poche de son peignoir" (356). [She made it to the back stairs at a run. But after rushing down two flights as if pursued by tongues of flame, she found her kitchen door locked and remembered that she had left the key upstairs in the pocket of her dressing-gown (282).] Had the door been unlocked or had she remembered the key, her embarrassment would have been minimal, the affair only a footnote, and the repercussions negligible. The "escalier de service" is part of the world of the service staff, separate from the middle class.[30] If Berthe had returned home via this passage, such poor behavior (expected from the lower classes) would have remained hidden (like the back stairwell, and like most of the servants' activities) from the middle class.

Berthe's affair would have occupied an expected and hidden place in society; however, such is not her fate. In order to create the scandal Zola desires, Berthe must appear publically in the grand stairwell. After finding her kitchen door locked, she flies up the stairs, past the two arguing men, and down the main staircase, exposed to all the apartments, hoping August left their door ajar:

> Sans reprendre haleine, elle remonta en courant, passa de nouveau devant le corridor d'Octave, où les voix des deux hommes continuaient, violemment… Et elle descendit rapidement le grand escalier, avec l'espoir

[30] The back staircase is also frequented by men, including Trublot, another male character in the story, who sleeps with most of the servants in the building and who wishes to access their quarters undetected. Trublot (and others) use the "escalier de service" as a secret passageway to sexual escapades.

> que son mari avait laissé la porte de l'appartement ouverte. Elle se verrouillerait dans sa chambre, elle n'ouvrirait à personne. Mais là, pour la seconde fois, elle se heurta contre une porte fermée (356).[31]

Her goal is to lock herself safely inside her own bedroom away from Octave, August, and the rest of the world. She desires safety and security and attempts to retreat as far as possible from the outside world. Sadly, the front door to her home is also locked and she is trapped in the open stairwell, the liminal space between apartments. Her outward explosion of the flight in the stairwell concludes in her entrapment and resulting homelessness (however temporarily) and is also an attack on the social mores of respectability (i.e. not having public affairs) and decency (i.e. not exposing oneself nearly naked in public) of the middle class of the Second Empire.

Similar to Octave in the opening scene, Berthe finds each mahogany door closed to her. Where Octave had found the doors a representation of closed-in and hidden respectability, Berthe as she is flying up and down the stairwell sees each closed door as barring her security:

> Alors, chassée de chez elle, sans vêtement, elle perdit la tête, elle battit les étages, pareille à une bête traquée, qui ne sait où aller se terrer. Jamais elle n'oserait frapper chez ses parents. Un moment, elle voulut se refugier chez les concierges ; mais la honte la fit remonter… Et, comme elle se trouvait

[31] [Without stopping to get her breath back, she flew upstairs again and passed along the corridor leading to Octave's room, where the two men were still shouting furiously… She ran down the front staircase, hoping that her husband had left the door of their apartment ajar. She would lock herself into her bedroom and not let anybody in. But once again she found herself confronted by a closed door (282-3).]

devant la porte des Campardon, elle sonna, éperdument, furieusement, à casser le timbre (356-7).[32]

Her very public display of adultery has shut her out of the homes of middle-class security. Gaston Bachelard reminds us that houses protect those within, providing shelter and cover, and offering peace and security from what is outside: "For our house is our corner of the world" (4).[33] Berthe has effectively expunged herself from protection and security and she finds herself consistently colliding into (*elle se heurta*) closed doors that will not allow her passage. Chased away from her own home (*chassée de chez elle*), she has been displaced and is effectively homeless at this moment. She has no place and no one to turn to (not her parents, not the concierge, not Octave, not her own husband). She feels lost and exposed both figuratively (the exposure to the public of her affair) and physically (she is nearly naked – *sans vêtement* – dressed only in her chemise). Her clothes even place her in a liminal space, neither clothed nor completely naked.

Exposure is a key aspect to liminal space, an uncertain, undefined area between two stable locations. Van Gennep[34] writes that when in a liminal place, one "wavers

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[32] [Finding herself locked out of her own home and naked, she lost her head, and rushed from floor to floor like some hunted animal in search of a hiding place. She would never dare to knock at her parents' door. For an instant she thought to taking refuge in the concierge's lodge, but the same of it made her turn back… Then, as she was just outside the Campardon's door, she rang wildly, desperately, almost breaking the bell (282-3).]

[33] See Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, especially the first chapter on the house, and also page 102 on nests and page 132 on shells and protection.

[34] As discussed in the Introduction, liminality, as defined by van Gennep and Turner, refers to the second stage of a ritual in which the participant moves through a rite of passage, experiencing a change or transformation of the self. Van Gennep first coined the term liminality in his 1909 text, *Les Rites de Passage*. Van Gennep writes: "The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another" (2-3). His work is a detailed study of traversing boundaries, the ceremonies and rituals that accompany changes of place or state, and the notable similarities of the ceremonies in all transgressions of borders.

between two worlds" (18), and is temporarily homeless. Two of Victor Turner's characteristics of people in the unstable, unstructured, liminal space are nakedness and having no possessions. Berthe is completely alone with nothing, not even her clothes; she has no property, rank, or status, and therefore in this moment, exists outside of society and has no home.

Homelessness is defined by physical structures that either shelter individuals or expunge them from their secure boundaries. Prevalent in much modern literature, including Zola's writings, homelessness requires characters to be wandering aimlessly and endlessly,[35] and leads to complete disorder and the breakdown of societal structures as represented in the novels. Most modern literature instructs us that if we break with decorum and cultural norms, loss and destruction are inevitable (Anderer 8). To this effect, those who seek stability and security are forced to follow strict rules created, implemented, and adjudicated by society. If a peaceful life is desired, it can only be found within the bounds of known places such as homes – secure, enclosed spaces.

Berthe, moreover, is doubly scandalized as the affair occurs outside of her home, where women are still most often confined. As Marcus notes: "Good behavior is being perfectly self-contained… The novel describes female education, female conduct, and marriage in terms of internment, suffocation, and enclosure" (175). The final act of adultery occurs in her lover's room; therefore, she has successfully broken out of the captivity of her home; however, she has exchanged security for uncertainty and homelessness.

[35] See the Introduction and my discussion of homelessness and disorder in Arishima's fiction.

Typically, liminal areas are void of rules or filled with changing rules and paradoxes when situated between two separate distinct worlds. Victor Turner, who continued Van Gennep's work, understands liminality to be an "inter-structural" situation between two strongly defined, stable states with specific ideologies. However, apartments, which all have the same ideologies, surround Berthe. She finds herself in the middle of a highly controlled space – no one can claim absolute ownership to the stairwell and everyone can claim some interest in its goings on. The concept of liminality deals with the exact point of the in-between, a space which is necessarily *not* clearly defined and indeed empty. However, even in its instability, it is not always free from the constraints of social norms and unspoken rules.[36] All space, even liminal, transitory places, continues to exert control over those within them through such methods of shame, isolation, and alienation. Berthe, controlled by society and confronted with her affair, feels shame in her exposed, in-between space.

Moreover, Berthe ruins the quiet, peace of the stairwell through her furious running, crying, and ringing of bells (*elle sonna, éperdument, furieusement, à casser le timbre*). Silence and passivity, the usual elements of the staircase, are the keys to successfully negotiating urban life in the 19th century.[37] Silence and passivity rule the grand central staircase essentially because of its design – the thick carpet deadens sound, the somber concierge acts as a guardian of the stairwell's virtue, and the watchful eyes of the neighbors encourage everyone to create as little disturbance as possible. A drunk or

[36] Here, my argument derails from that of van Gennep and Turner who believed that liminal space was entirely free from societal rules.

[37] Andy Croll, "Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame: Regulating Behaviour in the Public Spaces of the Late Victorian British Town."

an incompetent servant may disturb the peace; however, a member of the middle class creating a disturbance is a greater problem as the disturber is coming from inside. Societal grace demands that we avoid creating such a situation; however, Berthe breaks this rule, bringing her affair into the public's eye. The problem is not necessarily the infidelity but public's knowledge of it and the visual and aural crossing of boundaries.

Locked out of her home, naked, exposed and without a place to go, she desperately knocks at the home of the Campardons and begs them allow her to stay within the safe confines of their home. Once inside, she pleads with them: "Chut! Taisez-vous!… Il veut me tuer" (358). [Shh! Don't make a noise! He wants to murder me! (283).] After all her screaming, she becomes concerned with sound.

Zola describes her behavior from Rose (Campardon's wife) and Gasparine's (Campardon's mistress) perspectives as brazen or shameless (*éhontée*) and void of self-respect: "Avait-on jamais vu une éhontée de cette espèce ! se promener toute nue dans l'escalier ! Vrai ! il y avait des femmes qui ne respectaient plus rien, quand ça les démangeait !" (362). [Such brazen behaviour! Running up and downstairs stark naked! Really, some women lost all self-respect when the mood took them! (287).] She moves to the fringe of society in her blatant breaking of rules and in her lack of any defining characteristics, as she is without possessions. She has openly disgraced the household and the Campardons force her to leave and go knock on her parents' door because her staying with them would morally corrupt their home as well. Berthe has crossed over into the liminal, and as a liminal body, she is now marked by filth (according to Turner, as well as

nakedness and instability). If the Campardons allow her into their home, they fear their place of safety will be contaminated or infected, eroding its attribute of security.

The shamefulness of her actions is distancing, separating the perpetrator, Berthe, from the rest of society. She is isolated and alone, and trapped in a nowhere place, not private or safe. Moreover, shame is generated by the exposure to others, it is generated externally.[38] Turner, citing Henri Bergson, remarks that the preservation of an in-group's identity rests on its ability to "protect itself against threats to its way of life, and renews the will to maintain the norms on which the routine behavior necessary for its social life depends" (*Ritual* 110-111). An "in-group" mentality and loyalty to a group creates a greater desire to exclude, deride, and isolate what is different and outside (even what is just at the edge in the liminal space), thereby creating a greater cohesiveness and a tighter sense of belonging within the group. Anything removed from the center of the group becomes inferior and can be used as a scapegoat for anything that is awry. Outsiders and the marginal groups of society are necessary to define the normative social group.[39] Therefore, Berthe is excluded to retain the purity of the majority.

By invoking the feeling of shame in people who participate in socially incorrect behaviors, society is able to silence and isolate these individuals from contaminating the rest of the national community. In *The Politics of Shame*, Michael Warner writes that shame is integral to the notions of respect and dignity. Shame becomes a very powerful emotion in the effort to control the actions of the community.

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[38] Versus guilt, which exists internally, notes Amitai Etzioni in "Social Norms: Internalization, Persuasion, and History." Berthe feels no guilt, only shame.

[39] Both Turner and Bourdaghs comment on the relationship between marginalized beings and normative society. See both the Introduction and Chapter 3.

The disgust and the horror the onlookers attribute to the scene is complemented by the shame, which Berthe feels, and which arises from the exposure in the liminal realm. The paradox between the gravity of the majestic, overheated stairwell and the scandalous, sexual (melo)dramas unfolding behind the closed, mahogany doors of each apartment is of no issue to the middle class. Allowing indiscretions to break into the realm of appearances is unforgivable, and she is rejected for it, namely by the Campardons, who represent the quintessential bourgeois, perfect in appearance, scandalous in private.

Being trapped in the open space of the stairwell makes her visible from all the stable locations of the apartments as if she were locked in Foucault's panopticon. The architectural layout of the panopticon, as with the central staircase visible from all apartment doors, assures the subjugation of the inhabitants (Foucault 348) by creating a space of possible continuous surveillance. All the inhabitants in the building regulate one another's actions. Although Berthe is able to free herself from the constricting environment of her home, and enter the liminal space of the stairwell, she is ultimately unable to transcend that spatial boundary, always trapped by the watchful eyes of a highly *self*-regulated, controlled society.

The Right to Family and Home

Before Haussmann, Paris was overly cramped. A large number of people lived on top of each other in decrepit buildings. Space was more fluid. While it was difficult to move through the city, roads, alleyways, apartments, stores, courtyards, and sidewalks

served multiple purposes and were less defined spaces than they were after Haussmann's reconstruction. After Haussmann, the city still seemed crowded and perhaps somewhat disorderly, but space became clearly defined. Roads were wider for carriages and horses; sidewalks were more numerous keeping people from crowding the streets. Department stores housed shoppers, removing the *flâneurs* from the sidewalks. On each floor of an apartment building lived different classes of people. Each room in the home had a specific purpose. Although the rich had always enjoyed immense amounts of space within palaces, space was now available to the middle class who quickly consumed it, simultaneously becoming a slave to it, and what they believed it represented, namely privacy and security.

The newly designed space of the Second Empire, notably the structure of the apartment building, was exceptionally separate, regulated and defined. On the rue de Choiseul, as one creeps up the *étages* in the apartment building, the staircase becomes narrower, the rooms slightly smaller, and the carpet changes from bright red to drab grey. The amount of space a person possesses dictates his or her social standing. The tiny, cold, cramped cubicles in the attic, tucked into the eaves of the building are reserved for its poorest residents (Nelson 136). They are more trapped inside, within the building's control, than the bourgeoisie, who have heated spacious apartments on lower floors. The windows of the dirty kitchens in which they slave for their employers overlook an inner courtyard connecting all the kitchens and therefore all the servants together. This inner courtyard becomes a place of squalor where the slops from the dinner are thrown out for Gourd, the concierge, to clean.

Marcus calls the cleaning out of the kitchens into the pristine courtyard "eruptions of and into filth" (177). The servants' inner courtyard is at the core of the building, the building's most enclosed space. This sullying of the core, according to Marcus, constitutes both "the invasion of the building's interior by external forces and figure an implosion that contaminates and collapses the building's interior from within" (177). I agree with Marcus that servants' slop, foul language, and gossiping conversations certainly contribute to the contamination of the building – as do Berthe's outburst, her mother's vanity, Campardon's affair, and Octave's sexual promiscuity. All of these occurrences are all interior forces. The servants are not exterior to the building but essential to it and contribute to the apartment house's ambiance and environment as much as the muddle class inhabitants do. Under all these contributing factors, the inner courtyard does represent a seething core ready to explode at any moment, simultaneously holding back and revolting against the overly rigid pretentious outward appearance of the building.

Nelson views enclosed structures such as the apartment house as central to Zola's stories and Lemaître believes that these immovable structures control and devour their inhabitants (especially concerning Colombe's bar in *L'Assommoir*). The servants, the middle class inhabitants, and the apartment house form a whole and each resists the rigid structure of the building and of the bourgeoisie's moral code in their own way: the servants throw the scraps from dinner and scream profanities into the courtyard; the middle class residents commit adultery among other indiscretions in their own homes;

and the house revolts against its showy appearance by the cracking of its walls and ceilings.

In Haussmann's new Paris, the cold, attic space was especially reserved and designed for the servants – simultaneously keeping them apart from the middle class and delineating their place as distinct from that of the middle class. In *Zola's Crowds*, Naomi Schor notes: Haussmann's Paris and all of Zola's locales are "characterized by the strict segregation of the classes; each class, each crowd, is confined to a ghetto, from the "golden ghetto" or the aristocrats in *La Fortune des Rougon* to the golden-in-name only ghetto of the poor in *L'Assommoir*" (131). In *Pot-Bouille*, the new bourgeoisie allows those that serve them to live in their apartment buildings; however, the servants have no chance for social advancement.

Not only is free movement in space denied to the lower classes and society's marginal beings, but also certain aspects of society – that of family – are denied the poor: "The bourgeois characters thus deny working-class tenants access to a familial interior, while granting themselves the privilege of interiorizing even adultery" (Marcus 176). Suddenly, family becomes a privilege, not a right, which is not bestowed on the servants living in the apartment building on the Rue de Choiseul. For example, the carpenter living on the top floor in one of the servant's hovels is planning to have a child with his wife. However, the concierge, and the owner, Vabre, would not allow his wife to enter the apartment house. They insist that no women be allowed to come into the house because it would contaminate the entire building. The carpenter pleads: "Mais c'est la mienne! ... Elle est en place, elle vient une fois par mois, quand ses maitres le

permettent… En voilà une histoire ! Ce n'est pas vous qui m'empêcherez de coucher avec ma femme, peut-être !" (157). [But she's my wife! … She's in domestic service, and only comes once a month, when her people let her have a day off. That's the plain truth of it. It's not your place to prevent me from sleeping with my wife, if you don't mind my saying so (113-4).] However, Gourd and Vabre stubbornly stand by their "no girls allowed" rule and force the carpenter to give notice and move out as well. The chapter ends with the carpenter's comment: "Hein? c'est drôle tout de même, qu'on vous empêche de coucher avec votre femme!" [Well, that's a funny thing, ain't it; when they won't let you sleep with your own lawful wife? (115).] The petit bourgeoisie who see it as their right to exert control over every individual in the house deny the carpenter and his wife the rights of a married couple and the chance to create a baby even within the confines of a legal marriage. Gourd and Vabre react extremely, alarmed by the idea of conspicuous sexual intimacy and the appearance of impropriety; they meet any perceived indiscretion by purging it from the house.

A greater offence, which horrifies the overly dignified concierge, is the presence of an unwed, pregnant woman, who is renting a small maid's room in the eaves of the building. Gourd confesses that he would never have let her a room had he known; having an unwed mother would not be tolerated in the respectable apartment house. Jules Lemaître in his article in David Baguley's *Critical Essays on Emile Zola* comments that Gourd becomes obsessed with the young woman's belly (49). Her largeness haunts him and he exclaims: "Comment! vous ne voyez pas… Ce ventre! ce ventre!" (319). Gourd feels that the belly of the pregnant woman is spoiling the house and mocking him. Her

belly continues to grow as time passes and Gourd feels that the woman is being not only indiscreet but also brazen. Octave sympathetically notices her sadness and loneliness and comments to Gourd that she looks sickly and lonely: "Elle a l'air très souffrant… Je la vois toujours si triste, si pâle, dans un tel abandon…" (320). [She looks very ill… She always seems so sad, so pale, so forlorn (252).] The idea of the young woman giving birth, however, horrifies Gourd. He responds to Octave's compassion: "La voyez-vous accoucher ici!" (320). He cannot sleep at night for fear that she will *nous jouer la mauvaise farce* [play a dirty trick on the house], i.e. give birth before moving.

Gourd finds her pregnancy such an affront to his dignity and to the building's respectability that he will force her out in six weeks time *before* the baby is born, reducing her and her baby into a state of homelessness. The removal of the mother-to-be from the apartment house reinforces the same motif present in the situation with Berthe: those who openly flaunt immorality (extra-martial affairs, pregnancy outside of wedlock) must be pushed outward from society and loose the privilege of shelter. Shelter in this context has a dual meaning: the physical shelter a house offers and the metaphorical shelter from the judging eye of society – her pregnancy has denied her both. Gourd forces her into homelessness, living on the periphery of a society that refuses to accept her.

Her pregnancy, seen as vulgar, indiscreet, dirty, and immoral, is similar to that of Adèle, the Josserands' maid, who has been impregnated by Duveyrier from the first floor. Adèle, throughout the story, has been described as dirty, slovenly, and stupid; she has arrived from Brittany and is in service in the Josserands' overbearing, vain household. Although continually browbeaten by Madame Josserand, Adèle's fear is too great to

allow her secret pregnancy to be known and thus she suffers alone and in silence: “Une terreur l’hébéta. Les idées de son village repoussaient au fond de ce crane obtus. Elle se crut damnée, elle s’imagina que les gendarmes viendraient la prendre, si elle avouait sa grossesse” (446). [She was numb with fear. Her uncomprehending brain conjured up all the beliefs of her native village. She believed that she was done for, that the police would come and carry her off if she confessed she was pregnant (361).] Her fear only confounds her loneliness and she is forced to suffer in silence. Had Gourd, Vabre, or anyone discovered the pregnancy she could be exiled from the building in the middle of labor.

Over the course of six pages, Zola describes Adèle’s agony, her painful labor, and the furtive birth of the baby girl, whom she quickly wraps and abandons into the street: “Elle put sortir… aller poser son paquet dans le passage Choiseul dont on ouvrait les grilles, puis remonter tranquillement” (452). [She managed to go down and deposit her bundle in the Passage Choiseul just as the gates were opened. Then she crept upstairs again (366).] The labor and birth suck her belief in God from her as she confronted her miserable existence: “Il y avait des médecins pour les chiens! Mais il n’y en avait pas pour elle” (451). [There were doctors for dogs, but no one cared for her (365).] Adèle understands better than the others discussed above her tenuous place in society and the need for secrecy. By concealing her pregnancy and discarding (killing) her child, she retains her shelter – the attic hovel – at least a little longer.

Zola continually evokes imagery of the labor as a violent pushing out, as of excrement, of filth, and of a burden. The pregnancy and now the birth are a great trauma and an overwhelming problem for Adèle, which she is barely able to handle. She wishes

to rid herself of the whole lonely ordeal and certainly the child as well. Her only relief comes after she has disposed of the body of the nearly dead baby and fortuitously meets no one as she climbs the stairs to her room: "Elle n'avait rencontré personne. Enfin, une fois dans sa vie, la chance était pour elle!" (452). [She came across no one. Finally, for once in her life, luck was on her side.] The birth of a baby is reduced to a filthy problem that must be expunged from her body and from the apartment building. In Julia Kristeva's terms, the baby is the abject, that which normally would be desired but what Zola makes undesirable, filthy, and disgusting, which forces Adèle to first expel (in birth) and then discard (in the alley) creating the necessary separation between mother and child (subject and object for Kristeva).[40] The young, tortured mother seeks to ignore the trauma and repress the experience as quickly as possible. Adèle is denied the right of motherhood because of her social status and she deeply fears imprisonment should anyone discover the baby and the "inconvenience" which the little life would bring to the building.

Immediately after the disposal, Adèle returns to her room to clean the remnants of the birth – the blood, the placenta, the excrement, and all the fluid from the floor – before finally laying down to rest and importantly before her employer comes to find her. Her act of the purification of her bedroom is a replication of Haussmann's act of cleansing the city of its slums and epidemics and the removal of tens of thousands of Paris's poorest

[40] See Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, especially Chapter 1: Approaching Abjection, and Chapters 7 and 8. The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism defines Kristeva's notion of the abject: "The abject is what the subject's consciousness has to expel or disregard in order to create the proper separation between subject and object… the abject is still unconsciously desired and thereby transformed into something undesirable, filthy, and disgusting, like the bodily process for which it stands" (2167).

inhabitants. In Adèle's ability to keep the room clean and pure, she is able to retain her home and she is not forced to leave as the carpenter and as the young pregnant woman both are. In addition, by remaining silent and away from the public's eye, she does not find herself scandalized and homeless as Berthe is.

Berthe, the pregnant woman, and Adèle experience alienation and fear because of their situations. They are highly controlled by the physical boundaries of the building, which have become imbued with meaning (intimate familial life, serene respectability, and secrecy), which is figuratively constructed by the middle class. The lower classes, when allowed to live in the same building, have no voice and must conform to bourgeois ideals.

Disorder, Boundaries, and Conclusion

Zola's dismal outlook on Napoleon III's authoritarian regime surfaces in *Pot-Bouille* and throughout the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle of novels. The promises and glories of the mid-century Second Republic and of the beginning of the Second Empire start to give way as the century waned. The initial excitement, the new business, and the burgeoning economy that Haussmann had brought to the city had faded. The cracks in the quickly built apartments, the dirt and city grime that Haussmann had not effaced, and the indiscretions of people incapable of keeping up appearances were beginning to show. Angus Wilson writes: "The optimistic, cocksure bourgeois world of the 'forties and 'fifties was giving way to fin-de-siècle, melancholy and ennui; all but the most obtuse felt the rotten boards creak beneath their feet, saw the scaffolding tremble above their heads"

(4). Zola seeks to expose these aspects of society, and there is something rather *macabre* that runs through many of his books.

Zola understands that the heart of narrative lies in the disarrangement or questioning of order. The action of the story occurs within the transgression (of Berthe) or even destruction (by Nana) of boundaries. While Henri Mitterand suggests that the entire system[41] is subverted, I propose that the characters may attempt such transgressions; however, in the end, the space is not destroyed, the social constructs and societal rules are still in place and not altered. The apartment building does not crumble, though its cracks are visible; adultery does not become acceptable in society; prostitutes and mistresses do not become wives.

Boundaries are transgressed, however, only temporarily, and Zola never permits their complete erasure, for to do so would dismiss his naturalism and the importance he places on environment and space, on heredity, and on social positioning to predetermine our human lives. Moreover, when transgressed, the characters are pushed into liminal spaces, such as Berthe into the stairwell or the young pregnant woman into the street. They exist in the peripheral areas of narrow spatial boundaries but are never completely outside of it. They remain part of the scene, simultaneously unable to fit in and unable to be truly on the exterior. They are both *apart* from the scene and *a part* of it. Space, its boundaries, and the liminal areas on the edge are an integral part of the narration for Zola. The very limits of the space create upheaval, distress, and disturbance for those hemmed in by it, and these limits hold the balance of the narration within their suffocating grasp.

[41] By "entire system" Mitterand refers to the social constructs of the Second Empire.

Only in the delicate balance of silence and purity can one retain his or her personal physical space, a private home.

Pot-Bouille ends as it begins: the silence and outward dignity of the house from the first chapter is reflected in the last (Nelson 146). Life rights itself for the bourgeoisie. There is no duel between August and Octave, Berthe returns to her husband, Madame Duveyrier continues to have her parties, Octave marries a successful widow, who will carry him far, outside the apartment house.[42] The imperfections of the bourgeoisie do not create lasting trauma or strife. The morning after Octave and August's argument and Berthe's frantic, naked flight in the stairwell, the apartment building seems unstirred:

> Ce matin-là, le réveil de la maison fut d'une grande dignité bourgeoise. Rien, dans l'escalier, ne gardait la trace des scandales de la nuit, ni les faux marbres qui avaient reflété ce galop d'une femme en chemise, ni la moquette d'où s'était évaporée l'odeur de sa nudité (364).
>
> [That morning, as the house awoke, it wore its most majestic air of middle-class decorum. On the staircase there was not a trace of the scandals of the night; the stucco paneling no longer reflected a lady scampering past in her nightshirt, nor did the carpet reveal the spot where the odor of her white body had evaporated (290).]

The secret interior lives of the middle class are more or less held together; the institution of the family remains a cornerstone of their existence; and their apartments continue to be

[42] Octave's eventual marriage and departure from the building brings about his success. Moreover, in managing Mme Hédouin's expanding drapery store, Octave squeezes out Auguste Vabre's nearby small shop (Nelson 157). The drowning out of smaller stores by larger enterprises is typical of the Second Empire and the bourgeoning modern age.

their palaces, while the servants remain in their frigid hovels in the attic on the verge of losing their own small place in society at a moment's notice. To have a "home" and a "family" is an aspect of society only granted to the bourgeoisie and is one that the bourgeoisie denies to the poorer classes. In Chapter 2, I continue with the plight of the poor by examining Zola's depiction of space in the faubourg and its effect on the inhabitants.

Chapter 2

Liminal Living in Zola's *L'Assommoir*

"There's no scandal like rags, nor any crime so shameful as poverty." — George Farquhar

"There were times my pants were so thin I could sit on a dime ad tell if it was heads or tails." — Spencer Tracy

Introduction

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the natural world just outside Paris's *octroi* wall[43] was quickly disappearing. Impoverished Parisians, homeless after having their residences expropriated and demolished by Napoleon III and Georges-Eugène Haussmann's public works projects, moved to the under-developed periphery. In the liminal space between city and country, the displaced Parisians were forced to forge themselves an existence neither defined by the bustling city nor the agriculturally based rural community. Perhaps inevitably, shantytowns, poorly constructed, looming, large tenements overcrowded with the city's poor, developed. Gervaise, Emile Zola's tragic heroine in *L'Assommoir* (1877), lives in one of these out-lying communities. Overflowing with marginalized people (including construction and factory workers, and

[43] The *octroi* wall was the continuous wall that surrounded Paris and designated the city's border. I will discuss the wall in greater depth presently.

those recently migrated from the country, namely the impoverished in society), her neighborhood is marked by blood, hunger, slaughterhouses, murder, darkness, poverty, alcoholism, the stench of death, and a lack of social resources, easily-navigated smooth roads, and green space with the *octroi* wall, delineating the barrier of the city proper, rising up next to her. The grey endless wall serves as an unending frame to the city in which life, business, and activity are contained.

The border between the city and its suburbs was more than noticeable: wide, open boulevards gave way to unpaved, narrow roads. The large wall, not unlike Kyoto's Rashōmon gate from centuries earlier, demarcated the border between safety and danger, life and death, a carefully constructed world and a wild, natural one. Over the course of Zola's novel, while buildings and boulevards replace the natural world of the periphery, Gervaise, a victim of Zola's rigid naturalism, society's disregard, and her milieu's reprehensible conditions, is slowly consumed by the space in which she lives. In *L'Assommoir,* Gervaise is slowly forced further and further from the safe central space of her community because of her miserable lot in life. Her eventual death occurs after her community abandons her in the liminal cubby beneath the stairwell in the apartment house where she used to rent a home.

In this chapter I analyze Zola's detailed descriptions of the spatial layout and the disintegration of the natural elements of Paris's periphery through Gervaise's experiences and interactions with it. In the course of the decades which the novel spans, her milieu, on the impoverished outskirts of affluent, bourgeois Paris, holds her neighbors and her captive. Even though the city eventually engulfs the faubourg into its boundaries, it is too

late for Gervaise. She has already started her descent downwards and cannot be saved. Zola indicts society as he writes in his preface to *L'Assommoir*:

> J'ai voulu peindre la déchéance fatale d'une famille ouvrière, dans le milieu empesté de nos faubourgs. Au bout de l'ivrognerie et de la fainéantise, il y a le relâchement des liens de la famille, les ordures de la promiscuité, l'oubli progressif des sentiments honnêtes, puis come dénouement la honte et la mort (7).[44]

Zola argues that it is poverty from which Gervaise dies. I agree, and further argue that it is poverty inflicted on her by society and aggravated by a lack of social resources – specifically by the rejection and lack of connection to a greater social network with adequate resources to save her. While alcoholism and idleness play a role in her downfall, it is her environment that has the greatest effect and dictates the outcome of her life.

Displacement to Paris's Periphery

David Pinkney writes in *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris:* "Both Napoleon and Haussmann professed and actually demonstrated in many ways their desire to improve living conditions in Paris" (93). Pinkney and other historians of the Second Empire (David Jordan, Sigfried Giedion, and Howard Saalman) believe that Napoleon

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[44] [I have endeavored to paint the fatal downfall of a family of the working class, in the tainted atmosphere of our suburbs. After drunkenness and sloth, come a relaxation of family ties, the evils of over-crowding, the gradual lapse from honestly, then, by way of *dénouement*, shame and death (3).]

All citations from *L'Assommoir* in the original French are from the Gallimard edition, published in 1978. Translations of citations in English are from Nicholas White's edition of *L'Assommoir* published by Everyman in 1995. If there is no page number following an English translation, then the translation is my own.

and Haussmann's decision to destroy the slums was indeed necessary to improve the heath of the city as a whole. They give little if any concern or interest for the people who lived in them. In the two decades of the Second Empire, tens of thousands of residents were displaced, driven out of their homes, in Paris's oldest, central areas, either by massive demolitions to create space for Haussmann's avenues or by high rents in the new buildings that sprouted up along the newly drawn boulevards (Pinkney 165).

To displace is to banish or to remove something from its place, often for political gains and also complicating issues of identity (Lavie 13-14). The goal in redevelopment, such as Haussmann's development of Paris, was indeed to remove or "oust" the poor from their quarters and to "replace" them and their homes with elegant apartment houses. The poor were effectively banished from central Paris, unable to afford apartments in the new buildings, and therefore were displaced persons. A displaced person is someone who is "removed from his home country by military or political pressure… and thereafter homeless."[45] This term was first used in the mid-1940's after the end of World War II to describe refugees and those without homes, who were "still wandering about." The tens of thousands Parisians expelled from central Paris were essentially homeless until large tenements rose up on the outskirts of the city in order to house them. In addition, a large number of people moved from the provinces to work in the new machine-operated industries in textiles, iron making, and coal refining of the nineteenth century; however, although work was plenty, housing was limited and the conditions dreadful (Knapp 64).

[45] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, to displace is "to banish" (its second definition) or "to oust (something) from its place and occupy it instead; …to put something else in the place of; …to take the place of, supplant, 'replace' (its third definition).

This forced demolition of the old, dilapidated buildings occurred in the poorest, most congested quarters of the Central Markets, near the Rue de Rivoli, and on the Ile de la Cité.[46] While fashioning a cleaner, healthier city and while attracting new business and commerce as well as tourists for years to come, Haussmann stole some of the city's soul; by eradicating parts of its history and culture. Ancient monuments, medieval relics, and historic buildings in the Latin Quarter and the Marais were erased if they stood in the path of one of the wide, straight streets. All in all, Haussmann, the "indefatigable worker," demolished 19,722 residences and erected 43,777 new houses (Knapp 47).

Haussmann chose to extend the Boulevard Sébastopol through the Ile de la Cité in constructing the north-south section of his *grande croisée*. The southern axis route became the Boulevard Saint-Michel. In order to accomplish this project, the residents of the Ile needed to leave. More than fourteen thousand people were living on the small island, which was undoubtedly one of the most cramped slums within Paris. Haussmann's goal was to design the island as an exclusive place for medicine, religion, and law. He had desired to destroy every private residence on the Ile; and he nearly succeeded. By the end of the empire only two small areas of old residences remained: the first at the north branch of the river at the end of the island near the Pont Neuf and the second opposite the western front of the Palais de Justice. Only a few hundred residents continued to call the Ile de la Cité their home (Haussmann III 554; Pinkney 87).

[46] Haussmann's projects were quite effective in these areas, which in present day Paris, are places of business and government, upscale, open, and clean.

Faubourg and Parisian residents alike regularly argued about the emperor and Haussmann's motivations behind the renovations and recreation of Paris. As Zola describes in *L'Assommoir:*

> Le chapelier ne tarissait pas sur les démolitions de Paris; il accusait l'empereur de mettre partout des palais, pour renvoyer les ouvriers en province; et le sergent de ville, pâle d'une colère froide, répondait qu'au contraire l'empereur songeait d'abord aux ouvriers, qu'il raserait Paris, s'il le fallait, dans le seul but de leur donner du travail (409).[47]

Zola's description contains two aspects of the public works projects, namely (1) they employed many Parisians who otherwise would have no work and (2) they evicted the very same workers who were constructing the new buildings and boulevards from their homes within Paris's walls. The workers and their families, unable to afford the new affluent apartment houses of the second empire, were forced to leave their neighborhoods, their social networks, and Paris's multitude of resources behind and move to the peripheral areas of the city.

In reality, while Haussmann was aware of the number of people the public works projects employed, Napoleon and Haussmann's expressed concerns revolved almost exclusively around the wellbeing of the city and its streets, as well as the wellbeing of Paris's bourgeois residents. To this end, their building regulations dealt almost entirely

[47] [The hatter was never tired of talking about the demolition of Paris; he accused the Emperor of putting up palaces everywhere, so as to send the working men into the country; and the policeman, cold and pale with rage, declared that on the contrary, the Emperor's first thoughts were about the working men, that he would pull down all Paris, if need be, simply to provide them with work (345).]

with appearances only. Architects and construction workers were required to conform to predetermined façades and regulations concerning the height of new apartment buildings, but, assuming the height and face matched the other buildings on the block, the interior could be as shoddy as the ancient, dilapidated tenements. As a result, many builders erected overly crowded apartments void of air with, of course, the proper Second Empire façade (Pinkney 93). Giedion explains one example of this masked squalor on the Avenue Richard Lenoir. With the Canal Saint Martin underground, the meridian of green space dividing the avenue, and uniform apartments lining the street, the chaos and disorder behind this façade lay well hidden. Giedion writes: "Haussmann used the uniform façade as a kind of closet door behind which all the disorder could be crammed. All other aspects of the life of the city were sacrificed to the problem of traffic" (772). Zola would agree with Giedion; and he exposes this disorder and turmoil in *Pot-Bouille*.

In addition, little regard was given to the poor of the city or their residences; they were utterly ignored. Therefore, in their anxiety to erase the appearance of the old slums from Paris's center, Napoleon and Haussmann did little to protect against the construction of new ones; nor did they "protect residence areas from the encroachment of industry" (Pinkney 219). New slums quickly replaced the old ones, either in the periphery or in the center; except those in the center of Paris had wide streets with pretty frontages. According to Roger Gould in *Insurgent Identities*: "Urban blight, homelessness, poverty, unemployment, and crime… their elimination in one domain will only make them resurface somewhere else" (8). This phenomenon occurred in Haussmann's time and certainly still occurs today. Chapter 4 will look at present-day instances of shantytowns

and other slums including the *banlieue* outside of Paris home to many Algerians, other minority immigrants, and the poor. Through redevelopment, which seems to necessarily result in gentrification, residents of cities are regularly removed, or displaced, from one area and forced to relocate in another, usually less desirable area.

Before Haussmann's reconstruction, the poor, working classes and the rich bourgeoisie lived side by side, or rather on top of each other – the rich in the larger apartments on the first floors of a building and the poor servants in tiny rooms in the attic (as in *Pot-Bouille*). However, the gentrification, which Haussmann's public works projects started, divided areas of Paris and its periphery into social classes with the rich residing at its center with easy access to public resources and the poor living in the underdeveloped margins, creating a highly charged class divisions with long lasting political implications Such as the Commune in 1871. According to F. W. J. Hemmings, *L'Assommoir* articulates the conditions (which I discuss in the next section) that made the Commune possible. As Colette Wilson notes: "Haussmannization did indeed result in the segregation of social groups and it did mark the contrast between the bourgeois city centre and its working-class periphery" (Paris 7). The outskirts of the city, located between the official limits and the *octroi* wall, included Les Batignolles, Montmartre, La Chapelle, La Villette, and Belleville (on the Right Bank) and Ivry, Montrouge, and Vaugirard (on the Left Bank) (Pinkney 166). Gervaise moves to one of these communities – on the Rue de la Goutte d'Or just north of Boulevard de la Chapelle between Montmartre and La Villette. She comes to Paris in 1850 with her boyfriend,

Claude Lantier, and their two children, leaving her country home in the hopes of finding a better life; she dies in the same area in 1869.

In the opening pages of the novel, Gervaise is waiting at her window for Lantier, her deceitful lover. She is living in the Hôtel Boncoeur on Boulevard de la Chapelle, to the left of the Barrière Poissonière. In Gervaise's attempt to locate Lantier among the people in the streets visible from her window, Zola creates the opportunity[48] to describe the slum around her:

> Elle regardait à droite, du côté du boulevard de Rochechouart, où des groupes de bouchers, devant les abattoirs, stationnaient en tabliers sanglants ; et le vent frais apportait une puanteur par moments, une odeur fauve de bêtes massacrées. Elle regardait à gauche, enfilant un long ruban d'avenue[49], s'arrêtant, presque en face d'elle à la masse blanche de l'hôpital de Lariboisière, alors en construction. Lentement, d'un bout à l'autre de l'horizon, elle suivait le mur de l'octroi, derrière lequel, la nuit, elle entendait parfois des cris d'assassinés ; et elle fouillait les angles écartés, les coins sombres, noirs d'humidité et d'ordure (10-11).[50]

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[48] As does Muffat's waiting for Nana at the exit of the theatre in Zola's *Nana* "allow the description of the Passage des Panoramas" (Pierre-Gnassounou 98). These opening scenes are similar to a long shot or an establishing shot in film. They offer valuable setting information from the view of a particular character.

[49] Gervaise's neighborhood, while Zola was composing *L'Assommoir* in 1877, had already been annexed to the city proper; Haussmann had by this time built long avenues reaching the outlying communities. However, in 1850, when Gervaise first came to Paris, Haussmann's long avenues did not yet exist in this area.

[50] [She looked to the right, in the direction of the Boulevard de Rochechouart, where groups of butchers in blood-stained aprons stood about in front of the slaughter-houses; and the fresh breeze brought up from time to time a grim stench of slaughtered beasts. She looked to the left,

Her community exists just outside the octroi wall delineating the barrier of the city proper by one the ports (Barrière Poissonière), which marks an entrance to Paris. Xavier Bourdenet notes: "Les barrières sont le lieu d'un people marginalisé" (10). [The city's barriers are a place for the marginalized.] Zola's portrayal of the scene includes blood and slaughterhouses, construction and new buildings, murderous cries and darkness, and always the wall, which he describes as "cette muraille grise et interminable" (11) [this grey, endless wall].

She leaves the streets immediately adjacent to her home only a few times[51] in novel covering nineteen years of her life. Her lack of mobility imprisons her within the confines of her neighborhood outside of Paris's center. The mobility and openness newly characteristic of the city center, thanks to Haussmann's new, wide, straight streets, had yet to reach the periphery. Zola underscores the tension between stagnation and mobility in the Second Empire in his novels. In *L'Assommoir* the tension rests in the stark differences of the reconfigured city center and the underdeveloped periphery. In *Pot-Bouille* the claustrophobic interiors of the middle class apartments create tension that results in periodic explosions as a pot boiling over from too much pressure. The border between the city and its suburbs was more than noticeable; it represented a drastic change: wide, open boulevards gave way to unpaved, narrow roads. The large wall

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following the long trail of the avenue, which came to an end, almost opposite, at the white mass of the Lariboisière hospital, then in course of construction. Slowly from one end of the horizon to the other, she followed the city wall, behind which she had sometimes heard at night the cries of people being murdered; and she peered into the lonely angles, the dark corners, black with slime and filth (6).]

[51] She first leaves on her wedding day to have an outing to the Louvre. She does not leave again until her husband is dying and she travels into Paris to visit him at the hospital Sainte-Anne.

demarcated the border of safety and danger, life and death. The neighborhoods in the suburbs were particularly unsafe with fewer police officers and unsanitary conditions lacking appropriate sewers (Pinkney 171). On January 1, 1860, the suburbs were finally added and officially became part of the city of Paris, and the eighteen separate communities then desperately needed to be incorporated into the city (Giedion 750).

After the annexation of these areas in 1860, Haussmann did not ignore this area completely; he improved the streets, added sewers, created a better water supply, and built churches and schools. To his chagrin, however, the population grew faster than he could build. The center of the city experienced a net loss of 7,045 people between the years of 1861 and 1869, whereas the peripheral areas gained 28,115 people during the same period (Gould 79). Perhaps inevitably, shantytowns – poorly constructed, large tenements overcrowded with the city's poor – developed (Pinkney 166). These areas continued to increase rapidly in population as more and more workers were drawn to the urban center away from the country due to Napoleon's public works projects. In only ten years, the population of the suburbs jumped to 368,000 people. Moreover, since Haussmann's time, the same area has increased in population by more than eight hundred percent, whereas the city center has gained only seventy percent (Giedion 774).

Haussmann had included in his plans for Paris encircling the entire city including the suburbs with a green belt (Jordan 276). This green belt would connect the Bois de Boulogne with the Bois de Vincennes and serve as a vast green space for the suburbs and the poorer populations who lived there. Haussmann's plan had great foresight considering modern environmentalists encourage cities to have dense centers (rather than sprawling

outwards) with green space surrounding the outside. However, when Napoleon was away, the *Conseil d'état* defeated the idea. Haussmann wrote in his *Mémoires* that the president of the council, Baroche, was a narrow-minded bourgeois of the middle class and opposed Haussmann's "great works:" "Son Président, M. Baroche, y opposa des arguties de droit que je parvins enfin à tourner. Jamais, du reste, cet ami de M. Berger, ce bourgeois de 1830, ne s'est montré favorable à mon administration" (Haussmann II, 246). Baroche fought and defeated the whole project (Giedion 751). Giedion argues that if Haussmann had been able to add public parks to this peripheral area, multiple story tenements stretching out in continuous rows would not have been constructed (751). These enormous, newly formed slums made embellishing and re-planning the city even more difficult than the original fortifications had been (Giedion 752).

The Space of the Slums

Gervaise, like Octave, is from the country town of Plassans. In the opening of *L'Assommoir*, Gervaise experiences the same dizziness and overwhelmed feeling as Octave feels in the opening of *Pot-Bouille*:

> Mais c'était toujours à la barrière Poissonnière qu'elle revenait, le cou tendu, s'étourdissant à voir couler, entre les deux pavillons trapus de l'octroi, le flot ininterrompu d'hommes, de bêtes, de charrettes, qui descendait des hauteurs de Montmartre et de la Chapelle. Il y avait là un piétinement de troupeau, une foule que de brusques arrêts étalaient en mares sur la chaussée, un défilé sans fin d'ouvriers allant au travail, leurs

outils sur le dos, leur pain sous le bras; et la cohue s'engouffrait dans Paris où elle se nouait, continuellement (11).[52]

Zola uses the same word, "étourdir," in both stories. For Octave, Paris is swarming with people; for Gervaise, there is an endless stream of people, nearly trampling each other. Both are made dizzy by the amount of activity moving in front of their eyes. Gervaise notes the endless stream of men going to work from the faubourgs to Paris through the Barrière Poissonnière: "À la barrière, le piétinement de troupeau continuait, dans le froid du matin" (12). [At the barrier, in the chill of the morning, that trampling as of a herd in motion, still went on (7).] The men seemed to be engulfed and swallowed up, "s'engouffrait," by the city as they plunge into it. The city has the power to consume, not unlike in *Pot-Bouille* and *Au Bonheur des dames*, where Zola concentrates on world of shops and new enterprise and in which Octave initially feels lost at the beginning of *Pot-Bouille*. Octave, however, has a very different life story than Gervaise; where he is able to navigate through the crowds and business world becoming a consumer of it, Gervaise is not and drowns in the urban jungle.

Bettina Knapp comments that Zola's "sea of people" will "pounce on her and destroy her" (67). Knapp sees the central struggle in *L'Assommoir* as between Gervaise and the collective society, which "confuses Gervaise, traumatizes her, and forces her to lose her way in life" (67). I would further Knapp's argument and suggest that the city and

[52] [She leaned out, dizzy with the unending flood that passed between the two squat sheds of the excise – men, beasts, and carts, coming down from the heights of Montmartre and La Chapelle. There was a trampling, as of a herd in motion, a concourse of people, scattered over the roadway by a sudden block, an endless file of men going to work, their tools on their back, their bread under their arm; and the whole pack plunged ceaselessly into the depths of Paris (6-7).]

faubourg (her environment) play an insidious role, and actually create the circumstances for Gervaise's inevitable downfall, rather than her own laziness. Environment is significantly stronger than hereditary influences in *L'Assommoir*. Notably, Zola is writing *L'Assommoir* in the aftermath of the Commune, although the story takes place before it. Hemmings explains: "*L'Assommoir* … described in vivid and convincing detail the conditions that had made the Commune possible and perhaps even inevitable" (83). By exposing the reprehensible conditions of the faubourgs, especially in contrast to the living conditions and lifestyles of the bourgeoisie, Zola is insinuating that the bourgeoisie should build a better world – one with adequate housing, schools, and resources as well as reasonable working conditions and fair wages – for the working poor, as the working poor had built the bourgeoisie under Haussmann's direction. Hemmings writes: "The evils [Zola] showed – promiscuity, delinquency, alcoholism – were, he insisted, the inevitable results of a bad environment, which only needed to be changed for the evils to disappear" (84-85). Gervaise's downfall, therefore, is effectively caused by society's lack of interest in the situation of the poor and the dastardly conditions of her milieu, not her genes (which ostensibly make her susceptible to alcoholism, laziness, and self-destructive behavior).

For Gervaise, there is a darkness to the consumption of the city that seems to drain life from people rather than adding to it: Les ouvriers "marchaient toujours, sans un rire, sans une parole dite à un camarade, les joues terreuses, la face tendue vers Paris, qui, un à un, les dévorait, par la rue béante du faubourg Poissonnière" (12). [The workmen walked onward, "without a laugh, without a word to one another, their cheeks sallow,

their eyes fixed on Paris, which swallowed them up, one by one, down the gaping mouth of the Rue du Faubourg-Poisonnière (8).] The men drone on in silence, their faces transfixed on what is in front of them, the great city, which devours them, "les dévorait," as they enter into it. The men seem lost, as if in a trance, taken by the current of people along the road, conducting them into the city's entrance. The imagery of death, of loss, of hopelessness, which Zola creates through the long, tired faces of the workmen, their silent humorless march to Paris, and the smell of death from the slaughterhouses (that I discussed earlier), is vivid here and in contrast to the life of the city in *Pot-Bouille*. The faubourg's imaginary is a wasteland for lost souls.

Like the workers, the darkness of the city envelops Gervaise. Over the course of Zola's novel, the space in which she lives consumes her. Throughout the entire *Rougon-Macquart* cycle of novels, hereditary and society dictate how a character lives and dies. In *L'Assommoir* as well as in *Pot-Bouille*, characters are entirely controlled by their milieus and a character's gene's play only a secondary role: "The milieu explains why workers act, look, and smell like workers. In other novels, other milieus explain why the rich act and smell rich, why the members of the bourgeoisie act and look bourgeois" (Petrey 39). Gervaise is unable to escape from her neighborhood, a place filled with poverty, alcoholism, hunger, and the cold, and is therefore ruined by the environment surrounding her. Sandy Petrey explains in the article "Zola and the Representation of Society" that Gervaise is a "gentle, loving woman dedicated to creating a better life for those close to her no matter how hard she must work to attain it" (41). However, within the milieu, which society imposes upon her, she is "a slatternly woman who sees her life

get worse every day despite the virtues she deploys in her struggle against deterioration" (41). While Gervaise becomes lazy as the novel progresses (as her husband is injured, becomes an alcoholic, invites Lantier to live with them, and eats and drinks away all their money), initially Gervaise is characterized as determined, hard working, with goals and a life plan: she works diligently at the laundry houses to provide for her children until she is able to save (and borrow) enough money to open her own laundry, in which she takes great pride. Had her environment, one of constant misery, not stifled these characteristics, or had Gervaise lived elsewhere, her fate could have been significantly different. While laziness may be her fatal flaw, it is activated and enhanced by her milieu, making environment, not hereditary, the more damning aspect of this tragic story. Petrey articulates that for Zola, "the milieu explains the character" (40), unlike his contemporaries who believed that "the character explains the milieu" (40).[53] Therefore, Zola takes great care in his numerous and lengthy descriptions of Gervaise's environment, as these surroundings, and not her own personal motivations, determine her future. The stench from the slaughterhouse, the murderous cries at night, the tall impenetrable octroi wall, and the massive crowd of despondent workers create a bleak milieu in the opening pages of the novel. In fact, the number of descriptions of Gervaise's neighborhood greatly outweighs the time dedicated to describing Gervaise's personality,

[53] According to Petrey, Zola's contemporaries believe: "Members of the bourgeoisie live in a clean and healthy world because they understand that cleanliness is next to godliness and act accordingly. Workers live in a filthy and degraded environment because they have appalling habits that lead them to trash their surroundings and ruin their lives along with their neighborhoods" (40).

namely because for Zola, it is the society and the neighborhood surrounding her that creates her character.

The Tenement of the Faubourg

Zola weaves descriptions of the spatial layout of Gervaise's neighborhood throughout the novel starting with the opening pages as she gazes upon the street and the lost workers passing by. As readers, we see the neighborhood and its buildings through Gervaise's eyes: we see the workers trudging through the barrier, we hear the murderous cries, and we, like Gervaise, feel overpowered by the surrounding structures. Before she marries and moves into the large tenement, where she lives for most of the story, Zola spends pages describing the tenement as a powerful entity – "immense, ugly, and falling" apart (41, 52). He juxtaposes the building with Gervaise – her gaze rises up to meet the building as it bears down on her:[54] "Gervaise haussait le menton, examinait la façade" (52). [Gervaise looked up, and examined the front of the house (41).] She visually absorbs its five stories, each with fifteen windows across: "les persiennes noires, aux lames cassées, donnaient un air de ruine à cet immense pan de muraille" (52). [Their black and dilapidated shutters gave an aspect of desolation to the immense frontage (41).] Small rundown buildings bordering it only intensify the immense frontage of the tenement house.

The façade was large enough to house four shops: an eating-house, a coal merchant's, a haberdasher's, and an umbrella shop. The building in its entirety "profilait

[54] The same contrast between character and building occurs in the banlieue films *L'Esquive* and *La Haine*, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

sur le ciel clair, au-dessus des toits voisins, son énorme cube brut, ses flancs non crépis, couleur de boue, d'une nudité interminable de murs de prison, où des rangées de pierres d'attente semblaient des mâchoires caduques, bâillant dans le vide" (52). [It stood out in relief against the sky, high over the neighboring roofs, with its huge rough cubic mass, its dingy, unplastered sides, stark and interminable as prison walls, in which the rows of dentated ornament seemed like decrepit jaws gaping (42).] The house, "se pourrissant et s'émiettant sous la pluie" (52) [crumbling and chipping under the rain (42)], overwhelms the adjacent buildings with its height, and dominates the neighborhood by its sheer mass, in spite of, or perhaps partly because of, its dilapidated state. Zola's adept use of description places the reader in Gervaise's position, and encourages the reader to feel the same sense of power, which Gervaise feels, emitting from the overbearing building.

Zola personifies both exterior and interior space and the building becomes a character in its own right throughout the story. Knapp describes the house on the Rue de la Goutte d'Or as having its own personality and confining all characters within it:

> It participates in the drama, the sequences of events enacted on Zola's stage: it deprecates, denigrates, reintegrates the atmosphere of decay and pollution. It personifies feelings, shadows, and unregenerate characteristics. There is no escape from the 'giant' and monstrous building; it envelops Gervaise body and soul, absorbing and dehydrating her life flow, as it seals her existence (69).

Knapp's ideas are reflected in Zola's description of the house. The ominous nature of the building, which parallels the weight and force of society, serves to represent the control

society exerts over the people within its grasp: “Alors, il sembla à Gervaise que la maison était sur elle, écrasante, glaciale à ses épaules” (71). [And it seemed to Gervaise that the house was upon her, about to crush her, striking a chill in her shoulders (58).] The weight of the massive building bears down on her. The representation of society, notes Petrey, “takes the form of representing a monster because society’s effects on those unfortunate enough to live under its dominion are monstrous… Gervaise… looks at a tenement house and sees an immense weight ready to fall on her shoulders and crush her to death” (41). The sheer mass of the building is enough to intimidate Gervaise. Moreover, Zola is overtly foreshadowing that the tenement will eventually absorb Gervaise, its filth and ruined-nature will seep into her being, poison and overtake her, and as a result, she will die.

Gervaise, while waiting for Coupeau, her soon-to-be husband, explores the building further, enters the courtyard, and “leva de nouveau les yeux” (52) [looked up once more (42)]. From within, she notes six stories, with four tall facades enclosing the huge central square. Each of the huge walls is grey, “mangées d’une lèpre jaune, rayées de bavures par l’égouttement des toits, qui montaient toutes plates du pavé aux ardoises, sans une moulure; seuls les tuyaux de descente se coudaient aux étages, où les caisses béantes des plombs mettaient la tache de leur fonte rouillée” (53) [eaten away with a yellow rot, marked in long streaks by the drippings of the roofs; they rose straight up in the air, from the paving stones to the slates, without a single molding; only the waste-pipes curved out at the different stories, where the gaping mouths of the gullies left a stain of rusty iron (42).] Zola’s description of walls of yellow leprosy, “lèpre jaune,”

rising high, marked only by empty gaping holes, "caisses béantes," creates the image of the house consuming itself, almost growing in size and strength through its own consumption of its very walls and what is contained behind them. By the end of the novel, the house consumes her as well. In addition, the imagery of the building's self-consumption suggests an unquenchable thirst for more, while being unable to withstand its current levels of occupancy: its residents, their laundry, the sound of arguments, and the smells of food are bulging outward through the windows and doors throughout the descriptions of the building.

Each aspect of the house that Zola describes only further strengthens the idea of a giant creature: filthy, dark, and never satisfied. "Les fenêtres sans persienne montraient des vitres nues, d'un vert glauque d'eau trouble" (53). [The windows had no shutters; the curtainless glass had the greenish hue of muddy water (42).] The windows are stripped bare, without any adornments except for laundry hanging out to dry. The drying clothes illustrate the life within as it bursts from the windows of the central courtyard: "Du haut en bas, les logements trop petit crevaient au-dehors, lâchaient des bouts de leur misère par toutes les fentes" (53). [From top to bottom, these narrow lodgments burst their way out, showing the fag-ends of their misery at every crevice (42).] The inhabitants, with nothing to hide, allow their lives to hang out, revealing themselves to their neighbors within the building. According to Michelle Perrot in the fourth volume of *A History of Private Life*, the poor, who lived "crowded together in filthy hovels, …seemed to tolerate an indiscriminate mingling" (349). Barriers are broken down between them and they are less protected over space. They expose themselves and the interior (private) becomes

exterior (public). Gervaise's eyes follow a doorway: "une porte, haute et étroite, sans boiserie" (53) [a high, narrow doorway, without wainscoting (42)], which opens to a "vestibule lézardé" [cracked lobby (42)] with "vitrages noirs de poussière" [windows black with dust (42)], which leads to "les marches boueuses" [muddy, slimy steps (42)].

However, Gervaise notes life amongst the ruins – people talking, children laughing, and smells of cooking – in addition to the eruptions from each window. Because of the life within the building's four walls, to Gervaise: "La maison ne lui semblait pas laid" (54). [The house seemed to her by no means ugly (43).] She is even able to imagine herself living here on the sunny side of the courtyard. The tenement, containing such a large degree of activity and liveliness, allows her to ignore the ruinous state of the building, the barrenness of the walls, the poverty erupting from within. Again, Zola traces the gaze of Gervaise: "Et Gervaise lentement promenait son regard, l'abaissait du sixième étage au pavé, remontait, surprise de cette énormité se sentant au milieu d'un organe vivant, au cœur même d'une ville, intéressée par la maison comme si elle avait eu devant elle une personne géante" (53-54). [And Gervaise looked slowly up and down, from the sixth story to the ground, and up again, overwhelmed by the hugeness of the place, feeling as if she were in the midst of a living organism, in the very heart of a city, interested by the house as if it were some great living giant (43).] Zola has the space of the tenement to take on a life of its own, and thus, he imbibes it with power. The personification gives the house the qualities of life – breathing, eating, and dying. Knapp adds that the house is endowed with its own existence (68-69): "Zola, the animist, has injected… sensations of all types – into his depiction… of the house... Inanimate

objects assume lives of their own: they breathe, sigh, regret, enjoy, and pulsate their rhythms of gratification or resentment. They react to the world of workers, filling them with a sense of need or detachment" (72). The personification of the house figuratively brings it to life as another character in the story, indeed a very central character that affects all other characters that come in contact with it and certainly those who live within its crumbling walls. The tenement is a living, breathing monster, controlling all within its grasp. In this way, Gervaise becomes a puppet of the house.

Gervaise, who only recently moved from the country, is shocked by the immensity of such a building. The slums of the city are entirely foreign to the imagination of the country. The shocking internal images of the tenement are no different. Pages later Gervaise visits the inside of the tenement house with Coupeau, whose relatives, the Lorilleux, live on the top floor. As Gervaise mounts the stairs to her soon to be in-laws' home, Zola carefully notes the smells and sounds of each floor:

> "En effet, l'escalier B, gris, sale, la rampe et les marches graisseuses, les murs éraflés montrant le plâtre, était encore plein d'une violente odeur de cuisine. Sur chaque palier, des couloirs s'enfonçaient, sonores de vacarme, des portes s'ouvraient, peintes en jaune, noircies à la serrure par la crasse des mains ; et, au ras de la fenêtre, le plomb soufflait une humidité fétide, dont la puanteur se mêlait à l'âcreté de l'oignon cuit. On entendait, du rez-de-chaussée au sixième, des bruits de vaisselle, des poêlons qu'on

barbotait, des casseroles qu'on grattait avec des cuillers pour les récurer" (61).[55]

Zola's description is full of sensory experiences: the sounds of dishes clanking together; the sights of plaster falling and dirt caked on doorknobs; the feel of a greasy handrail and a dark claustrophobic hallway; and the smell and taste of boiled onions. Moreover, the sensations are violent and intrusive to the senses: Zola describes the cooking smells as "violente" [violent] and "âcreté" [acidic and sharp] and the corridors as "sonores de vacarme" [an echoing racket, a cacophony]. The horrid condition of the building is clear in Zola's vivid imagery. This scene is far removed from both the landscape of the French countryside and the cityscape of Paris.

This milieu has its own distinct culture isolating it from both the ornate, overdone facades of the city-world and the bucolic serenity of the country. These out-lying city spaces bordering the country are liminal places between the two more clearly defined locations. However, unlike a typical transitional place, one that is only occupied when moving from city to country or vice versa, this border area has become a partially stable location, marked by shops, restaurants, businesses, and housing for its displaced residents who do not wish to live in the country but who have not gained full access to the city. Therefore the border area's liminal qualities are vanishing, as it becomes a defined milieu, rather than an unstable border region. In this area with rampant alcoholism,

[55] [Staircase B, grey and filthy, with its greasy steps and rails, its walls from which the plaster was dropping, was indeed full of the odor of cooking. On each landing there were long corridors, loud and echoing; there was an opening of doors, painted yellow, and blackened at the lock by the dirt of hands; and at the level of the window, the gullies gave out a fetid odor, which mixed with the sharp smell of boiled onions. From ground floor to sixth story could be heard the clatter of dishes, of frying pans moved, of saucepans scraped with spoons to scour them (49).]

poverty, and substandard living conditions, misery is nearly certain and not just a possibility. However, those that live in the faubourg remain in an in-between state; they desire a more affluent urban lifestyle, one that is simply unattainable because they are denied access to it living in their enclosed microcosm.[56]

Zola's initial description of the exterior of Gervaise's building combined with this one of the interior echoes the opening description of Octave's apartment house and its grand, central stairwell. Gervaise and Octave have each recently arrived from the country; however, the buildings, which they inhabit, represent their starkly different fates, that of the middle class and that of the poor. One notable difference between Octave's apartment building and Gervaise's tenement is the sheer number of apartments. For Octave there are one or two on each floor; for Gervaise, the apartments are too numerous to count. Yet, there are also similarities between the two spaces. The tenement overwhelms Gervaise, and she, like all the inhabitants of the tenement and the tenants of Octave's bourgeois building, can have no effect on the building. They are entirely under the building's control; this space, and their modest homes within the larger structure, has ultimate power over them.

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[56] In Chantal Pierre-Gnassounou's article, "Zola and the art of fiction," she articulates that in *L'Assommoir* the tenement house on the Rue de la Goutte d'Or groups all the characters and therefore nearly all the action of the story into one location. Notably, the same is also true for Octave's apartment house in bourgeois Paris. Pierre-Gnassounou writes: "The space of the novel (even when taken from the real world) is never a mere setting of the activity of the characters, but clearly plays a part in the economy of the narrative. This can be seen in *L'Assommoir*, in which the tenement building has a particularly evident function: it permits the novelist to house together most of his characters, thus facilitating their circulation, the encounters and conflicts between them, which take place without troublesome plotting problems. The communal building contributes to the ineluctable centralization of the novel, which is not dispersed over multiple locations. Space can even constitute the main issue in the conflict being related" (94-95).

Gervaise and Octave have parallel experiences in that both climb the stairwell to the top of their respective buildings. When Octave reaches the fourth floor:

> Octave se sentit pénétrer par le silence grave de l'escalier. Il se pencha sur la rampe, dans l'air tiède qui venait du vestibule ; il leva la tête, écoutant si aucun bruit ne tombait d'en haut. C'était une paix morte de salon bourgeois, soigneusement clos, où n'entrait pas un souffle du dehors. Derrière les belles portes d'acajou luisant, il y avait comme des abimes d'honnêteté (22).[57]

Octave experiences silence, calm, and large closed doors; however, it is a "paix morte" or a deadly peace, suffocating and empty. Gervaise's experience is strikingly different – one of loud sounds and ugly smells. Moreover, when she finally reaches the top of the staircase, "les jambes cassées, l'haleine courte" (62) [stiff and panting (50)],[58] "elle eut la curiosité de se pencher au-dessus de la rampe…; et les odeurs, la vie énorme et grondante de la maison, lui arrivaient dans une seule haleine, battaient d'un coup de chaleur son visage inquiet, se hasardant là comme au bord d'un gouffre" (62). [She leaned curiously over the banister…; the smells, the rumbling sound of the whole huge place came up all in one breath – a great puff of heat against her anxious face, leaning forward as at the edge of a pit (50).] This heat seems to scald her, as if she is looking over the precipice to a large boiling pot (reminiscent of *Pot-Bouille*'s English title) ready to devour her.

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[57] [Octave felt penetrated by the awesome silence of the staircase. He leaned over the banisters in the tepid air which came up from the hall below; then he raised his head, to hear if any noise came from above. There was a deadly calm, the peace of a middle-class drawing-room, carefully shut in, admitting no whisper from without. Behind those fine doors of lustrous mahogany there seemed to be veritable abysses of respectability (6).]

[58] Octave is never described as tired when climbing the stairs in his apartment house.

Octave's peaceful experience contrasts with Gervaise's experience of vertigo and unpleasant noises and smells. However, both experiences are marked by the unknown and images of death and danger.

While Zola arranges the initial impressions of the two apartment buildings in similar fashions – both Octave and Gervaise first observe the outside of their respective places and both climb the stairs to the top of the buildings learning about the residents on each floor – there are more similarities between Gervaise's tenement and the servants' domains within Octave's building. In Octave's first glimpse of the servants' lives, Zola portrays it as a noisy sewer:

> Un terrible bruit s'en échappa. La fenêtre, malgré le froid, était grande ouverte. Accoudées à la barre d'appui, la femme de chambre noiraude et une cuisinière grasse, une vieille débordante, se penchaient dans le puits étroit d'une cour intérieure, où s'éclairaient, face à face, les cuisines de chaque étage. Elles criaient ensemble, les reins tendus, pendant que, du fond de ce boyau, montaient des éclats de voix canaille, mêlé à des rires et à des jurons. C'était comme la déverse d'un égout : toute la domesticité de la maison était là, à se satisfaire (25).[59]

The noises of laughter, shouting, and swearing, the smells of stinky onion soup, and the lack of privacy, resonate with the servants in *Pot-Bouille* and the tenants in *L'Assommoir*.

[59] [A hideous noise assailed their ears. Despite the cold, the window was wide open. Leaning over the rail, the dark maidservant and a fat, jolly old cook were looking down into the narrow well of an inner courtyard, lit up by the kitchens opposite one another on each floor. Bent forwards, they were both shouting at the top of their voices; while form the pit below came the sound of raucous laughter, and filthy swearing. It was as if a sewer had brimmed over. All the domestics of the house were there, letting off steam (9).]

The design, moreover, of the quarters is similar: long, narrow passageways with numerous doors opening to small, unheated hovels separated by paper thin walls are customary to both locales. As Coupeau leads Gervaise down the long hallway, Zola explains how it twists to the right and left: "Le corridor s'allongeait toujours, se bifurquait, resserré, lézardé, décrépi, de loin ne loin éclairé par une mince flamme de gaz" (62). [The corridor went on further still, going both ways, cramped, dilapidated, and unplastered, lit at long intervals by a tiny flame of gas (50).] While walking along the sixth floor, Gervaise notes: "Les portes uniformes, à la file comme des portes de prison ou de couvent, continuaient à montrer, presque toutes grandes ouvertes, des intérieurs de misère et de travail, que la chaude soirée de juin emplissait d'une buée rousse" (62). [The doors, all of one pattern, like the doors of a prison or a monastery, and almost all wide open, displayed, one after another, miserable interiors, filled, this hot June evening, with a sort of reddish haze (50).] Similarly, when Octave goes to the attic of his building, home for the servants and storage for the tenants, he takes the service staircase from the fourth floor by the door near his apartment. Mirroring the layout of the living quarters of Gervaise and her neighbors: "En haut, un long couloir se coupait deux fois à angle droit, peint en jaune clair… et, comme dans un corridor d'hôpital, les portes des chambres de domestique, également jaunes, s'espaçaient, régulières et uniformes" (141). [At the top was a long passageway, with two turnings at right angles painted in light yellow… and, like in hospital corridors, the doors of the servants' rooms, also yellow, were spaced along it at regular intervals (100).] The city's poor inhabitants live down long, twisting hallways with small stalls as apartments described as either hospital rooms or prison

cells. In addition, the rooms are easily affected by the seasons: “Un froid glacial tombait du zinc de la toiture. C’était nu et propre, avec cette odeur fade des logis pauvres” (*Pot-Bouille* 141). [It was freezing cold under the zinc roofing, bare and scrubbed, with the stale smell of poverty (100).] Without heating or cooling appliances, the rooms in both places are freezing in the winter and are boiling hot in the summer, nearly unlivable.

Furthermore, the walls of the servants’ rooms on the Rue de Choiseul are thin and allow noise to pass as freely as if the doors were wide open as in Gervaise’s building. Lack of privacy, or “promiscuité” in French, creates an open style of living. Each tenant knows the business of the others, and with the knowledge that very little if anything can be kept hidden for long, people freely air their misery and missteps in life. The servants in *Pot-Bouille* hear every bed creak and every throat clearing from the adjoining rooms. In *L’Assommoir*, Lalie’s father, Bijard, openly beats her, not allowing the neighbors to stop him. The neighbors, for their part, became so used to it, very few try to stop him; they are too entrenched in their own miserable existence to have much energy to care about the plight of others. When the neighbors learn that Gervaise is sleeping with Lantier while Coupeau occupies in the adjacent room, they gossip and spread rumors. Gervaise, for her part, does little to stop the gossiping; it is the least of her worries. It is difficult to hide secrets in places where sounds travel quickly and walls are thin and lacking insulation.

Whereas Octave is shut out of each apartment in his bourgeois building by strong, closed doors that emit no sound, Gervaise is confronted by numerous images and noises of apartment life through open doors and thin walls allowing all sounds to pass through.

For example, “On se battait au quatrième: un piétinement dont le plancher tremblait, des meubles culbutés, un effroyable tapage de jurons et de coups; ce qui n’empêchait pas les voisins d’en face de jouer aux cartes, la porte ouverte, pour avoir de l’air” (61-62). [There was a fight going on at the fourth storey; a trampling which shook the floor, furniture knocked about, a horrible uproar of blows and curses; while the neighbors opposite went on with a game of cards, the door open to let in a breath of air (49).] When on the top floor looking over, she hears all the sounds rising up such as the sounds of washing dishes, *des bruits de vaisselle*. The noises of life in the tenement parallel those of the servants’ inner courtyard filled with kitchen slops in *Pot-Bouille*. As the servants holler back and forth to one another, the stench of the kitchen scraps and the filth of their language carries throughout all five floors of the courtyard: “Il ne montait plus, du boyau noir de l’étroite cour, que la puanteur d’évier mal tenu, comme l’exhalaison même des ordures cachées des familles, remuées là par la rancune de la domesticité” (*Pot-Bouille* 147). […from the dark, narrow hole of the courtyard there was just the stench of blocked drains, like the fumes of the filth left there by the inhabitants, out of sight but stirred up by the servants in their rancour (105).] The smells of onion soup that hotly hit Gervaise’s nose while she leans over the banister from the top floor and the sounds of fights, arguments, and cooking that fill the stairwell parallel the servant’s inner courtyard in *Pot-Bouille*.

Lastly, these series of glimpses into the interior private life of the apartment building and its inhabitants bewilders and bothers her: “ces logements entrevus qui défilaient, lui cassaient la tête” (62). These tiny apartments are not private spaces of relief

as they are for the middle class. The poor of the tenement do not try to confine themselves to their quarters; they do not keep their arguments quiet or their affairs secret; and they do not keep their surroundings clean. As Berthe explodes into the grand staircase, without a home to return to, the poor regularly allow their business to spill into their hallways and staircases. They are more comfortable or at least more familiar with liminal spaces and occupying them. As marginalized people, they are used to a lack of privacy, or needing to take what they can get, and feel a lack of embarrassment at exposure since a liminal existence requires continued exposure. They are particularly comfortable in the liminal space, and can barely imagine life elsewhere, such as in the big city, just beyond the wall, inside Paris.

From Faubourg to City Center

In one memorable scene, Gervaise's wedding party walks from their faubourg to the Louvre. If we carefully trace the wedding day walk from la Rue de la Goutte d'Or to the town hall, to the church, to the Moulin-d'Argent, to the Louvre via the Faubourg Saint-Denis and by the Place des Victoires and the statue of Louis XIV where Gervaise reties her shoe and then the return trip through the Place Vendôme where they climb the column to view the city and back to the wine bar, the Moulin-d'Argent, the entire walk lasts more than six miles (emilezola.info/l_assommoir.htm). Moreover, the amount of walking inside the Louvre, staring at the paintings and sculptures, creates a long and tiring journey. Gervaise and her wedding party's expedition from their poor faubourg to the very center of Paris and the cultural, artistic, high-class heart of the city marks what

will become a standard trope in literature and film of the marginalized. The journey to and from mainstream society and the liminal poverty-stricken outskirts is necessary to show the distance both physical (slight) and metaphorical (significant) between the two separate yet tightly linked places.

Inside the Louvre, the wedding guests wander around the museum lost, feeling overwhelmed and stupefied: "C'était très grand, on pouvait se perdre… lentement, les couples avançaient… Ce fut avec un grand respect, marchant le plus doucement possible, qu'ils entrèrent dans la galerie française" (85). [It was a large place, they might easily lose themselves… the couples advanced slowly… It was with great respect, walking as softly as they could, that they entered the French Gallery (70).] They find the marble sculptures of Greek gods "très vilain" (85) [ugly], they stand "immobiles, se taisaient" (86) [silent and transfixed] before the *Raft of the Medusa*, and they "ricanaient" (86) [tittered] at the naked women in paintings.

As though in a foreign world, they roam from room to room with M. Madinier, one of the guests, leading the way. In the French Gallery, "sans s'arrêter, les yeux emplis de l'or des cadres, ils suivirent l'enfilade des petits salons, regardant passer les images, trop nombreuses pour être bien vues. Il aurait fallu une heure devant chacune, si l'on avait voulu comprendre. Que de tableaux, sacredieu ! Ca ne finissait pas" (85). […without pausing, their eyes dazzled by the gold of the frames, they went through the string of rooms, seeing picture after picture go by, too many of them to be properly seen. They would have to spend an hour before each, if they were to take it in. What a heap of pictures, damn it all! It would never finish (70).] Upon entering the long gallery

containing paintings from the Italian and Flemish schools, Zola describes the guests as being overpowered by the sheer number of paintings:

> Encore des tableaux, toujours des tableaux, des saints, des hommes et des femmes avec des figures qu'on ne comprenait pas, des paysages tout noirs, des bêtes devenues jaunes, une débandade de gens et de choses dont le violent tapage de couleurs commençait à leur causer un gros mal de tête (87).[60]

Even the guide, Madinier falls silent, walking slowly. The guests follow "tous les cous tordus et les yeux en l'air" (87). [Every neck twisted and every head uplifted (71).] Zola describes Gervaise and her group as having an "ignorance ahurie" [bewildered ignorance]; the Louvre and high class Parisian society, which it represents, is so far removed from their lives of poverty on the outskirts of the city that it is inscrutable to them: "Des siècles d'art passaient devant leur ignorance ahurie, la sécheresse fine des primitifs, les splendeurs des Vénitiens, la vie grasse et belle de lumière des Hollandais" (87). [Centuries of art passed before their bewildered ignorance, the fine rigidity of the early Italians, the splendor of the Venetians, the sleek and sunny life of the Dutchmen (71).] They have no resources to make sense of such a grand palace and the artwork is beyond their comprehension.[61] Only Madinier and Coupeau have ever been to Paris's center before; none of the other characters have broached the walls around Paris, either

[60] [Then the wedding party struck into the long gallery containing the Italian and Flemish schools. Pictures, and yet again pictures, saints, men and women with faces that one could not make out, landscapes gone black, beasts turned yellow, a jumble of people and things in glaring colors, which began to give them a headache (71).]

[61] In *La Haine* the late night, art gallery scene echoes this episode from *L'Assommoir*. In Chapter 4, I analyze the scene from *La Haine.*

having lived in the faubourgs their whole life or having migrated to the city outskirts from country homes. In addition, none express a longing for the city. Having reached the margins from the country, they expect no more. This narrative differs from others dealing more exclusively with displacement, exile and liminality such as Arishima's *Aru Onna* as I discussed in the Introduction. While the liminal faubourg is inextricably linked to Paris, its residents do not necessarily desire to or attempt to change their situations. Pinkney notes that most Parisians from Gervaise's time period would live, work, and seek entertainment all within a few blocks from home (17); Gervaise's life is thus quite typical.

At first in awe by the history, the art, and the wealth held within the walls of the Louvre, the wedding party slowly is worn down by the museum: "Et la noce, déjà lasse, perdant de son respect, traînait ses souliers à clous, tapait ses talons sur les parquets sonores, avec le piétinement d'un troupeau débandé lâché au milieu de la propreté nue et recueillie des salles" (87). [And the wedding-party, tired out and losing their respect for things, dragged their hob-nailed shoes along, clattering over the resonant floor with the noise of a herd in confusion, let loose in the midst of the bare and composed neatness of the place (72).] Feeling lost inside the extensive, multi-winged palace, overwhelmed by the great halls of the Louvre, it is only when they see the Ruben's painting, that they gain their bearings. Madinier leads them to the painting: "M. Madinier se taisait pour ménager un effet. Il alla droit à la *Kermesse* de Rubens. Là, il ne dit toujours rien, il se contenta d'indiquer la toile, d'un coup d'œil égrillard" (88). [M. Madinier kept silence, in order to

lead up to an effect. He went straight to the *Kermesse* of Rubens. He said nothing, but merely indicated the canvas with a knowing wink (72).]

Peter Paul Ruben's painting entitled the *Kermesse* depicts a scene of rural debauchery and an afternoon of binge drinking. This painting more than any other piece of artwork in the Louvre is the one to which Gervaise and her wedding party can relate. It serves as the sole link between their world and the high culture of Paris's Louvre. Reddening from embarrassed understanding, the women, making little screams, turn away, however only after studying the painting closely. Laughing and searching out all the depraved parts of the painting, the men show intense interest in studying this particular piece of art: "'Voyez, donc ! répétait Boche, ça vaut l'argent. En voilà un qui dégobille. Et celui-là, il arrose les pissenlits. Et celui-la, oh ! celui-là… Ah bien ! ils sont propres, ici !" (88). ['Well, here now!' said Boche, 'that's worth the money. Look! There's somebody spewing, and somebody watering the dandelions! And look at that one! Oh, look at that one! Clean lot, aren't they?' (72).] The impoverished outsiders seek out what is familiar in such a foreign place as a palace-museum in the affluent, high society world.

The wedding excursion to the Louvre, sullied by the intimacy and the innate understanding that they feel for the painting of debauchery, serves to highlight the incompatibility of their lifestyle with that of 'cultured' city-dwellers and to distance the faubourgs further from Paris. Therefore, this sole foray into the urban space of Paris is ultimately a failure. Wilson comments that their failure is their inability "to re-appropriate urban space on behalf of the Parisian working class" (343). Until

Haussmann's remaking of Paris, most of the working class lived within the city's walls. Only after Haussmann and Napoleon appropriate the city-space for bourgeois ends and state purposes are the poor and the working class exiled. Wilson also notes how fleeting the trip is and how quickly the party finds itself once more rejected and expelled to the periphery. The brevity of the trip further emphasizes Gervaise's and the wedding party's feelings of alienation and the inability to form a connection with city life while there, and therefore, their condemnation to spend their lives in the impoverished outskirts. As David Baguley writes in his article, "*Germinal*: the Gathering Storm:" "The proletarian characters of *L'Assommoir* remain trapped in their cultural and verbal environment" (148). The only time Gervaise will leave the faubourg again is at the end of the novel to visit her husband at the hospital Sainte-Anne.

Misfortune, Consumption, and the Changing World

Once married, Gervaise seeks to better herself; she works hard, and eventually is able to start her own laundry business. As a responsible storeowner the border between her world and Paris across the Boulevard de la Chapelle seems to fade. Significantly, after she gains the laundry in the front of the large tenement and makes the overbearing building her home, she feels content, proud, and satisfied: "La rue de la Goutte-d'Or lui appartenait, et les rues voisines, et le quartier tout entier" (147). [The Rue de la Goutte-d'Or was all hers, and the streets near by, and the whole neighborhood] (122). Zola describes the faubourg as it was changing, with the noisy city seeping into Gervaise's

neighborhood on one side and the peaceful country still present just at the end of the diminishing road:

> A gauche, la rue de la Goutte-d'Or s'enfonçait, paisible, déserte, dans un coin de province, où des femmes causaient bas sur les portes; à droite, à quelques pas, la rue des Poissonniers mettait un vacarme de voitures, un continuel piétinement de foule, qui refluait et faisait de ce bout un carrefour de cohue populaire. Gervaise aimait la rue, les cahots des camions dans les trous du gros pavé bossué, les bousculades des gens le long des minces trottoirs, interrompus par des cailloutis en pente raide ; ses trois mètres de ruisseau, devant sa boutique, prenaient une importance énorme, un fleuve large, qu'elle voulait très propre, un fleuve étrange et vivant, dont la teinturerie de la maison colorait les eaux des caprices les plus tendres, au milieu de la boue noire (147-148).[62]

Gervaise's neighborhood, therefore, is neither urban nor rural but rather the boundary between them. Haussmann's projects have not yet reshaped the rural Parisian outskirts: sewers have yet to be extended into the faubourgs, the roads are still uneven, and the rural world lies just beyond the neighborhood.

Zola indicates the state of reconstruction through the description of the gutter brimming with waste water in front of her shop: "Ses trois mètres de ruisseau, devant sa

[62] [On the left the Rue de la Goutte-d'Or dwindled away, peaceful and deserted, into quite a bit of country, where the women chatted to one another on their doorsteps; on the right, a few yards distant, the Rue des Poissonniers was noisy with vehicles and the tramp of men, making this end of the street a general meeting-place for all the streets round about. Gervaise loved the street, with its trucks jolting over the ups and downs of the road, its cram of people along the narrow pavements, interrupted by the sharp descent of the irregular pavement (123).]

boutique, prenaient une importance énorme, un fleuve large, qu'elle voulait très propre, un fleuve étrange et vivant, dont la teinturerie de la maison colorait les eaux des caprices les plus tendres, au milieu de la boue noire" (148). ["Her three inches of gutter before the shop took an immense importance in her eyes, a wide river, which she wished to keep clean and tidy, a strange and living river, to which the dyer's colors gave all sorts of delicate variations in the midst of the mud of the street" (123).] Once Haussmann installed the sewers in the faubourgs, the water running down the sides of the streets disappeared beneath the surface into the sewers. These few lines also illustrate the pride that Gervaise feels and the responsibility that she assumes when opening up her own laundry business. Zola describes Gervaise as loving the business of the street and the commotion of trucks and people, and therefore preferring bustling city life.

However, Gervaise cannot keep up with the quickly changing urban world. True to Zola's naturalist form, he allows misfortune and bad choices to befall Gervaise until she finds herself deep in debt and unable to make ends meet. She becomes lazy, idle, and sloppy with her work. The beginning of her slow fall is an elaborate and lengthy feast, which she hosts in her home in honor of her saint's day. Zola stages Gervaise's fall to begin at this meal because of its opulence and grandeur. Gervaise has essentially peaked at this dinner. She has overstretched her finances to even make it possible; from this high point, she can only fall. The more than a dozen guests, including host Gervaise, gorge themselves on the food she has prepared. They binge for hours on end until drunk and overstuffed. In the end, the massive amounts of food that they have consumed seem to overcome them. Many nearly pass out from indigestion.

After this lavish affair, massive in size and expense, Gervaise slowly gives way to idleness, to not paying bills, and to running up debts. Her success in attaining the laundry, gaining popularity, and hosting a large dinner party has worn her out. She is no longer punctual, her work becomes flawed and, she keeps her customers waiting, sometimes for more than one week. Little by little everything is falling into disorder: "Elle n'était pas exacte, ne venait jamais à l'heure, se faisait attendre des huit jours. Peu à peu, elle s'abandonnait à un grand désordre" (301). [She was not punctual any longer now, never turned up at the proper hour, kept people waiting for a whole week. Little by little everything was falling into disorder (253).] She pawns away everything in the house, first to pay the bills, then to put food on the table. Constantly surrounded by filth, by the neighborhood's dirty laundry, Gervaise becomes consumed by this filth herself. Zola creates the image of her sitting idly in her laundry, surrounded by dirty clothes, piled higher than she:

> Naturellement, à mesure que la paresse et la misère entraient, la malpropreté entrait aussi. On n'aurait pas reconnu cette belle boutique bleue, couleur du ciel, qui était jadis l'orgueil de Gervaise. Les boiseries et les carreaux de la vitrine, qu'on oubliait de laver, restaient du haut en bas éclaboussés par la crotte des voitures… C'était plus minable encore à l'intérieur : l'humidité des linges séchant au plafond avait décollé le papier… ; l'établi semblait avoir servi de table à toute une garnison, taché de café et de vin, emplâtré de confiture, gras des lichades du lundi. Avec ça, une odeur d'amidon aigre, une puanteur faite de moisi, de graillon et

de crasse. Mais Gervaise se trouvait très bien là-dedans. Elle n'avait pas vu la boutique se salir ; elle s'y abandonnait et s'habituait au papier déchiré, aux boiseries graisseuses, comme elle en arrivait à porter des jupes fendues et à ne plus se laver les oreilles. Même la saleté était un nid chaud ou elle jouissait de s'accroupir (306).[63]

The business, over which she once had great command, ruins her, covering her with filth, and she barely notices it. Knapp rightly notes how her washhouse reflects her status in life (73). Her washhouse is at one time a pristine place and a successful business in which Gervaise is able to wash away the filth of the faubourg in an attempt to overcome her milieu. However, imposing society, its overpowering tenement, and its destructive milieu overtake Gervaise and her business more than simply flounders but comes to epitomize the very filth and misery of the neighborhood.

She allows the blue exterior to fade and to be covered with mud, and the inside is completely rundown, filled not only with dirty laundry but also with crumbs of food, stains never cleaned, cobwebs never dusted, and peeling wallpaper. Zola describes her as at home in her dirty shop. In fact, he writes that she found her shop very nice, "trouver très bien," and even enjoys, "jouir," the messy filth. This description only furthers Zola's

[63] [Naturally, when idleness and poverty come in at the door, cleanliness went out at the window. The beautiful blue shop, the color of azure, once the pride of Gervaise, was scarcely recognizable. The wood and panes of the windows, which were never cleaned, were all splashed from top to bottom by the mud of passing vehicles… Inside was shabbier still; the damp linen drying on lines had unstuck the paper… the ironing-board seemed to have served as a table to a whole garrison, spotted as it was with coffee and wine, plastered with jam, slobbery with Monday's grease stains. With all that mingled a sharp odor of starch, a smell made up of must, of burnt fat, and of general dirt. But Gervaise was quite comfortable in the midst of it all. She never saw the shop get dirty; she got accustomed to the torn paper, the greasy woodwork, as she got accustomed to wearing torn skirts, and to not washing her ears. The very dirt itself made a warm nest where she squatted down contentedly (258).]

belief that downtrodden dirtiness, as characterized by the milieu, is part of her very nature and her fate is to have her life destroyed.

After running up so much debt, and being unable to pay rent, she must give up the shop, and she and Coupeau move to the sixth floor. Zola explains: "C'était un déménagement complet, une dégringolade dans le fossé. Et elle se sentait trop lasse, elle se ramasserait plus tard, si elle pouvait" (336). [It was a general moving out, a general sliding downhill. And she felt too tired to pick herself up again; she would do that later on if she could (284).] As she literally moves up in the world, that is to say to a higher floor in the tenement, she moves down socioeconomically and looses her place as in society. Again, Zola uses the imagery of laziness, idleness, and depression. The lower she slips, the more difficult it is for her to bring herself back up.

Along with Gervaise's aging, the quarter changes as well. It is after 1860 in the story, the faubourgs have been annexed, the octroi wall and the barrières have been torn down, and Haussmann's Grand Arteries project has brought new wide boulevards such as the Boulevards Magenta and Ornano through Gervaise's neighborhood. With so much construction and change, the neighborhood is hardly recognizable: "C'était à ne plus s'y reconnaître" (409). [It was scarcely recognizable (345).] Buildings on one side of the Rue des Poissoniers are torn down and, for the first time, sunlight and fresh air reach the quarter (409). A new apartment house is erected which Zola calls: "un vrai monument, une maison à six étages, sculptée comme une église, dont les fenêtres claires, tendues de rideaux brodés, sentaient la richesse. Cette maison-là, toute blanche, posée juste en face de la rue, semblait l'éclairer d'une enfilade de lumière" (409). ["A regular monument…,

a six-story house, carved like a church, with bright windows, hung with embroidered curtains, a general air of wealth. That house, all white, standing right opposite to the street, seemed to brighten it up like a sheet of light (345).] This new building stands in stark opposition to Gervaise's dilapidated apartment building. While her building is decaying, this one is a breath of fresh air in the neighborhood. It has curtains, where hers has none; its windows are bright, whereas hers are muddy and opaque; this building is all white, while hers is dark, rusted, and yellowing with rot; this building is compared to a church, whereas hers could be a prison; this building exudes wealth and hers is steeped in poverty and misfortune.

Not used to cleanliness, Gervaise is struck by how fresh and clean the quarter was becoming: "Son ennui venait de ce que, précisément, le quartier s'embellissait à l'heure où elle-même tournait à la ruine. On n'aime pas, quand on est dans la crotte, recevoir un rayon en plein sur la tête" (410). [Her discontent came from the fact that the quarter was looking up just as she was going down. When you are in a dirty state, you don't like the sun full on you (345).] Zola's idea of receiving "un rayon en plein sur la tête" once again brings up the concept of exposure. Similarly to Berthe's exposure in the stairwell, Gervaise's misery and filth are exposed for the world to see. In stark opposition to the neighboring building, Gervaise can little ignore the striking differences between her plight and the success of those living in the new building.

As Gervaise continues to sink further into a poverty-stricken existence, the city persists in engulfing and absorbing her neighborhood inside its boundaries. Her dilapidated, condemned building is an eyesore in the burgeoning new neighborhood. Zola

frames the new, grand boulevards Magenta and Ornano in positive terms, by calling them "vastes" [vast] and "blanches" [white] and by describing the old rues [streets] negatively: the Rue du Faubourg-Poissonière and the Rue des Poissonniers were sinking, broken, mutilated, and twisted ("s'enfonçaient, écornés, mutilés, tordus"). In addition, the great boulevards made a hole through ("avaient troué") the old *octroi* wall, which had been taken down previously. Gervaise's neighborhood, with its new sidewalks, meridian strip with trees and a walkway for pedestrians, and direct access via the long straight boulevards to Paris proper, is much more a part of the city and no longer a *faubourg* or a liminal place between city and country: "C'était un carrefour immense débouchant au loin sur l'horizon, par des voies sans fin, grouillantes de foule, se noyant dans le chaos perdu des constructions" (439-440). "It was an immense cross road [the intersection of Magenta and Ornano], stretching out into the horizon endlessly, with its seething crowds, amidst all the chaos of buildings in the course of erection" (370).] The seething crowds, "grouillantes de foule," that Octave experiences on arriving in Paris are now also at Gervaise's doorstep.

However, Haussmann's projects have not remade the entire face of the city, as some of the old dilapidated buildings, including Gervaise's, still stand: "Mais, parmi les hautes maisons neuves, bien des masures branlantes restaient debout ; entre les façades sculptées, des enfoncements noirs se creusaient, des chenils bâillaient, étalant les loques de leurs fenêtres. Sous le luxe montant de Paris, la misère du faubourg crevait es salissait ce chantier d'une ville nouvelle, si hâtivement bâtie" (439-440).[64] With the new and the

[64] [But, side by side with tall new houses, there were old tottering buildings still standing;

old side-by-side the stark differences are more glaring, the misery of poverty even harsher in comparison. Paris's choice to include the suburbs and expand the city allows the poor, however temporarily, to be enclosed within the arms of the city and therefore part of the cityscape. As newer buildings with higher rents are constructed, the impoverished will once again be forced to leave their homes and move further away from the city center to the *banlieues*, on the margins of Paris proper.

The Liminal Cubby and Death

As the city develops around her, hungry, cold years pass by for Gervaise, and paying rent necessitates having bare cabinets and a cold stove. She can no longer find work at any laundry in the neighborhood because her abilities have become so sloppy and careless. Zola describes her as "perdant la tête jusqu'à oublier son métier" (400), [forgetful of her own trade (337).] She is able to earn a few sous once a week by cleaning Virginie's shop, where her old laundry had been on the first floor. Zola describes this job to be her "dernier aplatissement, la fin de son orgueil" (403) [last degradation, the end of all the pride that was yet left to her (339).] Virginie and Lantier instruct her as to where and how to scrub the floor, treating her as if she is worthless and completely disposable. Like her husband, she also has started to drink and quickly becomes consumed by alcoholism.

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between carved façades gaped black hollows, and old hovels displayed the destitution of their window-frames. Under the rising flood of all this new wealth coming up from Paris, the poverty of the suburb forced itself to the front, like a foul blotch on this brand-new, jerry-built city (370).]

At this point, Gervaise looses connection with her community. It has changed, while she has fallen behind. Gervaise cares little at this point – she is cold, alone, and starving: "Gervaise, maintenant, traînait ses savates, en se fichant du monde. On l'aurait appelée voleuse, dans la rue, qu'elle ne se serait pas retournée" (400). [Gervaise now dragged herself about, without caring what people chose to say. If anyone had called out thief after her in the street, she would not have turned her head (337).] She becomes stout, unkempt, and dirty: "Naturellement, lorsqu'on se décatit à ce point, tout l'orgueil de la femme s'en va. Gervaise avait mis sous elle ses anciennes fiertés, ses coquetteries, ses besoins de sentiments, de convenance et d'égards. On pouvait lui allonger des coups de soulier partout, devant et derrière, elle ne les sentait pas, elle devenait trop flasque et trop molle" (401). [Naturally, when a woman sinks to that point, her womanly self-esteem goes. Gervaise had dropped her old pride and coquetry, and her requirements in the way of sentiment, propriety and respect. You might kick her about, before and behind, she would never feel it, she had become too flabby and too sluggish (338).] She has no self-respect and her friends lose all respect for her as well. Her tight-knit neighbors start to mock her, and she is slowly ousted as part of the community. More than simply degrading her as she cleans Virginie's store, they mock her very state of poverty, although none of them are far behind. They prod her into impersonating the trembling, arm flailing, dancing performances of Coupeau, which are due to his early-onset, alcohol-induced dementia. They allow her to starve to death, cold and alone. In loosing her support network, she looses her only chance at survival. Rather than helping her, Gervaise is farther ostracized and is again on the periphery of the community (that

had just recently become part of Paris, rather than a borderland on the edge of Paris). Unable to cope any longer in a liminal existence, she soon dies.

Having emptied her apartment of anything that she could possibly pawn including the mattress, she is forced to take to the streets, where she meets Old Bru, he begging and she attempting to sell herself. In her effort to prostitute herself, she is prepared to relinquish her body to men, to "pass through" her. In this way, her body becomes a liminal location. Similar to many liminal places, her body is undesirable, and she remains cold and hungry. Poverty kills too slowly: "La misère ne tuait pas assez vite" (457). Zola, to drive home his point on the misery of poverty, has M. Marescot evict Gervaise from the room on the sixth floor. However, she is allowed to finish out her miserable existence by occupying old Bru's place under the stairwell after his death:

> Mais, comme on venait de trouver le père Bru mort dans son trou, sous l'escalier, le propriétaire avait bien voulu lui laisser cette niche. C'était là-dedans, sur de la vieille paille, qu'elle claquait du bec, le ventre vide et les os glacés… La mort devait la prendre petit à petit, morceau par morceau… Même on ne sut jamais au juste de quoi elle était morte. On parla d'un froid et chaud. Mais la vérité était qu'elle s'en allait de misère, des ordures et des fatigues de sa vie gâtée (475).[65]

[65] [But, as old Bru had just been found dead in his hole, under the staircase, the landlord let her have that niche. Now she lived in old Bru's niche. It was there, on some old straw, that she fasted, empty within and cold without… Dead took her little by little, bit by bit… No one ever knew exactly of what death she died. It was put down to cold and heat. But the truth was that she died of poverty, of the dirt and fatigue of a life that had run to waste (400).]

Gervaise is marginalized further and further to the edge of society until she finally meets her death. Gervaise is forced to finish her life at the periphery of an already peripheral existence. Even the community of her impoverished, liminal life of the faubourg belittles and denigrates her. She is first ostracized from the community's care and then forgotten, as her body is discovered days after her death once the stench of decay becomes noticeable.

Conclusion

Angus Wilson notes the nightmarish quality (4) of *L'Assommoir* as Gervaise is trapped in a cell with no escape just as much as Coupeau is. Her peripheral border-world is defined by poverty and filled with a marginalized people. Enclosed in one space, they are unable to break free of the faubourg and its impoverished, reprehensible lifestyle. If they do escape (as does Gervaise's wedding party), they find themselves in an alien world, unfamiliar and unfriendly. The faubourg is so far removed from the city socially that an inhabitant of one milieu has no sense of how to exist in the other, as the milieu defines each person. Therefore, Gervaise is a victim of her milieu, and she like her environment is marked by poverty, alcoholism, and overcrowded, unsanitary conditions. Her death comes only when she is marginalized from this already marginal environment, which further illustrates the danger and despair of isolation from a community. Her death is from living too long a marginalized life of poverty inflicted on her by her environment and aggravated by a lack of connection to a greater social network.

Lack of connection and feelings of loss are characteristic in the Meiji literature of Japanese writers Higuchi Ichiyō and Shimazaki Tōson. In their literature, as I discuss in the next chapter, characters suffer from similar experiences to Gervaise's – isolation and rejection from society (even by neighbors and colleagues). These liminal figures (Gervaise, and the characters from Ichiyō and Tōson's works), living on the fringe of their communities, share feelings of insecurity resulting from not having a safe place to call home.

Chapter 3

Space and Marginality in the Meiji Literature of Tōson and Ichiyō

"In the Nineteenth Century men lost their fear of God and acquired a fear of microbes." — Anonymous

"The very poor are unthinkable and only to be approached by the statistician and the poet." — E. M. Forester

"Disease creates poverty and poverty disease. The vicious circle is closed." — Henry E. Sigerist

Introduction

In 1868, near the end of Haussmann's Parisian renovations, and at the close of the Tokugawa or Edo Period (1600-1868), Japan opened its doors to the West and the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) began. This period in Japanese history was without a doubt a liminal time of restructuring and of great change in politics, socio-economics, and the arts. In literature, the flowing prose changed to a more direct style of writing, known as *genbun itchi*, void of honorifics (Shirane 239, Karatani 45-47). Moreover, literary conventions, associated with the way Western European literature (especially German, English, and French) depicts the psychology of characters (and the author), began to be adopted and adapted by Japanese writers, creating the genre of Japanese Naturalism that I

discussed in the Introduction. This new style of writing allowed for an objective narrator while the author was able to associate himself with the protagonist. If the earlier Tokugawa tradition of frivolous fiction, *gesaku*, was marked by narrators who made intrusive comments that drew attention to itself, attempts to Westernize modern Japanese literature focused on ways of creating a narrator that would convey information, thoughts, and emotions without the self-reflexivity found in traditional narrative fiction. It made space for the many voices of the characters and for the varying sensibilities of the author, narrator, reader, and characters (Kamei 111-114). It also created an opportunity for authors to explore groups at the boundaries of society.

During early Meiji, two authors in particular, Higuchi Ichiyō and Shimazaki Tōson, recognized and created space for otherwise marginalized groups through depictions in their literature. Consistently, the majority forces the disadvantaged in society (minorities, women, and the impoverished) into unstable, liminal places on the fringe of their communities. Regardless of how far the disadvantaged are pushed to the outskirts, they are never completely removed and thus remain a part of society. The isolated groups find themselves inhabiting in-between realms, ordinarily considered to be voids, holes, or markers of emptiness. They remain part of the community, creating a simultaneous need for recognition with the realization of continued marginalization. I argue that it is only in becoming separate from society that the disadvantaged minority is accepted by it. Simultaneously they remain both *apart of* and *apart from* the majority group.

In this chapter, I analyze how the urbanization and reorganization of Tokyo during the unstable, liminal Meiji period contributed to the marginalization of individuals to peripheral locations as represented in the literature of Ichiyō and Tōson. Ichiyō's *Takekurabe* describes the poor attempting to eke out an existence, however unsuccessfully, on the outskirts of the Yoshiwara during the transitional time. In the short story, "Jûsan'ya," Ichiyō addresses issues of social status, possibility, and liminality. Tōson attempts to integrate the *burakumin* into the community in his novel *Hakai*. Alienation from and oppression by mainstream society resonate strongly in both these stories.

Space in Meiji Japan

Decades after the downfall of the samurai-ruled, hierarchical social structures and strict social classes established by the Tokugawa shogunate, the People's Rights Movement emerged in the 1880s under the new, modern regime to promote the equality of all social classes.[66] More than two centuries of samurai rule gave way to the Restorationists (of the emperor system) who saw the inadequacies of a Japan against the incursions of Commodore Perry's gunboat diplomacy. The leaders of this new era were motivated by the conviction that only by adopting Western technologies, institutions, and practices could Japan resist what would become the virtual colonization of many Asian lands by Western powers. The new Meiji government was not only restoring imperial rule and centralizing its own control, but also and most importantly it felt, attempting to

[66] In 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu had taken control of the government and he was named shogun in 1603.

stir economic growth. City planning was not at the forefront of the government's mind, "which was preoccupied primarily with establishing its own legitimacy, finances, and powers of control, and with national economic growth" (Sorensen 60). Yet, for both reasons of defense and economic growth, city planning quickly became essential.

Tokyo, or Edo as it was called during the Tokugawa period, was densely populated and had numerous canals, wooden buildings, and narrow, unpaved roads. In *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity* Maeda Ai comments that Edo was known for its "narrow, crooked pathways" (43) and "concentric swirls of outer moats, anchored at intervals by squares serving as approaches to the castle gates" (43). The narrow roads, moats, and drawbridges had been a valuable means of protection (despite the danger of fire) during the early and pre-modern Japan; however, in a more modern period, they made transportation, a reliable water supply, sewers, and drainage rather difficult.

The city was constructed nearly entirely of wood; clean water was scarce; drainage was very poor (Sorensen 60); and few sewers existed at the end of the Meiji period (Seidensticker 83). Certain areas had "a tile-lined ditch for the disposal of kitchen wastes, but body wastes were left to the *owaiya* with his dippers and buckets and carts and his call of *owai owai* as he made his way through the streets" (83). By the end of Meiji, farmers would no longer come into the rapidly urbanizing center as the distance was too great to travel; therefore, there was no place to dispose of waste (83). In *Low City High City* Edward Seidensticker anecdotally notes: "Shinjuku, on the western edge of the city, was known as the great anus of Tokyo. Every evening there would be a rush hour

when the great lines of sewage carts formed a traffic jam" (Seidensticker 83). The lack of sewers was only one of many problems.

The lack of straight roads, which had been deliberately designed by Tokugawa authorities to protect the city (wheeled vehicles had not been allowed to enter the city), now created a problem of defense and security. According to Donald Richie in *Tokyo: A View of the City*, even during the Tokugawa era: "Shogun Ieyasu would have agreed with Naples's King Ferrante who in 1475 characterized narrow streets as a danger to the State. Like Baron Haussmann, he wanted to make the city safe for its government. This meant controlling land. New lots were allocated in what is now Nihombashi, and a straight road was extended from the Ote Gate to what is now Otemachi" (21).[67] During the Tokugawa Era and early Meiji, most industrial and commercial transport was done via waterways; therefore, at the start of Meiji, most of Tokyo was a maze of narrow, unpaved streets. Edo-style Tokyo could not produce the industrial and economic growth, which the new government desired, nor support burgeoning methods of transportation (wheeled vehicles and trains), nor resist any additional cholera epidemics. In order for the government to achieve its expressed goals of turning Tokyo into a "modern" capital, a system of roads (following ways of transport in the West) and public works projects (sewers and water supply) had to be created. City planning and the reorganization of Tokyo became essential.

[67] Richie also wrote: "Such centrality is a baroque attribute, and one of the qualities of the baroque in any culture is an architectural display of power. Certainly, a garrison helped to build Tokyo just as a garrison helped to build modern Paris" (21).

Haussmann's Ideas in Tokyo's Reorganization

Napoleon III and Haussmann's transformation of Paris not only influenced cities around Europe but also stretched to Tokyo. In the late 1870s and early 1880s, when serious deliberations on the reconstruction of the configuration of Tokyo began, the new design of Paris "was seen as the best model for the future map of Tokyo" (Maeda 41). In fact, according to André Sorenson in *The Making of Urban Japan: Cities and Planning from Edo to the Twenty-first Century*, "Paris was considered the shining example of mid-nineteenth century urban planning" (64). The outline of Paris's plan was introduced in Japan as early as 1873 after the Iwakura delegation documented their visit to France in the public record, *Record of a Tour of the United States and Europe [Beiō kairan jikki,* 1878] (Maeda 41). Masataka Kusumoto, Tokyo's sixth prefectural governor, started drawing up new plans for Tokyo in 1876 under the Home Ministry. In 1880, Taguchi Ukichi,[68] published his *Theses on Tokyo* (*Tokyoron*) in which he declared that he wanted "to make Tokyo the central marketplace of Japan as well as a great world port" (Sorensen 64). This thesis called for the centralization of governmental power and economic activity, which supported the proposal by the seventh prefectural governor, Matsuda Michiyuki.

Matsuda also published his plan for Tokyo (that Taguchi had helped write), entitled *Tokyo Central District Demarcation Issues* (*Tokyo Chuo Shiku Kakutei no Mondai*) in 1880 (Sorensen 64). His proposal suggested that Tokyo was too spread out

[68] Taguchi Ukichi (1855-1905), an economist, was with the Ministry of Finance from 1875 to 1878 and he was considered one of the most influential, early advocates of urban modernization (Sorensen 64).

and simultaneously had too large a concentration of wooden buildings in the center, particularly, notes Sorensen, "the wooden nagaya[69] of the poor" (Sorensen 64). This density created concerns of fire danger and the spread of cholera. Therefore, Matsuda's plan called for the destruction of the central slums and the construction of housing, "high-density multi-storey stone buildings," for the wealthy (merchants and businessmen), mimicking Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris. While certainly similar to Haussmann's designs for Paris, the plan differed by the stressing the importance of economic growth, much needed infrastructure, and the desire for a large port and it concentrated on fireproofing the city and ending the spread of disease by eliminating slums. Had this plan been enacted, the poor would have been exiled from Tokyo's city center.

In February of 1884, the committee to investigate the reorganization of Tokyo's municipal wards held their first meeting led by the Secretary of Home Affairs Yamazaki Naotane, who also proposed a plan quite similar to Paris's new layout (Maeda 41). Because of its similarity to Haussmann's reconstruction and because of its divergence from an earlier plan proposed by Yoshikawa Akimasa, governor of Tokyo and chairman of the screening committee, it was ultimately rejected (42). Yoshikawa's earlier plan was more limited in scope and concentrated on "improvement to roads, rivers, bridges, and harbors; construction of parks, markets, theaters, business assembly halls were added" (42).[70] Finally, on August 6, 1888, Minister of Home Affairs, Yamagata Aritomo, issued

[69] *Nagaya*, which I will discuss later in this chapter, are long, back alley hovels, where many the city's poor lived.

[70] The Minister of Home Affairs lost his control of the city planning temporarily to the newly constructed Interim Bureau of Construction from 1884 until 1887, presided over by the foreign minister Inoue Kaoru, who stalled city improvement efforts (Maeda 42). In 1888 (Meiji 21), city

a proclamation of "Regulations for the Tokyo City Reorganization" (42) and the Tokyo City Improvement Ordinance (TCIO) Tokyo shiku kaisei jōrei was finally passed into law as an imperial edict, which proclaimed: "We authorize the government to promulgate the [TCIO] for rearrangement of the city streets in view of the permanent advantages to be gained in the municipal administration of commerce, public health, fire prevention, and transportation throughout the entire urban area" (Sorensen 67). Chaired by Committee Chairman Yoshikawa, now an official of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the reorganization committee first met on October 5 to discuss their goals. [71]

The main goals of the reorganization committee were limited to (1) the improvement of traffic, by building broad, straight, paved roads; (2) the prevention of fires, by eradicating some of the wooden buildings in the center and also by constructing all new buildings from fire-retardant materials; (3) the improvement of urban hygiene, by improving the water supply and creating an adequate sewer system (Maeda 43, Sorensen 61). While the prevention of fires was not as significant in mid-nineteenth century Paris, constructing wider boulevards, improving the flow of traffic, and creating a cleaner, more hygienic, disease resistant city were main goals for Haussmann and Napoleon III and central parts of their reconstruction of Paris. According to Carl Mosk in *Japanese Economic Development: Markets, Norms, Structures*: "The main thrust [of building projects in Tokyo] was not on building grand parks and playgrounds. Rather it was on

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reorganization plan was entrusted to the council of the *genrō-in* (senate), who also promptly rejected the plan as being too similar to Paris.

[71] Yoshikawa announced in the first meeting that he was not only going to focus on the central districts but on the entire city: "the reorganization shall extend to all areas under the control of the old Edo magistrate" (Maeda 42). He wanted to extend all city-planning projects to the "sixteen-mile zone," which included the "Vermillion Line" area (42).

widening, lengthening and paving roads" (171). The proposed plans for Tokyo showed little care for making the city a great imperial capital concerned with aesthetics and grandeur like Paris. Rather, the plans were concentrated on making it a place of economic worth, centered on economic issues and concerns (Sorensen 65). The root of economic growth resided in wider roads, adequate water supply, and an appropriate sewer system. Haussmann's less glamorous, although more important, contributions also included an elaborate water supply to all streets in Paris, an intricate maze of sewers and proper gutters so that waste water was no longer flowing in front of each building in the streets. Although proposals to follow Haussmann's designs for Paris were not enacted in and for Tokyo, the main goals and objectives for creating a modern city in both Paris and Tokyo were similar. In this manner, the two cities reflected each other. Maeda writes: "Yoshikawa's realism led him to flatly reject the baroque aesthetic celebrated by the urban renewal plans for Paris, even as he had unerringly grasped its strategic virtues. One can discern such designs in his own urban renewal plan, which nonetheless repudiated the overt conception of Edo as a fortress" (44). The stated intention as indicated by the administration's priorities was to transform the medieval, closeted city into a modern, open capital of industry and business.

For the reorganization committee's first two goals of improvement of traffic and decreasing risk of fire, the current roads were too narrow for defense purposes and often did not accommodate horse drawn carriages. The committee drew up plans for the construction of a system of roads and the building of stone bridges was one of the first visible improvements (Maeda 44). As a matter of fact, the committee wanted all new

construction to be built of stone or brick, both fire retardant materials: "In 1881, the prefectural government issued an order restricting the use of hazardous building and roofing materials. Within a decade, the regular and devastating fires that had been habitual for three centuries were almost completely eradicated" (Sutcliffe 408). In addition, concerning the prevention of fires, mechanical water pumps and steam pumps, which had replaced hand pumps in fighting fires, required wider roads for the four horse carriages that carried the pumps (Maeda 43). Other improvements include horse-drawn railway cars from Shinbashi station to Ueno and Asakusa stations (44).

For improving urban hygiene, as in Paris, the committee understood Tokyo needed a reliable waterworks and sewer systems. In their proceeding notes[72], they report: "When it comes to the back alleys, sediments of filthy garbage and puddles of rain water fill these spaces that never see the light of day; there is no circulation of air, and not only is there no outlet for these piles of filth, these are the main sites that produce pestilence and epidemics" (Maeda 43). During early Meiji, fatal cholera epidemics caused the committee to place the creation of clean water supplies as a high priority. In 1886, eighteen years into the Meiji period, a cholera epidemic occurred, taking 9,879 lives and 12,000 hospital patients (Maeda 44). Europeans, who had been suffering from similar problems, had initially believed that the cause of the epidemics and the rampant diseases be a feature of poor air circulation and unsanitary conditions of the cramped inner quarters of cities and were spread by "bad air, or miasma" (Sorensen 72). These beliefs led to privileging the construction of sewers over improving the water supply (although

[72] Maeda cites the proceeding minutes: *Tokyo shiku kaisei iinkai gijiroku* (Tokyo City Reorganization Committee proceedings), volume 1 (1888): 120-121.

Haussmann accomplished both). Moreover, the theory gave further credence to clearing the slums within Paris and other cities. However, when the Japanese began confronting the problem in the 1890s, the water supply had been identified as the true culprit of the spreading of cholera and typhus. More emphasis was thus placed on the construction of an adequate water supply for the city (Sorensen 72).

Yoshiwara and the reorganization committee still made the eradication of the *nagaya* slums and back alleyways "an explicit target" Tokyo's reorganization (Maeda 44). As with Haussmann's Paris, the creation of new streets and buildings necessitated the destruction of old buildings, residences, roads, and alleyways: "It became necessary to somehow recognize and then to assign a negative value to the slums as an integral part of the modern city. What emerges is an awareness of oppositions between hygiene and filth, health and illness, discipline and punishment" (Maeda 44). The committee chose to destroy the areas of the dense slums and therefore to drive its poor residents from their homes, relocating to certain designated areas (Mansfield 107). The massive fire that broke out on February 26, 1872 in the Ginza area of Tokyo afforded the government an opportunity to build a planed community, using only fire retardant materials such as brick (Sutcliffe 408). In the construction of the Ginza Brick Town, as it came to be called, the majority of the original residents, poor tenants of the back-alley nagaya who could not afford the expensive new housing that was built" (Sorensen 62), were displaced.

The goal of Tokyo's reorganization plan was "to remake Tokyo into a central, bureaucratic, capital city, but at the same time these efforts helped foreground the negative signs of the modern city such as slums and disorderly backstreet life" (Maeda

45). Designated areas of filth, or slums, are part of the modern city. The unevenness of modernity and the duality of the city-system, which divided people between hygiene and filth or desirable and undesirable, contributed to an already highly stratified class system. While during the Tokugawa Era, class was defined by job or position in society (*daimyo* [lords]; samurai; and farmers, artisans, and traders); in modern times, class is defined almost entirely by socio-economic status.

Ichiyō, Liminal Yoshiwara, and Socio-economics

Acclaimed as Japan's first modern women writer, Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896) had humble beginnings. Born into a samurai family in 1872, she died just twenty-four years later of tuberculosis in 1896, when Tokyo City Planning was still in its infancy. Her father was a poor farmer who had purchased a samurai position and their family's social status was, therefore, somewhere in between the haute bourgeoisie and the lower class. With her father's death, Ichiyō tried to support her family through her writing[73]. However, she was unable to earn enough money.

[73] Ichiyō was a gifted child with great aptitude. She began formal study of poetry at a poetic conservation in Koishikawa at age fourteen. Her mentor and love was Nakarai Tōsui her teacher was Nakajima Utako. She learned conservative traditions of Keien court poetry, which was founded in late Edo by Kagawa Kageki. This tradition evoked Heian poet Ki no Tsurayuki. Grounded in classical Japanese literature, she kept a detailed journal in the style of Heian poetic diaries (Danly 3-74). Ichiyō attempted to put her thoughts and feelings on paper and she wrote about issues central to this period in Japanese history: she wrote mostly about "modern" subjects and themes such as the struggles of people, especially people of lower social status in poor urban areas and the pleasure quarters. She concentrated on the psychology of the characters, their subjectivity, and their experiences. Kamei Hideo describes the narration in Ichiyō's stories as being that of a polyphonic story, one with numerous voices in a solitary text (see Chapter 6 of *Transformations of Sensibility*, pages 111-135). Each voice has a different perspective and offers a new way for the "self" to associate with the "other." Her style of flowing prose replete with

Ichiyō, her mother, and her younger sister were forced to pawn most of their belongings and move to a poorer district. They settled just outside the Yoshiwara, the licensed quarter in Tokyo where prostitution was legal, in an area called Ryûsenji. Their new home, part of a "long house,"[74] was only twelve by thirty-six feet and "lacked fittings and furnishings" (Danly 90). Robert Lyons Danly, in his biography of Ichiyō, *In the Shade of Spring Leaves: The Life and Writings of Higuchi Ichiyō, A Woman of Letters in Meiji Japan*, describes the Ichiyōs' new home in detail:

> Ryûsenji, the area they had finally settled on, was in the heart of the downtown district. It was only three miles from the Haginoya, but it might as well have been in a remote province. Not only was their new neighborhood located in the flat crescent of the rough-and-tumble wards south and east of the respectable parts of the city, in Ryûsenji they had chosen a spot in the very shadow of the notorious pleasure quarter. The walls of the Yoshiwara were a five-minute walk away… Strains of the samisen and the laughter of courtesans carried from the teahouses, but this was all of the rococo splendor that penetrated to the back street. The tenements of Ryûsenji did not share in the prosperity of the quarter. The Higuchis' new neighbors were rickshawmen and waitresses and bouncers for the famous brothels. Almost everyone was involved, in one way or

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puns and poetry dated from an earlier period. She used classical honorifics, Heian sensibilities, allusions, language, conceits, wordplay, and puns.

[74] "Long houses" or *nagaya*, a form of substandard housing, are single story wooden shacks that run along back alleyways.

> another, in the business of the houses, but they were the little people on the periphery of the booming red-light industry (Danly 91).

Ichiyō, like Gervaise in Zola's *L'Assommoir*, lives in an area peripheral to Tokyo's "respectable" areas. Ryûsenji was only three miles from the wealthier area of Haginoya; however, the two areas differed greatly in industry and economic status, making the distance between them seem greater. Similarly, Gervaise's home in the faubourg was close enough to Paris that her neighborhood abutted the octroi wall; however, she too felt the great gulf between her peripheral home and the homes of those on the opposing side of the wall.

The instability of the Ryûsenji area during the uncertain Meiji period allowed for rapid urbanization. As Stephen Dodd states in *Writing Home: Representations of the Native Place in Modern Japanese Literature*: "The possibility of economic advancement in Tokyo exerted an enormous pull on people from rural areas" (76). Each year between 1898 and 1907 forty- to six-thousand people migrated to Tokyo from the provinces. In fact, according to Dodd, intensified urban migration lasted through the end of World War I (77). At the beginning of Meiji, in 1873, Japan's population totaled about thirty-five million people with a little over fourteen million engaged in farming. By 1925, at the end of the Taishō period, Japan's population had swelled to almost sixty million people; however, "the number in forestry and farming remained at about 14 million" (Sorensen 58). This large influx in the urban population not only greatly influenced the city planning, but also brought to light social ills that were not as pronounced beforehand. According to Stephen Mansfield in *Tokyo: A Cultural History*: "As grand western-style

buildings were being built and the first trade fairs took place, Tokyo was discovering the concept of poverty, something that had always existed but had never been classified as a social ill" (107). Mansfield explains that three specific strictly defined zones within Tokyo (Shitaya Mannencho[75], Shiba Shinamicho, and Yotsuya Samegabashi) were designated as places "to relocate undesirables, convicts and beggars" (107).

As in Paris (and other Western cities), the poor, the minorities, and the outcasts were isolated to specific areas, kept separate, and almost quarantined from the rest of the city. There was a desire to use space effectively in order to prevent the "evils of toxicity" from spreading communicable diseases (Maeda 45). The social problems of "worsening housing conditions, increasing densities of population in poor areas, and worsening epidemics of cholera and tuberculosis" became prominent (Sorensen 92). In Paris and Tokyo, the rapidity of the urbanization and the economic growth and the weak and inadequate infrastructure (roads, sewers, and water supply) further exacerbated the situation.

Many industrial workers and laborers, as well as street merchants, performers, and social outcastes (Mansfield 107), namely the city's poor, lived in long, single story row houses. These accommodations, known as *nagaya*, were wooden shacks situated in back alleys (Sorenson 93). When Ichiyō and her family moved next to the Yoshiwara, they lived in one of these *nagaya*. As Tokyo's population swelled and large numbers of people moved from the rural areas, the *nagaya* slums became even more crowded. Communal toilets and shared water wells increased the risk of cholera epidemics and the spread of

[75] Sangorô, the poorest of the children in Ichiyô's *Takekurabe*, is nicknamed "Mannencho."

tuberculosis (Mansfield 107). Mansfield describes them as: “Airless places with no view of the sky, single rooms measuring from four-and-a-half to six tatami mats might accommodate a typical family” (107), which is similar to Gervaise’s situation when she moved from her country home in Plassans. Most French attempting to better themselves by moving from country to city during and immediately following Haussmann’s public works projects were forced to live in the impoverished outskirts of Paris in large, filthy tenements with little air circulation and little privacy similar to the nagaya in condition of the buildings if not in height.

With so many people crammed into the small hovels, privacy was a luxury many could not afford. Richie comments that even in Japan today: “Privacy is a luxury almost as expensive as space” (38). He compares the public, crowded street to the private, quiet house and garden. He suggests: “If what is thus enclosed is private, then what is not is public. So it is in Western cities as well. The difference is one of degree. In Japan, private space is seen as so sacrosanct that public space is regarded as profane. Something which belongs to everyone belongs to no-one” (38). The nagaya where so many of the poor lived (and still live) offer little to know privacy, further adding to their profanity and degrading their status as even more undesirable. Maeda creates a terrible picture of the poor, one filled with filth and animal carnage and entrails, one almost less than human:

> The excretory functions of toilets and sewers are also a part of this image of the slums. Children covered with slime who show no signs of letup in their struggle with clogged sewage, the infant who sucks on skewered giblets as if it were breastfeeding, and the burial of a dead cat all seem to

> overlap into a sad composite scene. We are left with the feeling that a dark energy that can only be called the power of darkness overflows here amid the chaos where the border between humans covetously devouring animals and animals reduced to dead meat, the boundary between life and death itself seems to dissolve (Maeda 50).

Two writers in particular captured the misery of the nagaya at the turn of the century: Matsubara Iwagoro and Gennosuke Yokoyama. Matsubara was a journalist who compiled accounts of the poor by living with them in nagaya. In *In Darkest Tokyo*, he exposes "deplorable conditions of the Meiji poor" (Mansfield 107). Yokoyama's *Japan's Underclass* gave a face to the impoverished. He attempted to describe the downtrodden and tell who they are: "rag pickers, tinkers, rickshaw pullers, ditch diggers, peddlers, umbrella repairers, jugglers, sutra preachers, and quacks who inhabited the three slums and the hovels of Asakusa and Honjo" (108). Mansfield explains: "The impact of these two books, human documents of a kind never seen before in Japan, was felt even among literary circles, influencing the work of writers like Higuchi Ichiyō and Kunikida Doppo" (108). It is this world (with the sale of young girls, the removal of dead bodies, the constant exchange of money), which Ichiyō had also experienced first hand, that she chose to depict in her stories.

Ichiyō's new home in Ryûsenji is doubly liminal in that it exists at the edge of the wealthier areas of Tokyo and also on the margins of the Yoshiwara. Ichiyō actually remarks in her journal on the business of the Yoshiwara and the rickshaws constantly passing her home: "Two nights ago, I counted seventy-five rickshaws going down the

road before our house within the space of ten minutes. That would make five hundred in an hour" (Danly 94). The area of Yoshiwara, which was situated north of present day Asakusa, was once "one of the most celebrated red-light districts of Asia" (Richie 114). Donald Richie describes Yoshiwara's heyday during the Tokugawa Era to be like Paris's Montmartre in the 1890s (119), including restaurants, drinking stalls, entertainment parlours, and theaters (114). The Yoshiwara had once been an exuberant center for social life. During Ichiyō's time the area is on the decline (which suggests even harder times for those that live in its shadow).

Ichiyō and her neighbors in no way afforded the success and happiness of those playing within the Yoshiwara walls. She, her sister, and her mother ran a small nickel and dime store that, although profitable, did not support them. Just as the characters that populated her short stories, Ichiyō's neighbors all worked for the brothels within Yoshiwara; they were rickshawmen, waitresses, bouncers, or street performers trying to earn enough to live on while always reliant upon the Yoshiwara and the brothel patrons. Moreover, Ichiyō is both disgusted and disturbed by the Yoshiwara, and the way in which women are sold into prostitution and are kept on display in cages at the front of brothels. It is this setting that comes alive in Ichiyō's story *Takekurabe* (1895-96), or "Child's Play."

Takekurabe*: Liminal Time, Liminal Space*

Takekurabe is a story of uncertainty, loneliness, yearning, and a loss of innocence. Ichiyō depicts the interweaving lives of a group of neighborhood children on the brink of

adulthood during the upheaval of Meiji Japan. Their relations to one another are in transition from carefree childhood friends to complicated adult dynamics, revolving around socio-economic status and power. Nobuyuki, or Nobu, is the son of the priest of Ryûge temple. Nobu is studious, serious, and somber and will soon follow in his father's footsteps: "It may well have been his own choice, and then again perhaps he had resigned himself to fate" (Ichiyō 256). Shōta, the youngest and most financially secure of the group, lived with his grandmother, who collects interest on borrowed money in the neighborhood. Sangorō, the poorest, is one of six children of a rickshaw driver. Ichiyō describes him as dark-skinned, easy-going, and kind. The fire chief owns Sangorō's family's home. The fire chief's son, Chōkichi, is described as "full of it" (257). Since he turned sixteen, he has been policing the festivals with his father: Chōkichi walks with "his chest puffed out," "baton swinging, belt low around the hips, sneering" (257). Midori, moved from the provinces with her family when her older sister was sold to a brothel; she is to follow in her sister's footsteps. Ichiyō builds tension and creates movement in the story through the children's interactions, particularly during the two festivals, three months apart that frame the tale.

The children live in fictional Daionjimae, literally "in front of the Daion temple," which borders the backside of Yoshiwara. This place is a liminal space, far enough from Yoshiwara to make this area one of poverty and misfortune, yet close enough that those living in Daionjimae can hear the music and see the moat. Ichiyō opens her story with these lines:

> It's a long way round to the front of the quarter, where the trailing branches of the willow tree bid farewell to the nighttime revelers and the bawdyhouse lights flicker in the moat, dark as the dye that blackens the smiles of the Yoshiwara beauties. From the third-floor rooms of the lofty houses the all but palpable music and laughter spill down into the side street… They call this part of town beyond the quarter 'in front of Daion Temple.' They name may sound a little saintly, but those who live in the area will tell you it's a lively place. Turn the corner at Mishima Shrine and you don't find any mansions, just tenements of ten or twenty houses, where eaves have long begun to sag and shutters only close halfway. It is not a spot for trade to flourish (Ichiyō 254).

The situation for those living in Daionjimae is dire – they rely on the revenue from the wealthy men visiting the Yoshiwara. The residents of Daionjimae live so close to such success and wealth, and yet, they can never attain it for themselves and are unable to change their lots in life. There is a stark contrast between the gaudy streets of the Yoshiwara and the forlorn streets of Daionjimae: "It is not a spot for trade to flourish." Those in Daionjimae are indebted to Yoshiwara for money, but despise Yoshiwara because of its domination. Moreover, the Yoshiwara was surrounded and therefore isolated (separating it from the rest of Tokyo) by the Ohaguro moat. The moat creates a defined boundary, penetrable only by a bridge, between Daionjimae and the Yoshiwara. When Ichiyō is working on *Takekurabe* in 1895-96, the moat still exists, as she writes in the story: "The flimsy drawbridges flop down across the ditch" (255). Daionjimae, like

Ryûsenji, is "isolated from the Yoshiwara's prosperity yet firmly under its control" (Maeda 119-120).

Not only is Daionjimae (and Ichiyō's Ryûsenji) removed from the respectable areas of Tokyo and on the periphery of the Yoshiwara pleasure district, but also Daionjimae is a borderland located between the bustling city and the rural farmlands.[76] At the dawn of the Meiji restoration, acres and acres of rice paddies and dry fields covered this area. By 1909, the area is completely urbanized and only ponds of varying sizes remain as vestiges of rice paddies of an earlier, more bucolic age (Maeda 124). Therefore, in the 1890s, when Ichiyō was living in the area of the pleasure quarter and composing *Takekurabe*, this locale was in the process of drastic transition and urbanization – away from a more agricultural lifestyle to one based on industry and business. In the early nineteenth century, green space had been plentiful within the city, but during Meiji it was quickly disappearing.[77] Richie explains: "These park-like enclosures were often the estates of the various daimyo, and when the Tokugawa regime at last collapsed, they became government property to be turned over and sold to private owners (60). Present day Tokyo remains a city with few open parks (61).

Ichiyō chooses to dot her story with these semirural landscapes that were still common at the outset of Meiji (Maeda 121), [78] and she makes numerous specific

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[76] Maeda describes Daionjimae as being situated between Asakusa, Ueno, Kanasugi, Minowa, and the Yoshiwara, which "form a horseshoe-shaped triangle facing north, in the middle of which were situated many paddies and fields. The Yoshiwara licensed quarter sticks out like a peninsula into this agricultural area, and the streets of Daionjimae seemingly form a narrow bridge across that area between the Yoshiwara and Kanasugi" (121).

[77] "Originally, Asakusa and beyond were a plain of flowering grasses" (Richie 113).

[78] Maeda comments: "The Daionjimae of the Meiji 20s was in fact a peripheral space located

references to the rural characteristics of the area:

(1) In the beginning of the story, Chōkichi, the fire chief's son, worries about not making a good showing at the Senzoku Shrine Festival and no longer having enough Backstreet Gang members for a swimming team. He and his friends would often swim at a pond, "Benten ditch," in one corner of Daionjimae (Ichiyō 257).

(2) On the day after the Senzoku Shrine Festival, Midori, a child living in one of the brothels, the Daikokuya, makes an offering at the local shrine. To arrive at the shrine, she passes through the rice paddies: "Off she went to the shrine among the paddy fields… She walked through the fields with her head downcast, to and from the shrine" (Ichiyō 265-266).

(3) Nobu and Midori attend a private elementary school that hosts an athletic meet in a called Mizunoya-no-hara. The poetic depiction of the meet location contains trees, flowers, and mud: "…At the spring athletic meet in Mizunoya-no-hara. The cherries had fallen and the wisteria was already in bloom in the shade of the new green leaves…[Nobu] stumbled over the root of a pine by the pond and landed hands-first in the red mud" (Ichiyō 268).

(4) After the fall festivals, the rickshaws populate the streets less. Ichiyō describes the scene in overly pastoral imagery: "Here and there a red dragonfly bobs above the rice fields. Before long, quail will be calling out along the moat" (Ichiyō 276).

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where the edge of the city met the agricultural areas beyond."

The plot of the story emphasizing the transitioning lives of the children is complemented by the quickly changing rural-to-urban landscape. In the lives of these children, as well as in Zola's *L'Assommoir*, the reminders of a rural area mark a transitory period in history.

This aspect of Daionjimae's liminal location locates itself squarely during Meiji Japan as these rural liminal attributes were quickly being erased as this area of Tokyo became urbanized. When Ichiyō and her family move to the quarter to open their little shop in 1893, twenty-six years into the forty-four year long Meiji period, it is in the middle of the rapid urban expansion and transformation that was occurring at this time. Maeda describes it as an "unstable time, when the semirural landscape of Ryûsenji-chō and its environs were gradually disappearing" (Maeda 124). Instability is one of the many facets of liminality. As noted in the Introduction, Victor Turner defines a liminal space to be located between two stable states. His definition of "state" is rather inclusive, including "legal status, profession, office or calling, rank or degree" (*Forest* 93) in its meaning and referring "to any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized" (94). Periods of transition, becoming, and transformation are detached from the typical bounds of society, and they do not resemble the stable state that existed before the period of liminality nor the stable that occurs after re-integration into society. Therefore, this particular area in Meiji Japan during this particular period is liminal and free from any specific governing laws. For example, isolated from Edo castle, the Yoshiwara was an area of licensed entertainment that the government chose to allow by banishing it to the margins of the city. In fact, the Tokugawa government moved the location of the Yoshiwara twice, each time further away from the city center. In

Takekurabe the unstable time creates a space for the children to play before they are forced to occupy their pre-designated roles in life.

Childhood, as separate from adulthood, is newly re-invented during Meiji as a time when children could attend school and play rather than assisting their parents at home, on a farm, or with a part time job. From an adult perspective, the child's domain, according to Maeda, symbolizes "freedom to *escape*" (110). Nobu chooses to spend his time studying; Midori and Shōta play in the afternoon floating candles and chasing fish (Ichiyō 267). *Takekurabe* is speckled with childhood games including paper dolls, magic lanterns, and tiddlywinks. The children in the story enjoy a freedom that their parents cannot. Danly comments that the protagonists of the story are: "living in a halfway house between the poverty of the back street and the luxury of the quarter, and between the innocence of childhood and the uncomfortable awakening of adolescence" (118). He suggests that the children are "all in a sense forgotten, and therefore free to play and make mischief" (118).[79] Stefan Tanaka furthers this idea in *New Times in Modern Japan* when he notes that children embody instability: "Like ghosts who constantly threaten to create mischief or conflagration, children constantly pose the threat that they might rebel or not mature and turn into productive citizens" (182). However, these children all do follow in their parents' footsteps and participate in their assigned roles: Nobu will become a priest, Midori a courtesan, Sangorō a rickshawdriver, and Chōkichi a fire chief. Their play is punctuated (forcefully ended too soon) during the Otori Festival celebrated at the end of the story.

[79] Chôkichi, wounded by taunts and jibes during two previous festivals, beats up Sangorô and flings a muddy sandal in Midori's face to prove his power and dominance in the neighborhood.

Ichiyō frames the story with her use of the two festivals: the Senzoku Shrine Festival and the Otori Festival. The Festival of the Senzoku Shrine, celebrated on August 20, is dedicated to an agricultural god and occupies an important place of departure in the story. According to Maeda: "The Senzoku Shrine summer festival, featured in the first scene of *Takekurabe*, symbolizes the traces of rural life that persisted in Daionjimae" (Maeda 124). During this festival, the children are united in two groups: the Backstreet Gang led by Chōkichi and the Mainstreet Gang led by Shōta. All the children are dressed in similar clothing, all are nearly the same age and are thus equals: "Matching kimonos for the whole gang are only the beginning… The back-street and the main-street gangs each had their own matching outfits, Mōka cotton emblazoned with their street names" (Ichiyō 256, 260-261). The children exist in a transitory, impermanent space, one that is doomed to end as they age and as mercantile, industrial aspects of Meiji take hold of the area.

During the Tokugawa Era, the Senzoku Shrine ruled over the entire area; however, during Meiji, this shrine became only a village shrine. It took a back seat to Otori shrine, dedicated to the god of money, which had long ruled over the Yoshiwara (Maeda 124). Later in the story, the Otori Shrine Festival in November shows the mercantile class taking over during this new period. The children also have grown in the past three months, and are fulfilling their respective roles in the society and are no longer equal – a monk, a merchant, a courtesan, a rickshaw driver, and a fire chief – they can no longer play together in the innocence of youth. They are swept up in the excitement of making *kumade* charms and selling them, food, and other items in individual stalls, each

trying to pull in the most profit. This drastic change in the children over the course of the story illustrates the fleetingness of youth as well as the transitory spaces of the story. *Takekurabe* occupies many overlapping, liminal spaces emphasized by the children, the setting, and the festivals: (1) the Yoshiwara, outside the main city; (2) Daionjimae, outside of Yoshiwara; (3) the period of adolescents of the protagonists; and (4) the border between agricultural living of the Tokugawa era and the Meiji's new mercantile capitalism.

The Road of Possibility: Ichiyō's "Jûsan'ya"

Framed by two rickshaw rides, Ichiyō's "Jûsan'ya" (1895) or "The Thirteenth Night" published in December 1895, narrates the story of Oseki, the young female protagonist, and her attempt to abandon her loveless marriage. Over the course of one evening, Oseki travels to her parents' home with the intent of never again returning to the home of her husband, even with the knowledge that she will be abandoning her son whom she adores. She expresses to her parents the psychological pain she has suffered in her marriage. After the birth of her son, her husband, Harada Isamu, a wealthy politician who is of a higher class than Oseki's family, becomes indifferent to Oseki and often hostile. He spurns her in front of their servants, undermining her, and mocking her lack of education and her parents' lower status. However, Oseki's father expresses how much Harada has improved their lives and the life of her younger brother because of his position. He reminds her of her duty to her son, Tarō, and he persuades her to return to her husband.

The story begins with Oseki standing outside her parents' home in the moonlight, hesitating before entering. She hears her father's voice inside, loud and filling the house; he says how lucky he is. Her hesitation to enter illustrates her desire freedom; for the moment, she is free from obligations and from societal norms and constructs. She has left the restrictive, abusive home of her husband and is about to enter the no less constrictive space of her father, Saitō Kazue. Although Ichiyō portrays Oseki's father as a kind and reasonable man, she also articulates his patriarchal attitude. Oseki hears only her father's voice when she is outside, not her mother's. In addition, it is her father who greets her at the door, and who invites her in. He dominates and controls the interior of the household, creating a closed environment. In the "constrictive" (according to Anderer) modern Japanese literature, "the closeness of the physical surroundings parallels the narrative focus on the dissatisfied mind of a single character" (Anderer 105), which is Oseki's mind in the case of "Jûsan'ya."

She forces herself to enter and to discuss with her parents her plan to divorce her "in-human" husband. After pleasantries, Oseki explains ruefully why she has come unannounced to their home so late at night and broaches the subject of divorce. She explains how Harada disparages her in front of the maids and her son, Tarō, eroding her authority, calling her ill-bred, "boring," and "worthless," and yelling that she can do nothing right. Oseki comments that although he has an imperial appointment: "He's a great man in name only" (Ichiyō 245) and that she cannot go on living with him even though she will have to abandon her son. She weeps that she was: "miserable enough to abandon innocent little Tarō as he lies sleeping" (247).

In confessing the difficulties of her marriage, Oseki regains some of the agency that Harada has stolen from her. Michel Foucault explains in *The History of Sexuality*: "One confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thought and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell" (59). Her oral story becomes an avowal of her life. Foucault explains that the word "avowal" has come to "signify someone's acknowledgement of his own actions and thoughts" (58). This definition of confession, as a declaration of belief or as a testimony restores some agency to Oseki as she acknowledges the truth of her difficult life. She attempts to liberate herself from Harada's grasp and reclaim her own subject-hood that is held captive by a controlling, abusive man.

Her mother responds sympathetically, recalling how it was Harada who courted Oseki, not minding her lower social position, lack of education, or financial status. She recommends that Oseki should stand up for herself and even tells her: "You're too well-mannered" (Ichiyō 246). Her mother wants her to assert her own agency and control the space in which she lives, perhaps because her mother feels a lack of agency in her husband's house.

While her mother supports her attempt to liberate her subject-position, her father blocks her efforts, as Leslie Winston notes in her article, "Female Subject, Interrupted in Higuchi Ichiyō's 'The Thirteenth Night.'" Her father sat "listening with arms folded and eyes closed" (Ichiyō 247) and feels that the mother's advice is too rash. As Saitō overwrites the mother's advice with his ruling male perspective, Danly describes the father as the "typical Meiji pragmatist who crops up in all Ichiyō's best fiction" (143).

Her father contemplates all that Harada has given their family – the new status of the parents, the employment of her brother Inosuke who recently even received a promotion, and also acknowledges her baby Tarō, who would miss her terribly and never understand. Moreover, her father notes how elegant her hair and her clothes are and how leaving Harada would mean surrendering to a life of hard work. He tells her that she would be miserable without her son and so she might as well stay married and be miserable with him. Although he loves his daughter, he loves his own security (Danly 144) and the security of his daughter more, which is worth the sacrifice of her happiness.

Her father's gentle yet cruel advice reminds Oseki of her responsibility as a wife: "It's still a wife's duty to humor her husband" (Ichiyō 248). Hemmed in by her status and gender, Oseki will remain confined forever in the space of her husband's (or her father's) home. She is not free to move through the world and her world quickly becomes devoid of possibilities. As Foucault suggests: "Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence" (60). Oseki's father holds the power, as he is the interlocutor. For Foucault, the interlocutor "requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile" (61-62). Saitō calmly explores the benefits of staying in the marriage and Oseki desists. Although she will be miserable, she chooses to sacrifice herself for the betterment of her parents, brother, and son. She feels that she has no agency as there is only one "reasonable" choice. The courage and possibilities she felt before entering her parents' home that night have been drained by away by another controlling, male force in her life.

Oseki subjugates herself to her father as she had been doing with her husband, assuming her predetermined place in society, and remaining well mannered and obedient. In his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Louis Althusser explains that an individual's subject-hood is predetermined before birth through one's class and gender, which resonates with Zola's Naturalism. Although willing to leave her husband, without her father's support, Oseki crumbles. She leaves her parents' home dejected, dead inside, and resigned to her fate. She accepts the responsibility of the family's security and says:

> It was selfish for me to think of a divorce. You're right. If I couldn't see Tarō, there'd be no point in living. I might flee my present sorrows, but what kind of future would I have? If I could think of myself as already dead, that would solve everything… It was a foolish idea… From tonight I will consider myself dead… As long as you are all happy, I won't have any regrets… From now on, I'll consider myself Isamu's property (Ichiyō 247, 249).

Emotionally she has killed herself. According to Winston: "Oseki is blind to the reasons for Harada's transformation, blind to her situation, and blind to an escape route" (4). Women are forever the objects of man's gaze, and are unable to see themselves. Her father had gazed at Oseki while noticing her elegant clothes and well-done hair, while she had not returned the gaze. Although Winston asserts that leaving her husband would make her a "complete human being," enhancing her abilities as a mother to Tarō (7), I would disagree because the act of divorce in this situation necessitates that she

relinquishes her mothering role and surrender her child. In gaining her freedom, she would loose her son. Moreover, in choosing divorce, she would also be subject to societal constraints placed on her because of her lower social status.

The second part of the story recounts a "tale of longing" of an "unconsummated dream." On the long rickshaw ride back to Harada's home, Oseki encounters her childhood sweetheart, Rokunosuke, her rickshaw driver, whom she had once hoped to marry. Realizing whom the other is, they walk together in the moonlight, pregnant with possibilities. The claustrophobia and lack of choice in the first part of the story give way to the open air and liberating (and perhaps dangerous) possibilities of the Hirokōji road in the second part. The Hirokōji road is a transitional space between the home of her father and the home of her husband, and it offers Oseki a slight reprieve from her life's difficulties. It is worthy to note that the road is occupied by another male figure, one who may have been her husband. Yet, this relationship, at last as Ichiyō frames it, would have been of mutual love and partnership.

Options in life seem to be a distant part of her past and have long since faded from her mind. With her father's voice still echoing in her head and because of her desire to help her parents and care for her son, she is pigeonholed, and the possibilities of the road are lost to her. She is already resigned to her fate with her husband and cannot even imagine a new life for herself. The danger of the empty road late at night is also of no concern to her.

Oseki's only respite is outside the two stable locations of her husband's home and her father's home in the liminal space of the Hirokōji Road. She is rejected by her

husband, has no authority with the servants and is alienated in her own household. She lives out her marginalized existence in the husband's house as a mother to Taro. Because other aspects of her personality have been denied, she chooses to dissolve them. She finds a in-between space between life and death in which to raise her son, which is her accepted role in the house, remaining both *a part* of and *apart* from her family community. While unable to remain in the space of the road, rejected from her father's house, and unable to tolerate her husband's house, she commits an emotional suicide and retreats into her mind, in a state neither dead nor alive. "Jûsan'ya" illustrates several themes that appear repeatedly in Ichiyō's writing: "the fundamental loneliness of modern man, the illusory nature of friendship, society's oppression of those who do not dwell within the mainstream, and the inevitable disappointment that life brings" (Danly 145-6). The loneliness that Danly notes is rooted in the alienation and isolation felt from society's oppression of minorities.

The Dream of Homeland: Tōson's Hakai

Alienation and oppression also resonate strongly in Tōson's novel, *Hakai*, or *The Broken Commandment* (1906), which is hailed as Japan's first modern novel and the first masterpiece of Japanese naturalism. A narrative that is both socially engaged and a personal account, this novel contained both of the paths that modern Japanese fiction could have followed. As I discuss in the Introduction, modern Japanese literature largely fell into the category of the self-obsessed I-novel, and social issues were rarely addressed after Tōson's *Hakai*. In the novel, the protagonist, Segawa Ushimatsu, is a teacher in the

small village of Iiyama. Unbeknownst to the town, he is also part of the *burakumin*, a group ostracized and marginalized from mainstream Japanese society.

All Japanese were categorized into one of five classes: aristocrats, peasants, artisans, merchants, and *eta*, or *senmin* (Nobuo 340). The lowest group, the *senmin*, or lowly people, were known as the untouchables, and were the ancestors of the *burakumin*, who worked in leather craft, animal slaughter, and unskilled labor – all jobs that were considered lowly and defiling. Kenneth Strong, in his introduction to his English translation of the novel, notes that the first written reference of the *eta*, the ancestors of the *burakumin*, dates from the thirteenth century (x). The Shinto faith, the indigenous religion of Japan, stressed against the dangers of ritual pollution, and thus, anyone performing tasks having to do with blood and death (childbirth, diseases, death, and the production or slaughter of animals) was kept separate from the majority (x). When it arrived from China, Buddhism (and its compassion for all sentient beings) only strengthened this idea of pollution, viewing those people, who worked in the slaughtering of animals or with leatherworks, were deemed "unclean" (x). This idea of "uncleanliness" followed the *eta* throughout generations. In the opening of *Hakai*, Ohinara, a rich *eta* is being exiled from first the hospital and then his lodging house on Takajo Street in Iiyama, while the townspeople slander him, calling him "unclean" (Tōson 4).

The lack of social mobility, especially during the rigidly socially structured Tokugawa regime, furthered segregated this group. The *eta* were believed to both look and smell different, to be less "human" and more "animal," and to be fundamentally alien (x). From the nineteenth century, Strong explains that the *eta* were thought to be

descended from Hindus, Filipinos, Koreans, or even Hebrews, and thus, not originally Japanese at all. In addition, Ohinara, Ushimatsu, and all the other *burakumin* are liminal figures that mediate human-animal relations in that they are involved with occupations that kill and skin animals, produce food, and make numerous animal-based products from dyes to leather goods. Their liminal status keeps them situated on the fringe of Japanese society, unaccepted, although performing essential tasks.

According to Nobuo Shimahara's article "Toward the Equality of a Japanese Minority: The Case of the Burakumin," the *burakumin* meet four of the five criteria which compose the definition of minorities: (1) they occupy "a subordinate position in a society;" (2) they suffer "from such social disabilities as prejudice, discrimination, and segregation;" (3) they are mostly a "self-conscious social unit based on in-group feeling and an intragroup solidarity that derives from sharing the common traits of social disability;" and (4) they often marry from only within the group passing on the same genes throughout generations (340). Although these four characteristics apply to the *burakumin*, such as occupying "a subordinate position in a society" and suffering "from such social disabilities as prejudice, discrimination, and segregation," the final characteristic does not: "Special cultural and physical traits that distinguish a minority from a majority" (340). Nobuo writes: "The Burakumin have no distinct cultural and physical attributes that separate them from majority Japanese. Both Burakumin and the majority Japanese display commonality in language, culture, and race" (340). Without any physical traits to tell the *burakumin* from the Japanese majority, identification could only be possible through family connection or self-disclosure.

However, from well before Tōson's time until far afterwards, the *burakumin* have been inscribed in literature as having "markers of difference." Text after text gave the same message – that the *buraku* were different – that they think differently, look different, and act differently (Fowler 8). The Tokugawa shogunate created laws to distinguish the *eta* from the rest of Japanese society: "They were required to wear designated clothing and slippers, to avoid ordinary hair styles, to stay out of the households of commoners, and to stay in their own hovels at night" (Nobuo 341). However, during Meiji, these laws were abolished and in 1871, the government made a new law, the Edict of Emancipation, declaring the *burakumin* equal to other Japanese and having equal rights; they would now be called "new commoners" or "*shin-heimin*" (Strong xii). This edict, however, did little to alter social prejudice and the markers of difference became the main pattern or trope used in literature for this group. Ushimatsu, although he appears no different from any other Japanese individual, acknowledges that he has "been branded from birth" (Tōson 206). Edward Fowler, in his essay "The Buraku in Modern Japanese Literature," explains that markers are:

> The attempt through language to make visible what cannot be discerned by the eye alone – namely, the characteristic traits of an outcaste "race" that in fact does not differ physically from the Yamato Japanese… Thus, *burakumin* are consistently depicted… first as being clearly distinguishable from mainstream Japanese, and second, as possessed of some peculiar trait in excess (7).

Traits that mark the *buraku* range from personality quirks to physical diseases. Tōson continues the discriminatory pattern by marking the protagonist, Ushimatsu, and his friend and mentor, Inoko Rentaro, who are otherwise indistinguishable from the rest of the community, with specific traits. Rentaro is imprinted with the physical disease of tuberculosis and portrayed as a successful intellectual, not in spite of, but rather thanks, to his tuberculosis. Either his writing is seen as distinguished and special because of his suffering, which leads him to become great, *or* Rentaro's intelligence is a side effect of his illness; it is part of the illness and not him. Ushimatsu's marking are not as clear. The townspeople, his fellow colleagues, and the principal at the school where he teaches call him "gloomy," "brooding," "solemn" (Tōson 196), and perpetually "silent" (193), as if he is "hiding something" (193). Even those who are not as quick to judge still label him: "What it boils down to really is Segawa's own attitude being so queer" (193) and "He's been looking pretty down lately" (194). Ginnosuke, his best friend in the town, attempts to come to his defense by saying: "It's just his temperament" (194), and he further suggests that Ushimatsu is "thoughtful" or "depressed" (196). Ginnosuke's comments only further separate Ushimatsu from his colleagues; Ushimatsu's depressed nature singles him out as different. Fowler sums up these sentiments by suggesting that Ushimatsu is distinct with "an anguished mental "dis-ease" (7).

Throughout the novel, disease is concentrated in the bodies of the *burakumin*. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the well being of individual human bodies represented the well being of the entire nation. The rise of hygiene accompanied the rise of germ theory and there was a shift in the medical world from

curing disease to preventing disease including the regulation of what it meant to be healthy – diet, exercise, cleanliness, and clothing all became topics of discussion (Bourdaghs 53). As I had previously discussed, cholera epidemics had led to the clearing of some of the slums in downtown Tokyo and the clean (and wealthy) were privileged above the dirty (and poor).

In germ theory, any body invaded by foreign elements or germs was considered sickly. Moreover, once the tubercle bacillus was isolated in 1882, all other factors (hereditary, urban environment, etc.) were no longer considered relevant. Germ theory served:

> To turn the focus of public health activities away from the social causes of illness (poverty, urban overcrowding, industrial pollution, and so on) and toward purely biological agents. Accordingly, hygiene was widely promoted as an alternative to socialism: it aimed to cure both disease and social unrest (Bourdaghs 53).

Socialism is only a theory or ideology, whereas hygiene is a "science." Although the actual "disease" was often poverty, which led to other issues, it could never be fixed through hygiene. Unlike cholera transferred by a contaminated water supply, tuberculosis was a disease of capitalism: overcrowding in urban centers, working long hours in factory lines, or laboring. Physical, bodily markings would stamp the *burakumin* as outsiders, not part of the homogeneous national Japanese community, and therefore, easy to exclude. This "*écriture* of discrimination," according to Michael Bourdaghs in *The Dawn that Never Comes*, "assigned inferior bloodlines to *burakumin* as a means of naturalizing their

social status" (56). However, the division of bloodlines could not be seen visually, complicating the need to discriminate. The lack of visual markings created a blurring of boundaries between the pure and impure Japanese. Therefore, disease was often assigned to the *burakumin* in literature in order to create the necessary markings of identity.

Most often these diseases of the *burakumin* were thought to be hereditary; however, in *The Broken Commandment*, they were contagious. The dual possibility of contamination through genes (heredity) or contagions (environment) resonates with Zola's Naturalism; environmental triggers were just as significant as inherited ones. In the "*écriture* of discrimination" how one becomes marked is insignificant; all that is important is that the gap between the gazing subject and its object is retained. Tōson solves the confusion between the cause of the disease – heredity or contagions – by creating two groups of *burakumin* or "new commoners." The first group appears to be identical in every way to the rest of the Japanese nation, whereas the second or lower group is marked by their bone structure and darker skin color. Ginnosuke even remarks, in defending Ushimatsu, that he has seen plenty of *eta* and that they all have darker skin. Darker skin color is not contagious but it can be hereditary. Tuberculosis at this time might indeed be contagious, therefore creating separate but similar results while instating the importance of tuberculosis in Japanese society. Bourdaghs explains how Ushimatsu and Rentaro, part of the first group, become the gazing subject in the slaughterhouse scene, showing that *burakumin* are "capable of returning the national gaze, of fulfilling the desire of the national gaze for intersubjective recognition" (Bourdaghs 61) and

therefore cannot be dismissed as non-Japanese or an outsider.[80] The defining of tuberculosis as a disease of the *burakumin* allows the Japanese state to quarantine the *burakumin* who have no other markings, effectively making the contraction of the disease a marking in itself.

Once Ushimatsu is suspected of being an *eta*, rumors spread quickly through the school and the two concerning Ushimatsu's genes and social class. There is an underlying horror and disgust that an *eta* has been living in town, among the majority, in secret. They call him "4 legs" (as in an animal) and "subhuman;" they find him dirty, loathsome and disgusting, and they even attempt to smell him to see if he has a different odor. Tōson, through the character of Ushimatsu, asks numerous insightful and heartfelt questions: "But why should the "new commoners" be so despised and mocked?... Why should they not mix with their fellow human beings? Why should the *eta* alone have no right to live out their lives as members of the community around them?" (206-7); "How… could he make a living?" (210); "Where could he go?... Lost in a maze of questions, Ushimatsu stood for along while on the river bank staring at the water below" (209). The protagonist acutely understands the exile and isolation he is about to face once he reveals his social class.

In his current depressed state, with rumors circulating about his birth, Ushimatsu is paranoid and panicky: "tense and nervous from this awareness of being constantly watched" (Tōson 205). The claustrophobia and fear he feels are compounded by his newly conspicuous nature within the community and by the exile he is already

[80] Bourdaghs then discusses the slaughterhouse scene in detail concerned with the linkage between the *burakumin* and bestial qualities.

experiencing from the community. Hamid Naficy underscores the link between exile and claustrophobia in his text on exilic cinema: "The separation from the homeland, the loss of status, language, culture, and family, and the fear of the hostile host society may constitute sufficiently 'excessive adverse life events' to lead us to expect to see in their lives and their films agoraphobic and claustrophobic spatiality" (189). In his feelings that people are following him and in his desire to only visit Rentaro (before he is killed) in the cover of darkness, Ushimatsu's acrophobia surfaces. As James Fujii explains in *Complicit Fictions*: "He lives with an unrelieved tension that stems from his fear of becoming the object of 'others'' knowing vision" (92). This constant fear of the gaze of others is immobilizing, and "Ushimatsu effectively remains a subject with no possibility of affirming his agency" (92). In addition, for the first time, he associates himself with the lower stratums of society: "For the first time he felt he understood in full the talk and the sighs of the boatman and the sledge puller and other such workers, the lowest of the low. Nothing divided him now from these men, living always on the brink of ruin" (Tōson 212). In liminal terminology, he is on the edge of ruin, and on the fringe of society. Wandering adrift in a community in the process of rejecting him, Ushimastu is without a home.

Knowing that he will be required to leave Iiyama almost immediately after his confession, Ushimatsu considers what he will be giving up in exchange for his openness and honesty. He recalls: "the degradation heaped upon his people, the senseless discrimination, the long history of contempt which dismissed them as an inferior race… He thought of the wretchedness of all those men and women who had been expelled from

their communities or had hidden themselves away in fear" (Tōson 210). The continuous degradation and humiliation from society's opinions is psychologically damaging. In fact, Tōson remarks: "Being shut out from society has made them terribly warped inside" (194). Ushimatsu thinks of the suffering of such a large group of people including of his own family members – his uncle and his father. The commandment of his father still rings loudly in his head: "*No matter who you meet, no matter what happens to you, never reveal it! Forget this commandment just once, in a moment of anger or misery, and from that moment the world will have rejected you forever… Tell no one!*" (220). In his father's warning is an overwhelming desire to remain part of a community as a whole member of society. To reveal himself to the community, in the hope of both self-acceptance and acceptance from the group, would result in expulsion from the community; however, in loosing the bigoted community, he gains his integrity and freedom. As Strong remarks: "It is the inner freedom that interests [Tōson] more than any notion of the freedom of the individual within the social framework, or of the absolute dignity of the individual" (xxii). Ushimatsu's only way to gain this freedom and affirm his subjectivity is in confessing (Fujii 92).

In the last pages of the novel, he makes the decision to immigrate to Texas with wealthy Ohinara, who has started farming in Texas and wanted someone educated and trustworthy to go with him. He decides to give up teaching and move away from the town and the students whom he loved: "He loved them…, and wondered how he could bear to cut himself off even from the happy din they made" (Tōson 221). Unlike Oseki in "Jûsan'ya," Ushimatsu declares himself an *eta*, claims his freedom, and departs.

Ushimatsu's decision to immigrate to Texas continues the production of quarantine ideology, for which the novel is criticized, especially since it directly addresses "a policy option once seriously considered in the early Meiji period" (Fowler 10), namely, "relocating *burakumin* from the "mainland" (*hondo*) to the undeveloped territory of Hokkaido" (10). Fowler comments: "The escape from one's *burakumin* identity, a common scenario in Meiji-period texts, is thus powerfully linked to the colonial expansionism (both domestic and foreign) that underwrote the growth of the modern Japanese state" (10). While noting the effects of the policies of colonial expansionism, Bourdaghs reads the decision to emigrate in a slightly different light. He sees Ushimatsu as having a sense of "social responsibility" and in choosing "self-segregation" he becomes a "faithful subject" of Japan carrying out his duties and finally becoming recognized as part of the state. Outside of Japan, all Japanese are viewed the same and therefore in Texas, he will suffer from the same racism from which all Japanese suffer; he will finally be Japanese.

He voluntarily chooses to confess to his students and resign, which brings about his immediate need for relocation or exile. Ushimatsu says to his students: "Children, I must tell you: I am such an outcast… I confessed today, asking your forgiveness… *I am an eta, an outcast, an unclean being*!" (Tōson 229-230). He searches for forgiveness and acceptance and finds it only in his exile from his homeland after his acceptance of himself as a *burakumin*. Accepting his position of scapegoat in the hegemonic ideology of hygiene and purity, he becomes part of the community of Iiyama assuming he does indeed leave the town. Although Texas is by no means at the peripheral limits of Iiyama,

or even Japan, Texas retains a liminal status in the setting of this story through the Japanese community living there. The concept of "liminality," moreover, allows room for the possibility of reunion and full connection with the home community. In his confession and in his moving to Texas, Ushimatsu becomes more closely linked to the Japanese community than ever before, and he can gains an authentic, albeit peripheral, life with other Japanese living abroad.

On Homelessness

The alienation from which Oseki and Ushimatsu suffer produces a feeling of homelessness present in many modern, Japanese narratives. Oseki has been turned away from her parents' home, feels alienated at her husband's, and retreats internally, committing emotional suicide. Ushimatsu quarantines himself to a country on the other side of the world, far away from his familiar homeland, in attempt to be accepted by his national community. In *Ukigumo*, by Futabatei Shimei, the protagonist, Bunzō retreats to his upstairs bedroom away from the stimulation of his family and the Meiji world. Similarly in Katai's *Futon*, the protagonist escapes from the city to his study to the bedroom and finally into his mind and memories.

During the era of Meiji, when the outside, bustling world was changing very quickly, writers were concentrating ever more on an interior world. These characters move into ever more restrictive places, while the city and the outside world, even Tokyo, the setting for so many stories, remains quite unexplored, and even foreign. Paul Anderer acknowledges:

> Modern Japanese fiction has largely withdrawn from an imaginative exploration of this convulsive urban scene, rife with the signs of foreign influence, preferring to detail, with ever deepening psychological nuance, an inner world which, however, turbulent, remains a certainty, a knowable world on which to focus (14).

To always feel lost and homeless is unsettling and has detrimental effects on psychological needs. Moreover, those homeless in our society today are more likely to be depressed and lonely, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Homelessness, which requires characters to be wandering aimlessly and endlessly, is notably prevalent and central to the writings of many modern Japanese writers including Ichiyō, Arishima, and Abe Kobo. In the *dénouement* of the stories discussed, Ushimatsu immigrates to Texas away from the only community he has ever known; Oseki returns to the home of her husband dead inside; Bunzō threatens to leave the house of his relatives (in *Ukigumo*) and Arishima's characters do not even have a place to leave from never mind to go to. The phenomenon of homelessness is rooted in the alienation that the disadvantaged characters experience in their own communities. Ichiyō's careful articulation of the lower class's deference to the wealthier in society and the capture and silent killing of the female spirit illustrate the control of one's surroundings and how the space influences the actions of those who encounter it. Tōson also struggles against the hegemonic desires of the national body. Yet, to ultimately remain part of a community that wishes to marginalize the characters, they both allow their characters to follow the wishes of the majority. Ushimatsu leaves the community

that rejects him, and finds some freedom in the open space of Texas (although he is fulfilling and propagating the discriminatory policies of his homeland). Oseki attempts to leave by confronting her situation, but is unsuccessful – for duty to her family and fear of their suffering. (She, too, seems helpless to change her inevitable situation.) While living *apart* from society – either figuratively or physically – the liminal spaces into which the characters are pushed serve dual purposes: they offer some respite from the characters' harsh, marginalized lives and they contribute to the alienated characters' acceptance by their community.

Chapter Four

Broken Lives, Fractured Cinema: The Cinematic Representation of Homelessness in French and Japanese Films

"There but for the grace of God go I." — Anonymous

"Show me an alley, show me a train / Show me a hobo who sleeps out in the rain / And I'll show you a young man / With many reasons why / There but for fortune, go you or I."

—Phil Ochs

Introduction

This chapter articulates the way in which homelessness is depicted on film in France and Japan through cinematic analysis of five films: Akira Kurosawa's *Rashōmon* (1950) and *Dodesukaden* (1970), Eric Rohmer's *Le Signe du Lion* (1959), Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (1995), and Abdellatif Kechiche's *L'Esquive* (2005). Homelessness, one significant instance of urban failure, is driven by an existence in liminal space, on the border of defined architectural structures, and yet still governed by social norms. I suggest that urban failure begins at forgotten, purposefully over-looked places in the city: in subway stairwells, beneath freeway overpasses, at the periphery of clearly defined neighborhoods. I illustrate how these places of juncture, liminal spaces, provide housing for the transient and homeless. I argue that these four filmmakers, in the

style of Hamid Naficy's "exile cinema," confront this taboo topic in their texts by bringing the problem of urban failure to the public's consciousness.

In particular, Kurosawa's films capture life in liminality and the survival methods of the poor while creating an aesthetics of vagrancy and stability. In Kurosawa's film *Rashōmon*, I consider two related questions: first, what is a border (of what does it consist), and second, what are the conditions of that liminal space? The border-world of Kurosawa's Rashōmon gate is isolated, unstable, devastated, and dangerous. It is on the very fringe of society, and if the world was flat, it could seemingly fall off with little to no consequence. With this understanding of a liminal place, I analyze representations of people living in discarded regions and the effects the architecture and the physical surroundings of the liminal places have on them.

Dodesukaden, *La Haine*, and *L'Esquive* all highlight urban failure of liminal space and social disenfranchisement of those living in such places. The segregated space of the slum in *Dodesukaden* has a similar peripheral status as the Parisian banlieue locales in *La Haine* and *L'Esquive*. Moreover, the youths in *La Haine*, the high school students in *L'Esquive*, and the community of slum dwellers in *Dodesukaden* all have been exiled from society's center. I propose that the juxtaposition of city and slum/banlieue scenes in *La Haine* and *Dodesukaden* offers a jarring contrast between the two lifestyles and underscores the vast cultural divide between people of the same nationality (Japanese or French) and living essentially in the same area. In addition, Kassovitz and Kechiche's banlieue films illuminate the conditions that breed hopelessness and disenfranchisement. (*La Haine* studies three youths, who attempt to transgress their marginal existence by

moving through spatial boundaries; whereas *L'Esquive* looks at high school students, who attempt a linguistic border crossing.) Each of these three films features characters that are forsaken by mainstream society and that remain imprisoned by their surroundings. Kurosawa, Kassovitz, and Kechiche's camera underline the physical boundaries between the marginalized people and mainstream society: the piles of trash and debris which line the slum isolate the characters in *Dodesukaden* and, in the two French films, the high rise housing projects imprison the banlieue characters. However, these three films also champion the sense of community and camaraderie that is felt by those who are bound together by their collective marginalized status. Lack of social resource is secondary to physical impediments that the characters face in their already marginalized status.

While *Dodesukaden*, *La Haine*, and *L'Esquive* do successfully illustrate the devastation and pain of living in liminal circumstances, exiled and without resource, they do not express the lack of social network that is often the cause of homelessness. *Le Signe du Lion* shows poverty and homelessness from the more realistic angle of loneliness and alienation from society. A much earlier film, made in 1959, it offers a direct look at one character's agonizing downward fall into poverty, isolation, and homelessness and it successfully directs early attention to issues of alienation and loss. This film stresses the lack of social resources, which leads to a life of vagrancy and which is at the heart of homelessness and marginality. It also emphasizes the liminal status of the protagonist in that only public, in-between places (such as doorways, sidewalks, and bridges) are accessible to him.

Kurosawa's 1950 film *Rashōmon* and its frame, the Rashōmon gate, provide an overall frame for this chapter. Thieves, the dead, and the weary frequent this forsaken place on the uttermost fringe of society. The ruined gate's representation of liminality, as a lost and forgotten place of exile, is timeless. However, the concept of exile implies exile from a particular place, as well as the possibility, however faint, of return to and reunion with that place.[81] Therefore, I address liminal, peripheral spaces in relation to the central, desired space. These five films, when analyzed as a unit, offer a transnational image of the homeless in liminal places, a picture that is ruled by a lack of social resources and controlled by the physical layout and environment of the peripheral location.

Liminality Creates Possibility in Rashōmon*'s Frame*

Rashōmon seeks to question reality by relating four different versions of a rape and a murder with each witness claiming to tell the truth. *Rashōmon* opens in a torrential rainstorm[82] with a shot of the entire devastated Rashōmon gate, half of it completely destroyed. The world around the gate appears post-apocalyptic and chaotic, void of life and activity. The ruined state of the gate only adds to the despair; however, its massive size, if nothing else, offers some sense of shelter, if not comfort, from the storm. The initial wide angle shot of the gate, a signature of Kurosawa's film style, welcomes the viewer into this no-man's land and includes the viewer in the frame. At least seven

[81] (Naficy 12). In fact, the desire to unite with the center is very great, and situates the pheripheral existence as less acceptable. Exilic filmmakers, whether they have left their homes voluntarily or involuntarily, have an "intense desire" to return to their homelands, even if they choose to remain separate. The attachment between homeland and place of exile is sufficiently srong that living in exile Is not outside of the target society but on the fringe, or liminal, to it.

[82] Gilles Deleuze calls Kurosawa "one of the greatest film-makers of rain" (188).

separate shots zoom in on the gate, cropping parts of it out, overwhelming the camera. This technique of moving from wide angle to increasingly zoomed shots focuses the viewers' attention; in this way, Kurosawa offers both the frame and the theme in the opening cuts. No longer able to encompass the whole gate in a single shot, the camera settles its gaze on two figures, a priest and a woodcutter, squatting in the lower level and staring out into the rain. The width of the wooden beam framing the shot, supporting the enormous gate, is larger than the two figures sitting next to each other. The camera captures the pouring rain and closes in on a third character, a commoner, running through the water toward the dry refuge of the gate. All are disheveled, with ripped and ragged clothing. The scene, accordingly, is one of both refuge and misery.

Kurosawa authentically replicates the period of civil wars and the devastation of twelfth century Kyoto in the setting for his film. Dating back to the twelfth century Heian period, the Rashōmon gate appeared in a collection of stories translated by Marian Ury and entitled *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection*, which related the culture and history of the period. In 1915, Ryunosuke Akutagawa chose two of these anecdotes: "How a thief climbed to the upper story of the Rasho gate and saw a corpse" and "How a man who was accompanying his wife to Tamba Province got trussed up at Oeyama" and created his own short stories from them, entitled "Rashōmon" and "In A Grove," from which Kurosawa created his 1950 film. Akutagawa describes in his stories: "Kyoto had been rapidly declining," and the past several years had brought "a series of calamities, earthquakes, whirlwinds, and fires" (Akutagawa 34, 32). Desperation and hopelessness is close at hand. Unburied corpses are

deposited at the gate: "After dark it was so ghostly that no one dared approach" (32). The government was on the downfall and provinces were seizing more and more control (Prince 130). The priest remarks: "War, earthquakes, winds, fire, famine, the plague, year after years, it's been nothing but disasters" (*Rashōmon*), The commoner comments in the film that on the top of the gate, there are at least five or six unclaimed dead bodies. Moreover, by situating his film at the ruined Rashōmon gate, which is such a remote place between known and unknown worlds, Kurosawa creates the possibility for a fantastical tale, one of questionable morals, and an unknowable reality.

The gate is therefore more than a location for the telling of the story; it frames the story, offering valuable information about time period and life conditions. Kurosawa's numerous cuts from a large number of angles allow for the inspection and study of the gate in an attempt to grasp its size, for only camera shots at a great distance can encompass the entire Rashōmon gate. As the shots zoom closer, centering on the characters at the gate, the viewer experiences the way in which Kurosawa encompasses the overall picture before narrowing his gaze. This narrowing of gaze resonates with Gilles Deleuze's description of Kurosawa as "the breath-Encompasser." Specifically, Deleuze calls attention to Kurosawa's method of starting with a wide-angle, all encompassing shot and moving to closer ones:[83]

> One does not begin with an individual, going on to indicate the number, the street, the locality, the town; one starts off, on the contrary, from the walls, the town, then one designates the large block, then the locality,

[83] Noël Burch noted similar camerawork of increasingly tighter shots in Kurosawa's *Ichiban utsukushiku* or *The Most Beautiful* (1944) (292).

> finally the space in which to seek the unknown woman. One does not move from the unknown woman to the givens capable of determining her; one starts off from all the givens, and one moves down from them to mark the limits within which the unknown woman is contained (188).

As Deleuze explains it, Kurosawa expresses the situation in its entirety before revealing the action of the film. All the givens of a particular situation must be known upfront. Through the wide-angle shots of the gate, the viewer comes to understand the gate as more than a dry refuge from the rain.

The choice of the gate, a marker of the border between two worlds, allows Kurosawa the freedom to question our perception of truth. As Keiko MacDonald writes: the gate "symbolizes the boundary between two worlds: an entrance from one level of existence to another" (47). The border area, which does indeed mark the possibility for a new beginning or a change of way of being, regularly becomes home to those outcaste from society: the suffering, the poor, and the unclaimed corpses. MacDonald suggests: "Kurosawa's film retains the original function of the gate" (47) as a division between two worlds, a waiting place as well as a place of contemplation and change. She astutely remarks: "The gate has become a world in itself, a microcosm representing the religious, moral, and political chaos prevailing in twelfth-century Japan" (47); it is "a world deformed beyond redemption" (47). The gate holds the characteristics of a liminal space, a transitional place between two distinct locations. As an in-between space, the gate is free from society's watchful eye: bodies can be disposed of, people can rest and contemplate life, and the gate itself can even be broken apart.

The gate, signifying one of the entrances to Kyoto, represents a place of entry to the city as well as a barrier between the savage outside world and a safe civilized life within the city walls. However, the area surrounding the entire gate is a wasteland. There is no trace of activity, commerce, or life anywhere in the vicinity of the gate. Conflict and hard times of the twelfth century have left the gateway far removed from the perimeter of Kyoto. The Rashōmon gate, therefore, is not only liminal (situated between two worlds), but also newly marginal, isolated from Kyoto: the sights and sounds of the city are a significant distance from the gate. Through his depiction of the gate's ruined condition and overwhelming size, Kurosawa implies that Kyoto has retreated from its former boundaries and from the dangerous borderland.

To this end, the gate is the ideal place for the woodcutter and priest to relate the events they have just witnessed. The priest comments that the trial he has just attended and the events that it revealed may finally cause him to loose his faith in the human soul. Moaning, the woodcutter repeats: "I don't understand it; I don't understand it at all" (*Rashōmon*). Breaking pieces of wood off the decrepit gate to make a fire, and noticing that the rain is not letting up, the commoner asks them to tell their story. The camera seems to analyze the situation as it watches the commoner look up at the rain; then, the camera pans upward to see the rain; next, the camera looks downward from the sky at the rain falling on the roof and pouring off of it; and finally, it settles on the dwarfed men squatting below, ready to hear the story as well.

Interestingly, although the liminal space of the gate should be a less stable place, for Kurosawa's camera, the gate is a known, understandable place in contrast to the world

within Kyoto's walls which, through the telling of stories, becomes less certain and knowable. Stephen Prince notes that the "restructuring of sound-image relationships" (134), which is common to the scenes depicting the rape and murder, does not occur in the scenes shot at the gate: "Many scenes such as those at the Rashōmon gate that frame the narrative, are realized in conventional terms. The sound merely supports the images, and no conflict develops between what we see and what the characters are saying" (134).[84] The lack of manipulation of the frame adds a greater degree of realism to the setting, and highlights the devastation due to the natural disasters and political unrest of the late twelfth century Heian era. The image of the ruined gate becomes a symbol for the ruinous period and reinforces the helplessness and hopelessness of people in this time period. Because Kurosawa realizes the shots of the frame scenes in conventional terms, the viewer is likely to question the authenticity of each story rendered within the film's frame, to trust the depiction of the gate-world, and to feel overwhelmed by the "complete desolation" (Richie 71) and devastation at the gate.

Since the gate functions as a frame and a constant, with consistent sound-image camera shots (we hear what we expect to hear based on the visual image), we, as viewers, do not question the gate or anything that occurs at that location. Rather, it is the main storyline (four different versions of a murder) within the frame of the gate that we question. Told through numerous flashbacks, the "artificial narrative system" (Burch 297) is in striking contrast to Kurosawa's earlier films that mostly conformed to the rules of linearity and continuity that were "universally respected in Japan" (298). In *Rashōmon*

[84] Prince therefore questions if *Rashōmon* is a modernist film since the restructuring is not consistent. However, the rest of his argument is outside the scope of this chapter.

Kurosawa plays with both the narrative structure, which in turn, adds to the uncertainty of the story, and with light, image, and sound in the telling and retelling of the rape and murder. His technique of light and shadow takes on a role of its own in the film. David Bordwell calls this lighting in the forest "dappled lighting" (197), because only a speckling of light reaches the characters and the ground. In the forest, the sunlight attempts to penetrate the shadowy times; however, instead, it "uncovers a world of relative reality" (Buehrer 46). Prince suggests: "The extensive patterns of light and shadow in the film were meant by Kurosawa to suggest a kind of spiritual and emotional labyrinth" (130). In addition, what occurs in the grove is filmed silently, what Prince calls "purely visual passages" (131-132). In his autobiography Kurosawa explains his intentions behind his particular use of light and shadow:

> These strange impulses of the human heart would be expressed through the use of an elaborately fashioned play of light and shadow. In the film, people going astray in the thicket of their hearts would wander into a wider wilderness, so I moved the setting to a large forest (182).

The unusual speckled lighting, and the use of shadows in the forest create the possibility or intense emotions and people straying from their typical actions and reactions.

Kurosawa's frequent cuts and his mobile camera help to retain interest in repeated material (Richie 78). The "sharply contrasting juxtapositions of close-up and long shot, of moving and fixed shots, or shots of contrary movement" (Burch 298) as well as his use of the 180 degree reverse-angle cut is jarring to the viewer; the constantly changing camera adds originality and varying perspectives to the storyline. Donald Richie observes that the

four hundred eight shots in the body of the film (which is more than twice the number in most Japanese films of this time) create a "mosaic" and "make it possible to feel the film" (79). Rather than presenting a single continuous narrative with a clear resolution, Kurosawa breaks the story into parts, shows each part from varying angles and perspectives, and offers the viewer the opportunity to arrive at his or her own conclusion.

The lighting, the lack of dialogue, and the frequent cuts do create a heightened emotional level and an ambiance of intrigue and mystery in the film, but they do not reveal the truth, nor do they show who committed the murder. Richie believes that Kurosawa is not questioning truth [as Akutagawa is], but reality: "No one—the priest, woodcutter, husband, bandit, medium—lied. They all told the story the way they saw it, the way they believed it, and they all told the truth" (75). Reality becomes relative in the film and the characters "reveal not the action but themselves" (75).[85] However, this frightens the priest more; he continues to question humanity and the possibility for goodness in the world.

Concerned less about reality and more about redemption, Kurosawa constructs a hopeful ending to the film: the woodcutter offers to care for an abandoned baby. At the conclusion of relating the events of the trial, the priest says that he does not want to hear

[85] Richie discusses in detail the question of reality in the film: "The film is about a rape (and a murder) but, more than this, it is about the reality of these events. Precisely, it is about what five people think this reality consists of. How a thing happens may reflect nothing about the thing itself but it must reflect something about the person involved in the happening and supplying the how" (75). He continues: "The people reveal not the action but themselves" (in the telling and the retelling)" and that reality escapes more quickly in a traumatic experience, fraught with emotion (75). Richie explains that Kurosawa imposes limitations on his villains: "They see themselves as a kind of person to whom only certain actions, certain alternatives are open. In the effort to create themselves they only codify; in the effort to free themselves… they limit themselves… This limitation of spirit, this tacit agreement (social in scope) that one *is* and cannot *become*, is one feudalistic precept which plagues the country to this day" (76).

any more horror stories. The commoner replies that they are common these days and he adds: "In the end, you cannot understand the things men do" (*Rashōmon*). He throws water on the fire essentially ending the film. Then, the three men hear a baby crying in another area of the gate. Upon finding the baby the commoner steals the infant's blanket and amulet and quickly departs in the rain saying these kinds of acts are the only way to survive in the world. The priest is appalled and further dismayed by these actions; the woodcutter calls the commoner "selfish." Through three dissolves, Kurosawa shows the passage of time and the end of the rainstorm. The woodcutter offers to keep and care for the baby, which restores the priest's faith in humanity. With a slight smile and a bow, the woodcutter and the infant depart. Richie comments: "Neither anarchist nor misanthrope, he insists upon hope, upon the possibility of gratuitous action" (70). This hopeful ending offers a positive worldview, shifts the audience's attention away from the relative reality, and widens the audience's conception of the world to include the possibility of both positive and negative actions, and both selfish and compassionate emotions. Beverly Buehrer writes: "Compassion has become a hallmark of Kurosawa films" (46). The miniature story of the baby occurs in the film's frame: at the Rashōmon gate, which is separate from the grove.[86] The liminal status of the gate defines it as a place that engenders possibility and one that embraces both the negative and positive potential in the world. Because the woodcutter's redemptive act of saving and caring for the baby

[86] The sound-image relationship of the camera shots at the gate is stable and expected, and therefore we trust what occurs at the gate. Within the main storyline of the murder and the rape, the sound-image relationship is restructured and less consistent, which contributes to the unknowable reality.

occurs within the frame of the story, we have faith in the potential for good and are left with a sense of hope and compassion.

Dodesukaden *and the Peripheral Slum*

Kurosawa reveals a similar compassion in his film *Dodesukaden* (1970), based on Shugoro Yamamoto's collection of short stories entitled *The Town Without Seasons*; however, this film is jarringly different than Kurosawa's other films. In his film Kurosawa seeks to reveal the "randomly intersecting lives" (Prince 255) of a community of downtrodden slum dwellers, barred[87] from mainstream society. It is "an episodic portrait" (251) in the sense that we as viewers follow the lives of characters, within eight distinct stories, that occasionally cross paths and loosely interwine. Kurosawa's characters, impoverished, delusional, and with a lack of resources, are excluded from society's center and live a "precarious existence on the periphery of the human world" (253). Kurosawa does not question how their lives reached such low a place, nor does he attempt to "fix" their problems. Rather, through the character of Tamba, he accepts them without judgment, acts as a witness to their plight of poverty and fantasy, and is a friend to those with few resources of their own, living in a place that is otherwise forsaken.

The film opens with Rokkuchuan, a mentally handicapped boy, smiling at two trolleys going by Rokkuchuan and his mother's home, a small tin shack at one end of a

[87] It is possible that some of the characters may have chosen to live on the periphery of mainstream society. Tamba, who I discuss in some detail later in this chapter, could be one such character. I would argue that any individual that lives apart from the core culture would struggle extensively should he or she ever choose to integrate back into the target group.

slum, unmarked by any locating factors.[88] Unlike in *Rashōmon* or in his other films such as *Ran* (1985), *Kagemusha* (1980), or *The Seven Samurai* (1954), *Dodesukaden* does not offer an over arching picture. In *Dodesukaden*, Kurosawa starts with a portrait of a character about whom we know nothing. In fact, the camera close up focuses on Rokkuchuan's smiling face, excluding much else from the lens. As viewers, we only hear the trains rumbling over the tracks and see their reflection in the windows of his home, but never witness them directly. The reflection adds to the sense of fantasy and delusion that lies at the center of this film, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy. The mainstream, central world appears as only a dream – an unreachable one at that – to the inhabitants of this slum-world.[89] Exiled to the slum, there is little chance for reunion or acceptance into the mainstream society. Tokyo's slums are often peripheral to the city; however, small pockets of blight can be found throughout the city. The distance between the middle-class neighborhoods and the slums is often minimal; and thus, it is not the proximity of the places that acts as a barrier, but the diverse socio-economic status of the inhabitants that segregates one group from the other.

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[88] *Dodesukaden* was filmed in an actual Tokyo dump (Richie 192). The sets were constructed from the materials in the dump and areas of trash were cleared to make paths through the debris. Piles of trash are visible in most scenes in the film. Kurosawa does not identity this slum with any particular place, but rather he allows it to be representative of any 1960s or 1970s slum near a major urban area with trolley lines in Japan.

[89] Kurosawa uses dream sequences in the film when the vagrant father of the beggar boy builds an imaginary Western-style dream house in his mind. His child encourages the father's delusions by agreeing with his father's design choices; however, he does not envision the house himself. Kurosawa cuts between the dialogue of the father and son about the house and the bright colorful images of the house. As the film progresses, he develops the dream, making the house larger and more unaffordable.

The passing trolleys are one of the few elusive connections that the inhabitants of the shantytown have with the rest of city life.[90] James Goodwin (1994) notes in *Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema*: "The shantytown opens onto the broader social world and it is linked directly to modern, urban Japan. The most obvious link is the trolley line" (218). Rokkuchuan, obsessed with trolleys, believes he is the conductor of a train with an unreliable maintenance crew. His delusion leads him to carefully inspect his imaginary trolley, which is just outside his home alongside a rubbish heap, before he starts to drive the trolley through the slum to his neighbors' hovels. His insistent pantomimes reveal both a vivid fantasy world and the tenuous grasp[91] he has to the broader social world bordering the slum. As Rokkuchuan begins to drive his train, Kurosawa's camera pans to show a narrow path through a dump, before focusing from front, side, and back angles on the boy calling "dodesukaden," the onomatopoeic sound for "train" rumbling over the tracks. Surprisingly, the film's soundtrack blows steam, clacks over the rails, and creaks the brakes in sympathetic commiseration, validating the boy's delusions as the train stops in front of Tamba, the kindly father figure of the decrepit village.

In the opening sequence, as Rokkuchuan is driving his trolley, school children scream names and throw rocks and other things at him. The school children are well dressed, with shiny black backpacks and caps on their heads. A dirty pond divides Rokkuchuan and the dump from the children and the rest of society. The children, safely

[90] Similarly, the RER trains, which connect Paris to its suburbs, are the only link between the youth in *La Haine* and mainstream Parisian society. I will discuss this shortly.

[91] Or a lost connection.

separate from Rokkuchuan and the dump, secure in their position, attack from behind a guardrail. The muddy pond might as well be an ocean, the guardrail an impenetrable prison wall assuring that the two worlds, although they are certainly linked by the passing trolley as well as other markers, will not intertwine: "Affluent Japan, a world where people really ride trolleys, is distant and unattainable" (Prince 256-257). Although the peripheral world of the slum and the rest of Japanese society exist side-by-side, the differences (namely environmental, physical and lifestyle) between the two create a large gulf.

The inhabitants reflect the landscape as the landscape reflects the inhabitants as in a Balzacian *milieu*, further dividing the slum dwellers from the rest of mainstream society, their lifestyle, and the material objects of the foreign world. Erich Auerbach notes in his seminal text *Mimesis* that for Balzac:

> Every milieu becomes a moral and physical atmosphere which impregnates the landscape, the dwelling, furniture, implements, clothing, physique, character, surroundings, ideas, activities, and fates of men, and at the same time the general historical situation reappears as a total atmosphere which envelops all its several milieux (473).

Auerbach explains the relation between the character Madame Vauquer in Balzac's *Père Goriot* and her pension as a: "harmony between her person and what we… call her milieu" (470). The same is true for the characters in *Dodesukaden*'s slum: their miserable surroundings do indeed replicate the misery they feel in their lives. In addition, the brightly, somewhat psychedelically painted set reflects mania and delusions from which

some of the characters suffers. For *Dodesukaden*, Kurosawa's first color film, he painted not only the constructed shacks but also the ground and the paths through the dump (Richie 192). In particular, his use of vivid primary colors – reds, yellows, and blues – enhances both the dingy slum and the emotions and delusions of those living in it.

As Deleuze observes: "The cinema does not just present images, it surrounds them with a world" (68). Kurosawa does indeed create a separate world in *Dodesukaden*, one that is significantly isolated from society in spite of its proximity to it, and it is a narrow space, holding only a small piece of society in its grasp. Goodwin calls *Dodesukaden*'s landscape a "wasteland" (217). Prince describes it as: "a depressing industrial landscape, a slag-heap littered with corroding automobile frames, rusting slabs of metal, and mountains of unidentifiable rubbish. It stretches to the horizon. No trees are visible. No birds sing" (256). It is a decidedly post-industrial scene, attesting to Japan's status as a developed nation. According to Noël Burch, the slum represents Japan, "overrun with the excrement of unbridled capitalism" (321). The inhabitants of the shantytown are discarded waste, casualties of progress and capitalism, and they exist alongside the industrial trash heaps. The dividing markers of the guardrail and pond, the debris that line the path through the slum, and the real trolleys at which Rokkuchuan gazes (and which the viewers can only see as a reflection on his shack's painted windows) all add to the sense of alienation and marginalization that further isolates the impoverished (and forgotten) living in this peripheral world.

As in Emile Zola's *L'Assommoir,*[92] all action of the film save one scene occurs in this slum of tin shacks next to a dump. In *Dodesukaden* it is the lonely beggar boy who enters mainstream society to seek food for himself and his dreamer father from the cooks through the backdoor of restaurant kitchens. The boy's adventure is our only glimpse into the cityscape of mainstream society.

In a series of six long takes, we see the boy outside of the slum, visiting the kitchens, and collecting food: (shot 1) the boy is on the sidewalk alongside cars, picking up scraps and cigarette butts and placing them in his pail; (shot 2) at the first kitchen, a kind chef gives the boy fish and instructs him to cook it first; (shot 3) the boy opens a sliding door into another kitchen where a woman quickly shoos him away; (shot 4) he is inside another kitchen collecting food while a chef cooks next to him, he adds broth to one pot and noodles to another; (shot 5) he enters the last kitchen where an unkind woman pours cigarettes over perfectly good food telling him that he can have none of it and asking him to leave; meanwhile the chef instructs him to wait, tells the woman not to be cruel, and gives the boy food; and (shot 6) the boy has returned to the slum and is approaching the shell of a Volkswagen bug where he and his father live. During the entire three-minute sequence, the boy speaks only twice: to say thank you to the chefs.

Notably, we do not see how the boy enters the broader cityscape, adjacent to the slum. Kurosawa's choice, to jump from the city slum to the city proper, serves to further

[92] In *L'Assommoir*, which depicts the misery of the inhabitants in a decrepit tenement on the outskirts of Paris, the entire story occurs in and around the tenement except for one scene when the heroine, Gervaise, and her wedding party have an outing to the Louvre in the center of Paris. There are two, brief, additional scenes at the end of the novel, when Gervaise leaves her neighborhood to visit her dying husband in the hospital Sainte-Anne.

connect the two places by locating them within immediate distance of each other. When the camera cuts between the slum and the city, it appears that the boy teleports: in one scene he is in the peripheral location with his father; in the next he is in the lively city. The seeming proximity of the two places is betrayed, however, by the shiny, new, clean cars, the flashing lights, and the electric signs of the restaurants where people order, eat, and pay for their dinner. The well-traveled parts of the modern city are strikingly foreign to the corner of society that the ragged, dirty, unkempt, beggar boy inhabits. In his juxtaposition of city and slum, Kurosawa aptly illustrates the unevenness of modernity, the detrimental effects of capitalism, and the possibility of two diverse environments existing next to each other.

The little boy of the slum-world has (somehow) entered (invaded) mainstream society and wanders the streets alone searching for food and picking up discarded cigarettes for his father. The camera remains still as the child drifts through, emphasizing the boy's transient place in the city center while strengthening the secure position of the new, shiny cars of the materialistic world. In this frozen moment, city life continues to pass as the film's soundtrack captures the sounds of cars and buzzing city life. The brief shots of the child outside of the wasteland cause the greatest affective moment in the spectator. The stillness of the camera seems to allow the boy to find what he needs, silently and furtively.

A child belongs to the space of playgrounds and schools. Even if we are to accept, as Kurosawa proposes, that this particular child has suffered such misfortune that he will spend his life living in a dilapidated car, caring for himself and his father, to see the child

outside his assigned environment, drifting through society, would be a shock to our idealized understanding of reality. Moreover, in this juxtaposition Kurosawa directly implicates the mainstream society and "the ultimate falseness for the Japanese, of superficially acquired Western learning," according to Burch (321), because it is that world, and its lack of social resources, which has allowed a child to fall so far, a child whose "dislocation" is made more poignant in a figure that is not simply a child, but a figure neither quite child nor quite adult, whose relation to fantasy and reality is troubled by a "mental health" that is not so evident in any conventional way.

The first cut opens with a shot of shiny cars; and as the boy enters from the right side of the screen, he is tiny and dirty in comparison: "The boy is dwarfed by the city's automobiles" (Goodwin 218). He enters each restaurant from the kitchen's back door; the boy and the viewer never actually see the dining area of the restaurants or the patrons. Even when part of the mainstream world, the boy is consigned to the shadows and always remains an outsider. When the boy returns home, the camera again jumps from the last kitchen to the boy approaching his dirty old automobile shell with his father sleeping inside. The camera cut back to the slum shows the proximity between the places, while the contrasting images reinforce their metaphorical distance. Although the pond[93] and guardrail that are visible in the opening scenes act as a strong boundary, the possibility to move between city and slum becomes a reality when the little boy is able to cross it.

[93] The pond does not surround the slum as a moat; however, in the scenes that feature the pond, it stretches from one end of the screen to the other. Kurosawa's camera never captures a wide-angle view of the entire slum and its relation to the rest of the city. This lack of clear spatiality allows the viewer multiple interpretations – perhaps the pond is difficult to navigate; perhaps the adjacent, more affluent city is further to reach than it seems.

No Hero, No Solution

Kurosawa's camera offers an inside look into a world that is often ignored or forgotten. In Tokyo (as with most big cities), with its bright neon signs, tall office buildings, and millions of bustling salarymen,[94] it is easy to overlook the cracks in society and the peripheral areas that exist just an arm's reach away. Kenny Loui writes in *Tokyo Phantasmagoria*:

> Like Haussmann's Paris, Tokyo hides its socio-economic differentials behind aesthetically pleasing structures and displays. The homeless, not only in San'ya, but throughout Japan, are ultimately ignored and forgotten, seen as nothing more than insignificant blights in a society that values material wealth. (46)

Kurosawa attempts to shine a light on one instance of urban failure and bring the impoverished and homeless into mainstream society's consciousness. However, despite the intimacy of the camera—sitting beside his characters, chatting with them at the water pump, sharing in their drunken revelries—the viewer feels removed from them and their plight. The film is observational, non-judgmental, and non-emotional. The film's static quality, which Richie believes is its "most serious limitation" arises "from the absence of any alternative to the never-ending dialectic of suffering and reverie in which its characters are ensnared" (191). The limiting aspects of the static quality, however, serve to reinforce the seriousness of the social epidemic. In *Dodesukaden* Kurosawa

[94] A "salaryman" is Japanese businessman, usually someone who works for a corporation, and the term is often associated with a middleclass lifestyle.

straightforwardly articulates that there is a social problem, that it cannot be erased, that it is not disappearing on its own, and that he does not have a solution to it.

The static, episodic quality of the film, therefore, disrupts the flow of the narrative. According to Prince, Kurosawa's previous films had been rigidly structured: at the plot's center, a hero becomes hemmed in by societal norms. Of *Dodesukaden*, Prince explains:

> Kurosawa finds a social space that is open and permeable, free of confining social duties and group norms, but this openness is also an emptiness in which the laws of structure are replaced by the free form of random encounters. The social space is open because the condition of poverty has replaced and leveled the characters' former roles and positions. For Kurosawa, the linear narrative was a structure of commitment… Because everyone is blighted by their poverty in *Dodesukaden,* because the human figure has become as expressionistic a feature of the landscape as decaying cards, because abandonment by society has obliterated the possibility of heroism, narrativity—as a symptom of all this—breaks down. The narrative becomes diffuse and nonlinear and organizes the lives of its characters as a series of tangents, briefly and arbitrarily interconnected. (255)

The lack of structured space in the film is possible because of the peripheral location of the slum. In liminal places, which mark the border of known and foreign places, and therefore are not bound by social rules, structure breaks down. Yet the freedom from societal norms results in further cultural abandonment and disengagement. The characters in the slums are left to fend for themselves. Poverty is an aspect of modernity, and it is

conspicuously present in urban life where the impoverished, the middle class, and the affluent often lie and work in close proximity to one another. The impoverished, as part of the modern city, are stigmatized and sectioned off to a peripheral area with diminished social resources. In this way, the impoverished are effectively condemned (by the taunting children and by the women matrons in the restaurants) to remain in a state of miserable poverty. The slum dwellers' spatialized, liminal position on the edge of mainstream society stands out in stark opposition to (and free from) the societal structures, allowing normative members of society to ridicule, ignore, or condemn them, which in turn pushes them further to the edge.

The lack of narrative and episodic feel to the film distances the spectator from the problems of the slum dwellers. In the article "Beyond Genre and Logos: A Cinema of Cruelty in *Dodes'ka-den* and *Titus*, Brent Strang argues: "Instead of being carried away horizontally on the track of emotional identification [as in a narrative structure], viewers are fixed in a vertical relationship with the image, assimilating its charge in episodic segments" (cinephile.ca/archives/volume-4-post-genre/beyond-logos-cinema-of-cruelty). Strang further argues that the lack of Aristotelian narrative arc flattens the storyline, erases any opportunity for catharsis, and creates discomfort for the viewer. Strang proposes that the sideways meandering narrative situated in a trashed slum unhinges the viewer; specifically, he cites the scene involving the rag picker Hei and his estranged wife.

Although the viewer is indeed "unhinged" from watching *Dodesukaden* (by Kurosawa's use of bright primary colors in what should be a dingy slum, by the boy's

dislocation looking for food in the city, and by the lack of narrative flow), I would argue that the physical structures of the slum—the trash heaps, the dirty pond, the crumbling shacks, and broken car—and the dejected emotional states of the characters offer no solution to the social problem of poverty and homelessness that Kurosawa is addressing. The viewer is left hopeless by the lack of answer and feels disassociated from the slum-scape. Kurosawa's goal in the film is not to drive people to social change but to instill the necessity of acceptance. Again, differing greatly from his other films, there is no hero in *Dodesukaden* who is attempting to better himself, to merge with the rest of society, or to solve a larger question. In the typical exposition of a Kurosawa film, explains Deleuze, all givens are disclosed, the situation is understood, and a large question for the hero to address is brought up. Kurosawa poses a question without a clear solution, and throughout the rest of the film, the hero chooses one particular path to address it. In *Dodesukaden*, Kurosawa raises a very clear question as to the best way to address social ailments, such as poverty and homelessness, present in modern day society. However, there is no hero to find a possible solution.

All of the characters in the eight intertwining tales suffer from despair, delusions, dreams, and drunkenness and there is no forward movement, no narrative force, to alter their situations. Moreover, their impoverishment is "fixed and unchangeable," as none of them have the strength to affect change. The character of Tamba, who has the "strength and wisdom to empathize with those most devastated… approaches these people in the spirit of accepting them as they are, the one kindness he can bestow" (Richie 187). Kurosawa suggests, through the characters of Tamba and the chefs, "that the best we can

do in the brutal, poisoned class-society of the present is [to] ameliorate evil in small ways" (187-188).[95] In his attempt to instill compassion and acceptance into the viewer, Kurosawa successfully creates a jarringly bleak world of misery and despair. The architecture of the slum, in striking contrast to that of the city, seems cruel to the sensibilities of the viewers and adds to a sense of hopelessness in the characters.

Assuming that the viewer is able to accept and refrain from judging the less fortunate, Kurosawa allows the viewer to disassociate from his downtrodden characters. Our inability to identify with the impoverished characters within the film has a distancing effect: although Kurosawa and his camera appear to be in communion with the community, the viewer remains on the outside, disconnected but observing. Although we might feel sympathy, we do not necessarily envision our own lives reaching this level of destitution. This lack of empathy occurs, in part, because Kurosawa does not explain how the characters came to live in the slum. Was it the loss of a job? The loss of a social network? Depression? Insanity? I agree with Kurosawa's implication: how they arrived in the slum is not important. However, his observational camera does not call on us, as viewers, to change the situation, and worse, makes it difficult for us to relate to the characters on screen. The audience is most likely to identify with the generous chefs or with accepting Tamba: we give the beggar boy fish; we tell his father to take him to see a doctor when he is ill; we are sympathetic; and therefore, we are absolved.

Moreover, Kurosawa's refusal, in Richie's words, to "treat the themes of pain and suffering in a dark and heavy manner was highly conscious" (185); he wants the film to

[95] Richie views Tamba as being at the film's moral center.

be light and bright, not depressing. However, this choice of a lighter mood, brought about in part through his use of vivid, primary colors, also takes away the sting of their reality, which is only realized in the cuts between city and slum. Perhaps a truly realistic depiction would overwhelm the viewer and turn him or her off from any action. Nevertheless, Kurosawa's method within the slum does not go far enough.

Kurosawa is clear that his goal is not to propose a solution, not to inspire social change, and not to offer voyeuristic pleasure, but rather to suggest acceptance and compassion is the best we can do. However, what is the role of cinema if not to provide some insight into culture and motivate the spectator to alter the circumstances around him or her? Kurosawa's answer to the problem of homelessness and poverty in the world is unsatisfying at best.

Vertigo in the Banlieue: La Haine *and* L'Esquive

Moving forward in time and jumping in location to the Paris banlieue, recent banlieue films create an aesthetics of marginality and attempt to address the politics of the region at the turn of the century; however, similar to *Dodesukaden*, the films do not offer any solutions to the violence, poverty, and isolation plaguing the banlieues. Mathieu Kassovitz's film *La Haine* (1995) and Abdellatif Kechiche's film *L'Esquive* (2004) create a dislocation of self within a sense of vertigo caused by the architecture of the films' settings: the banlieue. Both films deal with the banlieue—the dangerous, riotous, violent suburbs of Paris—and the tall, overwhelming tenements in which the protagonists live. These often circular apartment buildings form a sort of fishbowl, capturing the

youths that live within and creating a sense of vertigo, capture, and desolation for both the youths and the viewers as the camera pans upwards.

According to *An Etymological Dictionary of the French Language*, a *banlieue* [*ban*, "justice;" *lieue*, "league[96]"] is: "properly the extent of a ban, is the territory within which a ban is of force…, and thence a territory subject to one jurisdiction" (Brachet 49). Therefore, the *banlieue* refers to the zone around a city that is under the city's rule. These areas around the city are physically (as well as culturally) isolated from Paris. Amy Siciliano comments that the banlieues are also segregated from neighboring areas and commercial centers: "Chanteloup-de-Vignes (the cité where *La Haine* was filmed) was designed with no direct access to the neighbouring village of La Noë—it was, quite simply, surrounded by a sea of empty fields" (216). The suburb of Le Petit Nanterre (9,000 inhabitants) is separated from the rest of Nanterre (76,000 inhabitants) by a river and train tracks (Mejías www.cafebabel.co.uk). Clichy-sous-Bois, the poorest of all banlieues with unemployment at forty-five percent and the site of the 2005 riots, does not even have a train or metro station. In order to leave this area, inhabitants need a car (Mejías www.cafebabel.co.uk). Siciliano, quoting a study by France's Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme, writes: "In 82 neighbourhoods surrounding Greater Paris, residents had to travel between one and two miles, usually crossing railway tracks or highways, just to reach a shopping complex or movie theatre" (216).

Isolated from the city as well as from other outlying areas, the residents suffer a sense of alienation, dislocation, and entrapment. In *La Haine* Kassovitz highlights the

[96] The *banlieues* were considered to be one *lieue*, which is four kilometers, wide (Vincendeau 17).

separation and isolation of banlieue regions and constructs a similar dichotomy between city and its slum (as in *Dodesukaden*) when his three protagonists cross the border from their home in the Paris banlieue to Paris city proper. After rioting and learning that one of their friends is in a coma after a police beating, Vinz, Saïd, and Hubert, a Jew, an Arab, and an African respectively, ride the RER into Paris with the intent of both temporarily fleeing the drama of the banlieue and retrieving money from a friend. While on the train, Hubert stares first straight-ahead and then out the window. The camera follows his gaze and focuses on a billboard reading: "Le Monde est à vous" (The World is yours). This concept is as foreign to him as Paris is. The world is not his; Hubert feels constrained by the banlieue and by trying to eke out an existence without getting in trouble with the police and staying safe from the violence of his neighborhood.

Unlike in *Dodesukaden*, we see at least part of the transition from banlieue to city: the train ride. However, the hour-long journey lasts only fifty seconds on film and consists of only four takes. As with the beggar boy's trip to the city in *Dodesukaden*, the youths in *La Haine* spend the next hours attempting to interact with the city and its people and fail. From the train scene, the camera cuts to a long Parisian boulevard-vista lined with traditional Haussmannian apartment buildings with the banlieue youths looking out from behind a railing over the street. While their perspective on the city is advantageous (from above, looking down), they remain separate from it. Siciliano comments: "Most 'banlieue' films share a common theme of a 'journey' between the banlieue and the city—often plagued with difficulty and dwelling on an acute socio-spatial divide" (214). This theme of a journey is not only common to banlieue films but

to many texts dealing with liminal space and those living in it, as we saw in *L'Assommoir* and *Dodesukaden*. In *La Haine*, the Parisian space is foreign to the boys' sensibilities and they spend the rest of the night socially incapable of interacting with it.

In less than two hours upon entering Paris, the police pick up Saïd and Hubert for disturbing the peace. The policemen rough up the two protagonists and question whether or not their names sound "French." Vinz, who evades police capture, wanders alone, alienated from the world around him. Even while in a car with friends, he stares, tired and lost, out of the window, unable to connect socially or culturally in a world that is foreign to his own.

The multi-ethnic trio breaks the homogenous image of *solidarité* the nation wishes to put forth. Ginette Vincendeau and Siciliano note that the multi-ethnic youths create an image of the new France "subverting bleu-blanc-rouge, (the national colours of France), for black-blanc-beur (black-white-Arab)" (Siciliano 219). However, their ethnic "otherness" is only part of their affront against mainstream French society. The larger issue is their "cultural 'otherness' as residents of the banlieue" (220), notes Siciliano. Vincendeau furthers this point:

> Despite their contrasting skin colour and religious signs (a Muslim Fatma's hand for Saïd, a Jewish Star of David for Vinz, a Catholic cross for Hubert), their shared habitat, clothing and language reinforce their common identity as *banlieue* boys (58).

The banlieue is its own defined location with its own identity simultaneously separate from Paris and inextricably linked to Paris. Sociologist Loic Wacquant "uses the term

anti-ghetto to affirm that 'European banlieues are heterogeneous. The marginalisation of their inhabitants does not stem from race or ethnicity; but rather from social class'" (Mejías www.cafebabel.co.uk). Regardless of ethnicity, the three are grouped together as one because of "the shared experiences of unemployment and cohabitation" (Naficy 99), because of their similar social class, which is determined by their peripheral residence on the fringe of Parisian society.

Everyday life in the banlieue, often viewed as marred by crime, violence, insecurity, and poverty, disrupts the idealized (however inaccurate) Parisian lifestyle of luxury, wealth, and comfort. Not all Parisian banlieues are in such dire straits. The ones to the west of Paris, such as Versailles and St.-Germain-en-Laye, are known for being wealthy, predominantly white, and safe places to live. In addition, they both boast chateaux and are on RER lines. Moreover, Paris is free from neither crime nor poverty. However, certain banlieues, such as Chanteloup-de-Vignes and Clichy-sous-Bois, which are home to predominantly poorer people, do experience more violence, more crime, and are more dangerous than Paris's city center.

Upon missing the last train, the trio is effectively homeless for one night in Paris, a place foreign both spatially and culturally. With no way to return to the banlieue and no place to sleep, the three protagonists wander the streets of Paris. Similar to Gervaise and her wedding party wandering lost and disconnected among the paintings in the Louvre in *L'Assommoir*, the boys study the modern art pieces in a gallery opening but cannot make sense of them. In the first shot, Vinz and Saïd are staring into the camera with confused and mildly disgusted looks. Saïd walks away, shaking his head repeating the word

"frightening." Vinz signals to Hubert, who had been examining a three-dimensional work of four white bottles connected together and attached to the opposing wall, to see the art piece. The camera takes a reverse shot of the wall revealing a ceramic, plump dog, with large blank eyes in a sitting position, mounted to the wall askew. After another look, the boys give up their attempt to understand the modern art in the gallery and start consuming the spread of appetizers and drinks set out on a table.

They attempt to have a conversation with some women at the gallery, but the women find them overly aggressive and are disgusted. Saïd is initially attracted to a black woman who has just entered with a friend. He cajoles Hubert into approaching them on his behalf. The conversation begins innocently enough as Hubert introduces himself and explains that his friend is "trop romantique et trop timide; super cool et trop gentil; C'est un poète, quoi" (*La Haine*). […very romantic and very shy… super cool and very nice… He's a real poet.] The women agree to speak with Hubert and Saïd; however, as Saïd enters the conversation, the situation takes a turn for the worse. Saïd immediately comments that the women are looking "fine" and asks for a phone number. The women are taken aback, question his supposed "shyness," and comment that they were willing to talk but that he, like most men, is only interested in sexual relations. The conversation escalates, their voices rise, and they create a scene breaking champagne glasses and knocking over a table as they leave.

Their failing here is not due to their ethnicity: Initially the women are happy to talk to the black and to the Arab. In fact, one of women asks Hubert if they had met before, and he responds warmly: "No, but I wish we had" (*La Haine*). As Saïd

approaches, she smiles back at Hubert enticingly. Their failing is due to not knowing, and thus not following, the social code. Life in the banlieue has not prepared them for late night art openings with champagne and servers in suits.

The three youths are culturally inept in Paris high-culture (not in their own culture) and do not know the accepted way to flirt with women in this scene; the women in turn do not accept them and, in fact, shun them. As foreigners, they are unable to assimilate into the group and, in turn, they make a scene while being forced to leave by an older white man (likely, the gallery owner). He comments as if to provide a reason for their behavior: "Le malaise des banlieues." [The malaise of the ghetto.] Assimilation is "the action of making or becoming like; the state of being like; similarity, resemblance, likeness."[97] The youths and those in the art gallery are not similar and neither group blends with the other to gain a cultural resemblance. Sociologists Teske and Nelson believe that assimilation is a process of "interpenetration." For assimilation to occur, each group must fuse with the other. They define assimilation as:

> A process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups; and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life (359).

[97] Its first definition, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Assimilation's second and sixth definitions respectively are: "2. The becoming conformed *to*; conformity *with*… 6. The process whereby the individual acquires new ideas, by interpreting presented ideas and experiences in relation to the existing contents of his mind. Used with some manner of qualification or specification by various writers" (<http://oed.com:80/Entry/11934>).

Assimilation, by this definition, necessitates that the target community accept the newcomer(s). Although living side-by-side, those from the banlieue and those from Paris proper do not have shared memories or shared experiences. Rowdy, insulting, violent, and poor, the three protagonists serve as "spatialized, racialized" (Siciliano 220), and cultural markers of the banlieue, whereas the wealthy, up-scale, white, champagne drinking, art crowd are spatialized, racialized, and cultural markers of Paris and an idealized French persona. Therefore, Siciliano concludes:

> All poor youth from the cité are likely targets of police brutality, recalibrating conventional notions of racism from a "legitimately" biological platform, to a "legitimately" cultural one, where a particular "style of life" or "way of being" becomes crucial to French identity (220).

Although they are all French, they live in separate spheres with different ways of life. The Parisians in the art gallery scene wish to remain separate to protect their lifestyle, which can only remain superior and more desirable if contrasted to a less desirable one. The banlieue remains an exiled yet important part of French culture in that it serves to elevate mainstream society as the *burakumin* in Japan in the early nineteenth century are a similarly necessary part of Japanese society. The Parisians, therefore, have a vested interest in keeping the troubled youth exiled to the banlieue with little chance of assimilation or acceptance.

On the train ride home, which consists of two takes and lasts only seventeen seconds (although the lapsed time is actually an hour in length), the three friends sit apart from each other in silence. They arrive back in the banlieue at six in the morning. Again,

the transition is especially quick in contrast to their night in Paris, which lasted on screen for nearly an hour. The brevity of the train ride scene creates a drastic shift in perspective from the cityscape to the banlieue world in which they live, similar to the camera cuts between the slum and the city in *Dodesukaden*. The initial shot of the city and its boulevard resonates in stark contrast to the camera views of the banlieue tenements, or *cités*, captured just minutes before. The flat, run-down, cardboard-like walls of the circular projects in no way resemble the fancy façades of the Parisian buildings. The *cités* are modern, bland, non-descript housing structures in harsh contrast to the old, elegant, Second Empire apartment houses in Paris.

The architecture of the two locations offers insight into the two distinct cultures and the buildings of the banlieue grow out of the ground like barriers to entrap their inhabitants. This style of façade architecture originated during Baron Haussmann's recreation of Paris during the Second Empire in the 1850's and 60's. As he carefully sculpted the most central areas of Paris, evicting tens of thousands from their homes in overly cramped central quarters, tall tenements rose up on the outskirts of Paris, becoming home to the displaced as well as the new immigrants streaming into the city from their rural homes looking for work and a better life. In the 1920's, Le Corbusier proposed futuristic high-rise apartment-towers, which became home to the Algerians and Tunisians among other immigrants who moved to France from 1955 to 1975, when the unemployment rate was exceptionally low (Vincendeau 17). Vincendeau notes in her study of *La Haine* that the present-day banlieue had been semi-rural before World War II. During the post-war period, France's "economic boom and rapid expansion of Paris

during the 'trente glorieuses' (1945-1975)… demanded a massive building programme to house both immigrants and French workers, who flocked to the city" (17). In the 1960s, architects constructed large, industrial, concrete apartment housing known as the *grands ensembles* and predominantly referred to as HLM (habitation à loyer modéré), which 'boasted' four-thousand apartments in La Courneuve, three-thousand in Aulnay-sous-bois, and a shocking twelve-thousand in Sarcelles (17, 18). Vincendeau explains that the tenements were built as long walls (*barres*) of high-rise tower blocks (*tours*), "filled with grids of identical flats nicknamed 'rabbit hutches' (*cages à lapins*)" (18). She continues:

> Although the HLMs were social housing that, with hot water and central heating, constituted progress, their disadvantages quickly became apparent: paper-thin walls, permanently broken-down lifts, damp cellars; few shops and cafés, and a lack of cultural venues… The term *cité* replaced HLM as the symbol of so-called "difficult," "sensitive" or even "hot" areas (18).

Vincendeau's description is notably similar to the apartment house with the long hallways and paper-thin walls in which Zola's Gervaise lived in *L'Assommoir*, except that in Gervaise's neighborhood there were plenty of stores, restaurants, and bars.

Today, the banlieue projects continue to dot the outskirts of Paris. These enormous apartment buildings still house immigrants as well as the struggling and the poor who have been expunged from, or never allowed entrance to, Paris proper. The infrastructure that Haussmann had designed easily connects the periphery to the center by grand thoroughfares; however, in *La Haine* and *L'Esquive,* the *banlieue* is a distinct

world separate from the city with its own culture and dialect. It is not just a transitional place (there is little hope for movement out of it), but rather a marginal place home to those marginalized from Paris's broader social network.

Kassovitz captures the tall, enclosed semi-circle of tenements when in one scene, Saïd calls up to Vinz's apartment. His voice echoes along the project's walls while others shout at him and he appears as if in a fishbowl, surrounded by the looming buildings. The camera moves between Saïd's face, capturing it at different angles, and the apartment buildings towering above him. In one shot, the camera is below Saïd, with his neck and his upturned chin in the center of the picture, further emphasizing the height of the buildings. In the same shot, the opposing *cité* is in the background with a person who appears on screen as smaller than Saïd's nose looking out of the window. This cacophony of sounds—Saïd's hollering, Vinz's sister's calling down to him, and the neighbor's yelling from his window—make it difficult to keep track of the voices and the camera swings widely from Saïd's central position trying to focus on the various characters within the drama. Here, time stands still, seemingly as an eternal present that simultaneously captures the socio-historical past of the banlieue and its culture. The tenements encircling and capturing Saïd reflect both his actual situation and the larger story of the banlieue, its culture, and its past.

A similar semi-circle of tall, non-descript, tenement buildings, where all the protagonists live, dominates the setting of *L'Esquive.* The continuous façade of the apartments stretch through each scene. According to Henri Lefebvre, façades are designed only to be seen; they create a purely visual space. With the façade of prison,

which corresponds to the façade of the family, one perceives the outside only. What lies behind the exterior wall, is captured or imprisoned within (Lefebvre 144). However, *L'Esquive* inverts the façade, holding the camera captive along with the students, documenting life within their prison. Just as Sharon Marcus analyzes the microcosms behind the façade in her study of the interiorization of bourgeois apartment dwellings of the Second Empire, *L'Esquive* similarly looks behind the projects of the banlieue, which act as a collective face holding all the students together and hidden from the outside mainstream society. The bourgeoisie's "lived space" is a private realm free from the public's eye, explains Lefebvre (145). In *L'Esquive,* the students' "lived space" is always public surrounded by the *cités* for us, the viewers, to watch and examine. Within the walls of their prison, no space is private. The students are simultaneously quarantined and marginalized in their peripheral existence.

Therefore, the large, high-rise apartment buildings work as boundaries in the film to hold the students and their families captive. The projects fill entire shots; they overwhelm both the camera's eye and our eyes, which can never see the buildings in their entirety. They dominate the landscape in nearly all the scenes in the film, whether as the backdrop for the students' conversations outside, or as viewed through an apartment or classroom's window. The projects exert the same overbearing force on their tenants that Gervaise's intimidating tenement exerts on her. Their dominating presence chains the students to the scene; guarding them, watching them, refusing to allow them to leave. The destitute buildings take on anthropomorphic properties, acting as both prison and guard,

and the buildings become representations of a much greater force, that of the nation-state, that desires to hold certain struggling groups apart from mainstream society.

Constructed during the post war period under the direction of President Charles De Gaulle, the *cités* (or HLM, *habitation à loyer modéré*) were to house immigrants and laborers who at that time were flocking to the city in search of work (Vincendeau 17). Because of the large numbers of people, these 1960s concrete buildings were built outside Paris with little access to the city (Vincendeau 17). Socialist President François Mitterand had attempted a revitalization project of the banlieues during the deindustrialization period of 1975-1990 when many were loosing their jobs and unable to find new work (Siciliano 215). The intention of *Banlieues 89*, as the project was called, was to unify all French under the notion of "equality" (taken from the French Revolution of 1789), which unfortunately simultaneously excluded and silenced the history of French colonization (216). In addition, Siciliano remarks: the projects "did little to tackle structural unemployment nor systemic racism, and the numbers of those without work in the banlieues continued to escalate" (216). President Jacques Chirac, elected in May 1995 immediately following Mitterand, designed his campaign around "'a global politics against exclusion' that targeted the estimated six million French people living below the poverty line and their worsening social exclusion" (Vincendeau 16-17). In October 1995, Chirac announced his "Marshall plan for the *banlieue*," which was a plan for "national urban integration" (19). According to Siciliano, what emerged instead "was a renewed form of colonial governance" (217). Siciliano further notes that the Interior Minister implemented "changes to the penal code to allow prison sentences for public order

violations such as loitering in their entrance ways and stairwells—policies which targeted the most visible of infractions to aid in successful prosecution" (217). This "intensive policing" and "militarization of housing projects" resulted in a large number of juvenile offences, which triggered more resources and funds to be poured into the criminal justice system (217). Although the French government has developed projects and programs to revitalize the forsaken banlieue regions, the results have not been successful. As a matter of fact, they have at times created a greater sense of isolation and marginalization. From this history, the high-rise, public housing, apartment towers, designed and built by the government, do indeed function as an instrument of the state, by keeping the largely poor, minority populations who occupy them isolated and disconnected from the city center and its resources.

In *L'Esquive* and in *La Haine*, the scene is designed as an inverted panopticon with the apartment towers acting as the outer border. The students exist in a fishbowl under continuous surveillance by the buildings. According to Foucault, the architectural layout assures the subjugation of people (348). Lefebvre notes that power hides under the organization of space (144). I would extend Foucault and Lefebvre's notions of space as power to my reading of the film: the students and other youths are ultimately unable to transcend their spatial boundaries and therefore suffer from social and physical immobility. The architectural design of the *cités* and their surroundings does intend to keep the inhabitants imprisoned together. As noted above, many of the poorer banlieues are cut off from Paris as well as from the neighboring banlieues because of a lack of trains and other sources of public transit. In order to leave the project, a person needs a

car. In addition, the design of the *cités,* which are often twenty stories in height, with long, flat façades, creates extended walls, which act as barriers to the world outside the neighborhood, serving to isolate the inhabitants.

Hans-Georg Gadamer informs us: "Architecture gives shape to space" (134). Space is what surrounds everything that exists within it (in space). Lefebvre notes that social space is produced by architects; cultures come alive within this space. The multi-ethnic world becomes merged into a solid existence of violence, poverty, and fear. The youths of *La Haine* are aware of their dismal existence in this border world. In exile cinema, Naficy explains: "The representation of life in exile and diaspora… tends to stress claustrophobia and temporality" (5). In the banlieue films the students and youths suffer from a feeling of claustrophobia. At one point Vinz comments that they live in rat holes. In a conversation with his mother, Hubert repeats: "J'en ai marre la cité. J'en ai marre… Il faut que je parte." [I'm sick of the projects. Just sick of it… I need to get out.][98] His mother responds kindly but dismissively asking him to please go to the store and buy some lettuce on his way out. Her remark reflects a certain amount of cynicism but also a deeper understanding of the situation: leaving the banlieue is nearly impossible because it is not a transitional place. They are locked into a dangerous existence in this peripheral world and are unable to move beyond it or effectively change their situation.

The high school students in *L'Esquive* are desperately trying to master the eighteenth century French of Marivaux as they are working on a class production of his play *Les jeux de l'amour et du hasard.* They neither are able to cross the spatial boundary

[98] My translation.

of the immense projects as the protagonists in *La Haine* do (however unsuccessfully), nor are they able to transcend the linguistic boundaries. Director Kechiche adeptly juxtaposes the multi-ethnic slang of the adolescent, multicultural protagonists known as *verlan*, with the polished rhetoric of eighteenth century French, illustrating the students' abilities to occupy the space of marginal society, while only able to imitate the space of "acceptable" society. Vincendeau comments that *verlan*,[99] like all slang, is a "marker or identity… It designates a group, a clan, stressing its cohesion against the outside world" (26). I would use Vincendeau's definition of *verlan* to suggest that those who use it further isolate themselves from mainstream society. The students attempt to cross the linguistic boundary by learning the eighteenth century French style of expression; however, the necessity of learning a 'new' language increases the foreignness of their banlieue from French society. In this coming-of-age film, the students' success is only an internal awareness of social and spatial boundaries as they remain on the outskirts, never entering or merging into Parisian society. Their linguistic failings are mimicked in the limitations imposed by architecture.

The film reflects the lessons of Marivaux and illustrates that the sentiments of eighteenth century French society still apply to twenty-first century French culture. In one scene, Lydia, the protagonist, questions how well she and her classmates should impersonate their characters. Should the rich woman act like an ideal maid? Or should some of her lady-like qualities bleed through in the performance? The teacher explains

[99] Common *verlan* terms include *beur* (*arabe*, arab), *meuf* (*femme*, woman), and '*laisse béton*' (*laisse tomber*, drop it/leave it be). "*Verlan* is an ancient form of back-slang revived in the 1970s, in which syllables are inverted" (Vincendeau 25).

the impossibility of not having some bleed through, which is reflected in the protagonists' quick ability to shift back into their everyday, salacious, profanity-filled slang from the eighteenth century dialogue. The teacher instructs:

> *Ce que Marivaux nous dit, les riches jouent les pauvres et les pauvres jouent les riches et personne n'arrive bien… Il nous montre si qu'on est complètement emprisonné de notre condition sociale… (L'Esquive).*[100]

The teacher continues to explain that regardless as to how someone dresses him or herself, regardless of whatever mask or disguise he or she chooses to don, the language and culture will always betray that person. The way that we express ourselves betrays from where we come, and thus, there is no chance to transcend our place in society. We see devastating social immobility throughout French literature: in Marivaux's eighteenth century play, in Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* novels of the late nineteenth century[101], in Kassovitz's *La Haine* and the banlieue riots, and now in *L'Esquive*, which continues to reproduce the same ideology. When different social classes intertwine, they rarely assimilate to each other and consistently reveal themselves via their language, manners, and methods of expression.

> *Les riches tombent amoureux de qui dans la pièce ? Des riches. Les pauvres tombent amoureux de qui dans la pièce ? Des pauvres. Donc, ils se reconnaissent malgré de déguisements. Et ils tombent amoureux de leur*

[100] [What Marviaux tells us is that the rich play the part of the poor and the poor play the role of the rich and no one can really manage it…. It shows that we are prisoners of our social condition…(*L'Esquive).*]

[101] The wedding trip to the Louvre in Zola's *L'Assommoir* is another example of this idea. In addition, in Zola's noel *Nana*, Nana becomes somewhat wealthy and frequented by some of the most upstanding men; however, she dies poor, alone, and of smallpox in the end.

même classe sociale. Marivaux nous dit : On est conditionné, complètement conditionné par son milieu d'origine (L'Esquive).[102]

Therefore, in Marivaux's *Les jeux de l'amour et du hasard* as in *L'Esquive* there is no chance.[103] The students are destined to remain in the *banlieue*, similar to Hubert's fate in *La Haine*, surrounded by the apartment projects, some more than twenty floors in height and full of mostly small, dingy apartments. The teacher implores one student, Krimo[104], who plays Arlequin, to "leave himself to reach a new language," a new way of being. She yells: *"Sors-toi!"* [Leave yourself!], but Krimo is unable to transcend himself and his current cultural frame of mind. Defeated, he walks out of class and refuses to perform in the play. Assimilation is the transition from a place of alienation to one of acceptance both *of* and *by* the target community. The physical force of architecture and landscape impedes the process; the tenements hold the high school students apart in exile.

However, in all these films, *L'Esquive, La Haine,* and *Dodesukaden*, there is a sense of camaraderie among the characters. In *L'Esquive*, the high school students have formed cliques and groups of friends. We see them in constant conversation with one

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[102] [Who do the rich fall for? The rich. And who do the poor fall for? The poor. They recognize each other despite their disguises. They fall in love within their own social class… Marivaux says that we're conditioned by our original milieu (*L'Esquive).*]

[103] The direct citation from the subtitled film is of the teacher speaking to the students: "No chance and no love. Love in the usual sense, pure love, that is. Usually you fall in love with the inner being, not with what's around it… We stick together. Even disguised, we cannot escape our origins. So when you play rich people or poor people, playing those same roles, they can manage it at times but the origins are there and they often fail. Reflexes return. … Imitating is only ever imitating. These two recognize each other. Their love, the purest feeling, is influenced by their origins."

[104] Krimo joins the cast of the play because of a crush on Lydia, who plays the lead. He struggles to learn his lines, and he has trouble articulating the words as well as projecting his voice. He eventually gives up and does not perform in the play.

another. In *La Haine*, although the youths are more fragmented, the characters clearly exist within a larger community and the three protagonists have strong bonds with each other and remain together even in intense situations of drama and violence.

In *Dodesukaden*, the characters regularly cross paths and intermingle with each other in the center of the slum: six women gather every day at the water pump in the center, chatting and gossiping as the other characters come and go; Rokkuchuan drives his imaginary trolley through the center, the two drunken men swap wives and homes crisscrossing their paths, the beggar boy with the dreamer father live in car shell just off from the center. Actually, all homes except Rokkuchuan's form a semi-circle around the water pump. Kurosawa's choice of layout creates an intimate environment in which the characters live, certainly cut off from the rest of society, but within their own tight-knit community. None of the characters, save Hei and his estranged wife, seems lonely. Even the girl who is raped by her alcoholic uncle has a kind aunt and a young bike messenger admirer who gives her small thoughts while on his route.

Loneliness, Isolation, and Le Signe du Lion

It is the issue of loneliness in relation to the poor and the homeless that is most clear in French New Wave director Eric Rohmer's *Le Signe du Lion* (1962). An indolent, loud, brash, American musician, living in Paris, becomes overwhelmed by debt after he learns he is not receiving an inheritance from his deceased aunt as he had previously thought. He has no family and most of his friends are away. The few friends who remain in the city refuse to lend him any more money and recommend that he find either a job or

a woman who could support him. He recognizes that no woman would want him in his filthy, unkempt state. He also acknowledges that his music has never earned him a cent in his life; however, he makes no attempt to find another job; and therefore, he is forced into becoming homeless, living on the streets, sleeping on benches or by the Seine.

The lack of social network is not only a symptom of homeless people but also often a significant cause of their plight. Crisis, a United Kingdom charity and research center on homelessness, and other homeless organizations have found that the main cause of homelessness is the breakdown of social networks and estrangement from families (Lemos 1, 3). Nearly thirty-eight percent of homeless people spend all their time alone; less than one-third spend time with non-homeless people; and more than half reported that they have no ties to their family (Warnes 79-80). Moreover, the homeless choose not to reach out and make connections for fear of being victimized (Rokach 108). Extended isolation destroys coping mechanisms and weakens social abilities including conversations skills, general knowledge, and employability (Smith 9-10). Moreover, isolation causes one in four homeless who have found housing to return to the streets because they are unable to sustain their tenancy (18).

It is this ambiance of isolation that is particularly prevalent in *Le Signe du Lion*. Aimée Isreal-Pelletier cites an interview in which Rohmer tells Jean Douchet about the importance of ambiance for him in his films: "He is less and less interested in dramatic effects and more interested in ambiance—the presence of all that surrounds the narrative" (39). The sense of isolation and alienation makes it an important film for awakening the viewer to what is perhaps the most serious problem of the homeless. The film, then, is

driven more by the ambiance than by the actions of the protagonist, the unlikeable Pierre Wesselrin.

Wesselrin is an American living in a foreign country ostensibly far away from his family. Moreover, we know his aunt, who had been living in Europe, is dead and he is estranged from his cousin, who inherits all the aunt's money. Since the film is set during the summer, by the time he is truly in dire straits, most of his friends, like most Parisians, have departed for their long, August vacations and he finds himself alone in the city. We come to learn that the few friends who remain have already lent him a good sum of money and refuse to give him any more. He has eradicated his social network, and therefore, having nowhere to turn for help, and no place to sleep, he is forced to live on the streets.

Rohmer's camera takes numerous shots of Pierre attempting to make a connection: he endlessly endeavors to call people; however, he either has the wrong number or the friend is not home. He rings the bell of a few friends' residences, visits a few businesses inquiring after friends and acquaintances; however, everyone seems to be away on vacation. The film therefore captures both the mood of Paris in August (one of idle holiday) as well as "how easily one can change from a 'normal,' static inhabitant of a city into a mobile tourist or vagabond" (Mazierska 234). Through the unanswered phone calls, Rohmer expresses that Pierre's homeless situation is indeed due to a lack of social network and support. Had Jean-François or any of his other friends not been on vacation, Pierre's situation may never have become so dire. Moreover, the lack of response to his requests for help silence his voice in the film. As the film progresses, the only time he

speaks is to try to reach someone, to beg to be allowed to stay another night at a hotel, or to ask a friend for more money. All of his interactions are reduced to bartering and begging for basic needs.

The camera follows Pierre as he walks the city of Paris. As viewers, we follow him too, also in silence, watching the cars pass by, seeing the bright lights of restaurants and city life, and hearing the sounds of the city and the conversations of others. In one scene, Pierre, listening to a violinist, sits on a city bench just outside of a café where Parisians are eating and drinking. In another scene, he sits on a park bench listening to a petty conversation among three women over how much a few drinks cost that they are enjoying. He is clearly tired and thirsty with no resources to obtain a drink. In a third episode, he has returned to the Seine and sees people eating and laughing. He nearly steals a family's picnic leftovers; however, a dog barks and scares him away. The series of scenes featuring the protagonist creates an ambiance for the film of Paris (its streets, its parks, and the Seine) and the numerous anonymous faces that create a cityscape. Israel-Pelletier writes: "All these features are not the backdrop to the narrative, but constitute the very fabric of social discourse and Rohmer's vision of contemporary life, the illusion of the real" (40).

The surrounding environment is brought out through the movement and travels of the protagonist. Israel-Pelletier notes: "Rohmer's films are traversed by movement… His characters are almost always on the move, criss-crossing space and visually agitated… Characters stroll, pace, drive cars, ride trains, buses, bicycles; they cover a lot of ground" (42, 43). Even in all of his walking and travels, Pierre consistently returns to the Seine,

almost in search of a home. Each day as he travels the city, searching for food or for a friend to help him, he always returns to the river. Pierre is seeking a home he no longer has. As a *sans domicile fixe* or SDF (without a permanent home, or a homeless person), he is forced to live a life in constant transition, which Rohmer puts forth as unstable and undesirable. According to Ewa Mazierska, "The moral of his films is that transition is bad, unless it fulfils the function of a 'rite of passage' to permanence and stability" (244). For Pierre, his situation is only temporary as he is saved at the end of the film; however, for the more than 100,000 homeless worldwide[105], homelessness is not a rite of passage but a permanent lifestyle of often-undesired instability.

Pierre speaks remarkably little throughout most of the film save for an occasional "excuse me" or another inquiry into the whereabouts of a friend. This lack of speech is tightly contrasted with the constant conversations of others. In addition, in nearly every shot, the camera captures Pierre among other people; however, he does not interact with them, which only further emphasizes his isolation. A camera shot of him alone is always followed by another shot with people, emphasizing that people are always just a frame away. The only moments when he is alone for an extended period of time are after the restaurants and bars close when everyone has gone home and he is left on the street, forced to sleep hunched over a café table, sprawled out over a doorway, or curled up on a concrete bench on a bridge.

[105] As reported by the United Nations in 2005, this number reflects only those with no housing whatsoever and does not include those living in semi-permanent structures including cars, tents, abandoned buildings, etc. One billion individuals worldwide lack adequate housing (Capdevila online).

After his third night on the streets, hungry and dirty, he picks through the trashed remnants of a street market and finally returns to the Seine where he is able to ask another homeless man if he has any food to share. Since his fall into an unwanted, transient lifestyle, this moment is the first time he asks a stranger for food. Their similar plight creates an instant kinship, which allows him to make his request. The two become companions and Pierre lets this man take care of him as the homeless man pushes lazy Pierre through the streets of Paris in an old baby buggy.

As his friends return from vacation, they learn that Pierre's cousin has died and finally he has indeed inherited a great sum of money. However, they can no longer find him. He has stopped coming to them and wanders aimlessly through Paris, drinking and sinking further into a state of isolation. It is the sense of isolation that is the driving force in the film. Of Rohmer's later film *Le Rayon Vert* (1986), Israel-Pelletier comments that the central character, Delphine, "occupies cinematic space," but "she has not been central to us" (42). The same is true for Pierre. The camera follows both characters throughout the films; however, we as viewers are "preoccupied" by the ambiance that Rohmer created through the interactions between the characters and the rich physical landscape he captures on film. According to Israel-Pelletier, "This way of positioning the character between her own self-importance and our general indifference to her is prevalent in Rohmer, and explains our feeling of detachment from many of his characters. We are not meant to like them, because they are flawed and morally weak" (42). The spectators have little sympathy for an out-of-work musician who expects his friends to care for him and does not attempt to obtain even a part-time job.

In the final scene when his friend, Jean-François, tells Pierre that his cousin Christian is dead and he inherits everything, the camera follows Pierre closely, first as he is lying on the ground cursing people and the stone, and then as he stands elated and relieved. He stares out straight and his two friends and the other homeless man look at him. As the friends carry Pierre off scene to their car, the crowd that has formed follows, but the camera remains focused on the other homeless man, dumbfounded as his friend walks off. He tries to climb into Jean-François's car with Pierre but two journalists hold him back. Pierre calls out that he will see the homeless man tomorrow and he is left alone in the street as the car drives away with the crowd staring at him, mocking him. In this way, Rohmer effectively focuses the camera and our minds on the isolation of the homeless again. And he leaves this thought lingering as the credits role. The situation of the nameless homeless man in the film is at the center of the film's sense of despair and isolation.

Conclusion

Rather than mental illness, addiction, poverty, or ill-fated fortunes, the central problem of homelessness rests with an individual's alienation from his or her community or in-group. The failing of the community to support or even recognize the individual allows the victimized homeless population to grow exponentially and forces society to become increasingly fragmented and disjointed. Yet, the impoverished, the disadvantaged, and minorities are always part of the world, even when living in the liminal peripheries and crevices of modern cities. The protagonists of the films analyzed

in this chapter are living in exile. In the style of Naficy's exile cinema, they do all desire to return to their homelands, however improbable that may be. Moreover, the films depict an idealized picture of the target environment—wealth, fancy cars, and elaborate dinners out in Tokyo; art galleries, restaurants, champagne, parties, and grand apartments in Paris. The desired lifestyle appears much grander in comparison. These films have begun to locate the displaced, namely the impoverished and the homeless. Homelessness, urban living, and marginal spaces are not particular to any one city; therefore, through examining French and Japanese films, this chapter has attempted to move away from East-West dualism and area studies to explore global concepts of space, the effects of rapid urbanization at its onset and today, and the problem of homelessness, which has no boundaries.

Conclusion

Centering the Margins

"Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty." — Mother Teresa

"Border consciousness emerges from being situated at the border, where multiple determinants of race, class, gender, and membership in divergent, even antagonistic, historical and national identities intersect. As a result, border consciousness, like exilic liminality is theoretically against binarism and duality and for a third optique, which is multiperspectival and tolerant of ambiguity, ambivalence, and chaos." — Hamid Naficy

Modernity and Naturalism in France and Japan

I chose this topic of liminality and homelessness because of my interest in the aesthetics and politics of spatial relations. I am curious about that way in which space exerts control over our actions and deeply influences our psychological states. In many ways, my project is a study of modernity, of its aesthetics and its politics, and a look at the harsh reality that "human growth has human costs" (Berman 57). In *All that is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity*, Berman traces modernity, its chaotic path, and the way in which modernity hurts many who stand in its way. It is Berman's belief that modernity is the disintegration of the past in order to make room for the progress of

the future. While the world continuously changes, in this turmoil, there is nostalgia for the past, yet the wish for stability is never granted, breeding fear, tension, and the need to cling to possessions and status. We see this desire for stability in the dream of Gervaise of owning her own laundry, in the amassing of possessions by the inhabitants of the apartment house in *Pot-Bouille*, and in the ephemeral nature of childhood in *Takekurabe.* Modernity "annihilates everything that it creates" in order to "go on endlessly creating the world anew" (Berman 288). The constant changes leave a wake of damage and casualties and the new developments in the modern world bring chaos and instability that is beyond human control. Many become disoriented in the modern world, unable to grow with the changes, which quickly create an unevenness of the cityscape: lost individuals live and work next to people thriving in the new urban centers.

The theme of insatiable desires and perpetual creation necessitates its opposite: continuous destruction of what is old, namely the past; it is the only way to make room for the present. Soon, the present will be destroyed to make room for the future. Some cannot keep up with changing society; some do not gain employment in new industries; some lose their homes and end up adrift in the city and isolated. Berman believes that union is not possible in this modern state of instability. He writes that we are "condemned to modernity" (125). Berman's idea suggests not only that we cannot stop the perpetual change, but also that we cannot stop the inevitable destruction and loss that accompanies it. Kurosawa's lack of solution to the slum dweller's plight in *Dodesukaden* echoes Berman's idea. Kurosawa's unsatisfactory recommendation for acceptance and compassion, while kind, misses the essential problem of homelessness and marginality –

that of fear of instability – which isolates people to the fringe of society – instead of extending community, providing resources, support, and kinship.

The rapidity of the urbanization process of Paris and Tokyo links these two strikingly diverse cities with deeply different cultural and political pasts together, and thus, I chose to study these places rather than any other two locations in the world. In roughly similar time periods (Tokyo's transformation occurring only a few decades after Paris's), the two cities experienced burgeoning modernity marked by population growth, urbanization, industrialization, and the literary movement of naturalism, among other things. In naturalism, while there are conversions, one country did not imitate and reproduce the other's form and technique, but instead articulated the movement differently. The movement of naturalism produced varied and distinct paths in each literary tradition. While much has been written on naturalism in both contexts and the relations between them, I would briefly like to comment on the movements to further explain why I find these two locales, this time period, and this socio-historical situation particularly engaging.

Zola, naturalism's founder in France, is inspired by modernity, and in specific, his numerous and lengthy descriptions of the space of Paris create a vivid picture of the city at its time of transformation. His characters represent particular aspects of Second Empire society and a large number of his novels deal specifically with Parisians, their activities, and their social lives. Zola expressed his ideas of naturalism in *Le roman expérimental* (*The Experimental Novel*, 1880), explaining that his desire is to study the psychology of individuals in a quasi-scientific manner, through careful observation and "objective"

depiction. Since each novel in the *Rougon-Macquart* series concentrates on a different aspect of society, and any given character, controlled by environment and heredity, usually occupies one particular place in society, it is necessary to read much of the collection to receive a more complete picture of France's Second Empire.

Zola's naturalism as well as the European Realist movement initially influenced Japanese naturalism. Whereas French naturalism arises from a reaction to romantic literature and the perhaps over-emphasis on the individual self, Japanese naturalism concentrated on the search for the individual self (Suzuki 2). In fact, Japanese naturalism (1906 to the early 1910s) is often autobiographical in content centering on the author's interior life (as in Katai's *Futon*). Sincerity, soul searching, suffering, and confession are all part of Japanese naturalism. By the 1920s, this movement, which once encompassed both the inner life and true self in relation to the natural world and the social self in relation to society, came to deal only with the author's inner life (the I-novel, which I discussed in the Introduction) and no longer addressed wider social concerns which was always a part of European naturalism.

Both forms of naturalism arose out of a quickly changing world with new industries, drastic population growth, political reform, and modernizing city planning projects and both sought to grasp the world – for Zola, he concentrated more on the conditions the Second Empire produced for the people living there and was thus largely political. Tōson depicted the internal struggle of characters and the social pressures and concerns they faced in opposition to their natural true self. This idea is not to say that naturalism in Japan was not social or political – it was, especially concerning Tōson's

writings; however, the internal lives of characters play a greater role. Moreover, Zola and other French writers certainly explored their characters' psychological impulses and sufferings; however, the political and social aspects are highlighted.

Liminality versus Marginality

In this dissertation, I have explored the concept of liminality by analyzing liminal figures in peripheral places during the urbanization of two cities, Paris and Tokyo. While Berman argues that we are always in a state of flux, that the world is constantly changing, I propose that there are certain places (stairwells, for example) and particular periods in history (movements of urbanization, colonization, and modernization) that are distinctly "liminal."

By "liminal" (using concepts from van Gennep, Turner, and Anderer), I refer to locations in which an individual is in transition and "wanders adrift" between two more stable locations. A liminal place is one that is both transitional and on the fringe or border of a more stable location. While in a transitional, intermediate place, an individual is effectively rootless and homeless. At these sites, liminal figures are invisible to the rest of society, existing between life and death, with no home, no rank, and no status; they are unknown, unacknowledged, and unclean and thus "dangerous" (from the point of view of what is structured) and must be kept separate, quarantined, if possible, to avoid contamination of the unknown and the instability that fringe existence has come to represent. In such an uncertain, changing world, we run from further uncertainly and cling to stable security in our homes. Liminal figures have crossed a "dangerous"

boundary into an intra-structural, less secure, less known, less ruled world. The transversing of boundaries results in death, loss, and defeat. Once exiled to the fringe and situated in a liminal place, fully rejoining with the target culture becomes increasingly less likely, which results in liminal places (transitional spots between country and city or border places between different areas within cities) becoming more stable locations (the banlieue, or the slum for example) for the marginalized in society. Staying too long in a liminal place results in insanity or death.

Liminality does not necessitate poverty, misfortunate, marginality, or isolation. Indeed, liminality is marked by the trait of opportunity. A liminal region is distinct from a marginal one in that the former has the possibility for transition and for a variety of outcomes (e.g. the Hirokōji road in "Jûsan'ya" or the stairwell in *Pot-Bouille*) whereas the latter is a more permanent state and holds out little hope for change (e.g. the Parisian banlieue or *Dodesukaden*'s slum). As Turner notes, liminal space is essential for transition from one stage of life to another (e.g. engagement before marriage, pregnancy before parenthood, a candidate before becoming president). Reaching new life stages or attaining new social positions are more positive outcomes of a time spent in liminality. I chose to study the possible negative outcomes, in particular, homelessness.

Through my research I have discovered that the rootlessness that many feel in the modern world is attributed to a lack of support, isolation, and a breakdown of social norms, and these things consistently occur in both liminal and marginal space. In order to reduce the anxiety and fear that instability brings, isolating the unknown does not help. Repeatedly, the margins bleed into society (e.g. Berthe's entrance into the Campardons'

household, Ushimatsu's presence in Iiyama, the beggar boy moving quietly through the kitchens of city restaurants, and the banlieue youth creating a scene in the art gallery). In fact, removing what causes the fear from sight, only allows it to fester and lurk on the edge of our consciousness – neither solving the issues of urban blight nor fully erasing them from our awareness.

The Unevenness of Modernity: Liminal Figures in Peripheral Locations

These issues – fear of the unknown, desire to isolate and quarantine, the need to cling to stability, and the subsequent isolation and marginalization of the liminal figure – occur in all the stories I studied. In my first two chapters, I illustrate how Zola uses space to control the characters within its bounds. Space often acts as a character in his stories as with Gervaise's tenement in *L'Assommoir*. While Zola's Naturalism promotes two equal influences on human life, namely hereditary factors and environmental ones, in *Pot-Bouille* and *L'Assommoir*, space controls the story and acts as a greater force than Zola acknowledges or even realizes. Zola creates a convincing picture of the middle class home (and the privacy, security, and protection that it offers to middle class residents during the Second Empire, according to Bachelard and Benjamin). The imagery of the home is complicated by its ability to imprison. Its claustrophobic and suffocating nature combined with the rigid spatial boundaries result in explosions into the less defined liminal space as we saw with Berthe. There is a coming out at the seams by the inhabitants and by the materials of the apartment house itself. Space, although compromised, is never completely destroyed: the staircase in *Pot-Bouille* is still silent

with a façade of respectability at the end after the scandal has passed, and the tenement in *L'Assommoir* is still standing even after Gervaise's death and the downfall of numerous other characters (e.g. her husband, her daughter, Virginie). Zola does not permit the complete erasure of boundaries – to do so would ruin his naturalism construct.

According to van Gennep and Turner, the staircase in *Pot-Bouille* is indeed liminal because it is a transitional space for movement between apartments. When in that space, an individual wavers between two worlds; and when Berthe is in the space, she has no clothes, no home, and is in danger of contaminating other households. Because of fear of contamination, the Campardons, for example, do not let her in. Stable locales are closed to her, and safety is not accessible. She also initially feels that she cannot return to her family's home. She has no social network and is temporarily unaccepted and barred from society. In *Pot-Bouille*, there is a general cleaning out of anything impure: the carpenter and his wife and the pregnant woman are forced to vacate the apartment house; and Adèle abandons her baby, killing it, for fear of losing her spot in the attic.

With Gervaise, we again see the importance that Zola places on space (over and above heredity). Gervaise is killed by the space in which she inhabits. Her very neighborhood – that of the faubourg – with its murderous cries, swarming people, and slaughterhouse smells, situated near the factories on the border of the city next to the country – traps her. The miserable tenement is large, impressive, controlling, and overpowering. Gervaise's quarter is in transition throughout the story, changing from one state to the next – rural, to semi-rural, to city outskirts, to part of Paris.

For most of the story, when Gervaise is living in the transitional space of the faubourg, she is not wandering lost. In fact, she is very much at home. Although isolated from prosperous Paris, she is not isolated from her community, and in fact, she achieves some amount of success. Moreover, she chose to move from the country to the faubourg, this place on the border of Paris. Gervaise is not a drifter but a permanent fixture of her neighborhood and the misery it represents. Gervaise only becomes lost twice in the story – and in these instances she is liminal figure – wandering aimless, without a home: at the Louvre and at the end of the story. Her wedding party's exploration into the city center is a complete failure as they cannot assimilate or make sense of the Louvre and its art. At the end and near her death, she is turned out of her apartment, attempts to prostitute herself to get some food, and sleeps in the cubby beneath the stairwell. Gervaise's demise occurs only when she becomes liminal – losing her home, her dignity, her social network (they abandon her and let her starve), and living a liminal existence between life and death (cold, hungry, and homeless).

Ichiyō's story *Takekurabe* reflects the unevenness of modernity in that the Daionjimae *nagaya*, the rich Yoshiwara, and the more "respectable" areas of Tokyo border each other. In this story, more so than in *L'Assommoir,* the children's fates are determined by their genes, or rather by their parents' occupation. There is little chance for the children to alter their fate or to escape Daionjimae. Chōkichi's desperate desire for status, recognition, and power results in his fighting with Sangorō and flinging a dirty sandal in Midori's face. These two characters, one marked by poverty and the other by prostitution, represent the least desirable life for Chōkichi – a life without power, and

without a supportive community. For Midori, there is no one to buy her contract and save her from a life of prostitution: her parents have sold her into this world, Shōta, who might have enough money one day, is still too young, Nobu is off to become a priest and will have nothing to do with her, and Chōkichi just looks down on her. She has no support system.

The character of Oseki in "Jûsan'ya" has gained much, about which Midori can only dream. Oseki is married to an affluent man, she has a child she adores, her family is happy and doing well thanks to her, she has nice clothes and money. Yet, she too is isolated from her community and hemmed in by her family's socioeconomic status. Trapped by feelings of responsibility, familial duty and love, Oseki chooses to stay with her belittling husband. She chooses to live her life as if "dead," and she exists forevermore in some in-between realm, as a mother to her son, Tarō. When she travels along the liminal space of the Hirokōji road (between her husband's and her father's homes), we note that she has no home herself and the liminal space that may have offered her possibilities to push life in a new direction is lost to her.

Ushimatsu of Tōson's *Hakai* lives on the fringe of his community of Iiyama; he is ridiculed for his odd mannerisms and depression, even before the community learns of his actual genes. Once labeled as *burakumin*, his liminal status is permanent, as the *burakumin* were never seen as completely human never mind completely Japanese. Viewed as a subsection of the population between the animal kingdom and human beings, they were liminal figures, occupying a very peripheral place in society. Like Berthe was seen as contaminating the Campardons household, Ushimatsu and all

burakumin were thought to be able to contaminate the villages where they lived; therefore, they needed to be exiled, kept at the periphery. When Ushimatsu chooses his exile in Texas, he finally is "Japanese," now part of the Japanese community in Texas.

In the films I studied, I used the Rashōmon gate as a definitive example of liminal space –in-between, transitional, full of possibilities, and dangerous. The locales of the slum in *Dodesukaden* and of the Parisian banlieue are certainly peripheral to the cities; however, they are also defined locations, even stable locations. In this way, they are not so much liminal as marginal because they have lost their ability for transition and possibility. Therefore, there is very little hope left to those occupying these spaces. Although the characters of the slum and of the banlieue do not have support from the target communities, they do have the support of each other and have not sunk to the level of loneliness and isolation as Gervaise or Oseki has, or as Pierre Wesserlin in *Le Signe du Lion*. Wesserlin exemplifies the epitome of a liminal figure – isolated, without a community, without a home, with no security, no privacy, and literally wandering aimlessly, with only transitional borderlands available to him – benches, doorways, and the walkway along the Seine. Even before his plight of homelessness, Wesserlin is isolated from his community – he lives alone and abroad, with no family nearby, and no job to keep him afloat. He alienates all his friends, and even before his fall, he is already somewhat adrift in the world.

On Roots and Homes

The places that I have analyzed – the grand stairwell in *Pot-Bouille*, Gervaise's final cubbyhole (beneath a stairwell), Daionjimae on the border of the Yoshiwara, the Hirokōji road in "Jûsan'ya," Texas, the Rashōmon gate, *Dodesukaden*'s peripheral slum, the Paris banlieue, and benches, sidewalks, and doorsteps in Paris – are temporally and spatially transitional. These locales create a spatialized isolation of the characters suffering within them, the subsequent breakdown of social networks, with homelessness as the unfortunate result.

In the opening of this dissertation, I note a certain rootlessness that is prevalent in much of modern literature and film. This feeling of rootlessness or homelessness reflects a general sense of unease and anxiety in the world today. If homes do indeed establish roots (342) as Michelle Perrot suggests in *A History of Private Life*, what can increase the sense of home in society? I would argue that inclusion in a community and connection to a broader social world is essential to feel secure and to establish roots, yet the characters in these works inhabit spaces where such security is impossible to obtain. Modern political discourse often theorizes that poverty, mental illness, or misfortune are the causes of homelessness, yet the works I have reviewed yield an alternative hypothesis: that homelessness is a product of modernity and of living in liminality, alone and adrift, both in terms of mental and physical space.

My overall goal is to question assumptions about the causes of homelessness, illuminating the way that we force individuals to live in liminal places, which inevitably leads them to be marginalized from society, much as the individuals in these works are

marginalized by the spaces they inhabit. In comparing and contrasting two divergent cultures, which nevertheless hit upon the same literary themes at parallel moments in their histories, I hope to have shown that the connection between physical and psychological liminality is a universal truth, uncovered independently by various cultures during times of upheaval and architectural change. The implication of this view is that the gentrification impulse of modern society and the resulting isolation and loss of secure networks is the true architect of homelessness.

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