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Marriage and the City: Fatal Displacement in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*

Laurel Ann Cummins

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Marriage and the City: Fatal Displacement in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*

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The following is a meta-commentary of the article, “Marriage and the City: Fatal Displacement in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*,” co-authored by Dr. Anca Mitroi Sprenger and myself, Laurel Cummins. The article will soon be submitted for publication, and this commentary contains an annotated bibliography of all our primary and secondary sources as well as an account of the origin of the argument and the process of writing the article.

Our article is based upon an analysis of *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, a story authored by Honoré de Balzac within his seminal collection *La Comédie humaine*. In the article, we analyze the theme of fatal displacement in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* as an allegory of the repressions of nineteenth-century modernity. The theme is presented through the tumultuous marriage of the bourgeois protagonist, Augustine Guillaume, to the aristocrat artist, Théodore de Sommervieux, and through Augustine’s literal movement within the city of Paris that ensues after their marriage (from her home, the Chat-qui-Pelote, to her husband’s home, her attempted return to the Chat-qui-Pelote, and her visit to her husband’s mistress). We demonstrate that these displacements are not only the source of Augustine’s premature death but are emblematic of the perishing past in a post-revolutionary, modern Paris.

Our development of this conclusion comes through a close analysis of the principal text itself as well as of the literal and figurative displacements that occur throughout to the main character, Augustine. In studying these displacements, we consider not only the social structures and institutions at the time of the novel but the detailed images of the past that anchor Augustine in traditions that do not let her transition into modernity. We examine the portrayal of marriage in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* as it coincides to the ideals of marriage in pre and post-Revolution periods. We likewise consider the various geographical areas (as pinpointed by specific roads provided by the author) as a way of understanding the historical background and the effect of displacement from various areas of Paris to others. The title of the story (which references the sign outside of the protagonist’s house), the Chat-qui-Pelote, also offers rich symbolism that, when deciphered, substantiates our claim that this story goes far beyond an unfortunate marriage caused by class disparity. Instead, Augustine’s trajectory in the story, she being the human embodiment and relic of ancient French traditions, alludes to a foundational inability for past ways of French life to survive in modernity.

Keywords: Honoré de Balzac, Displacement, Marriage, *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, At the Sign of The Cat and Racket, Movement, Modernity, *La Comédie humaine*, Paris

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I would like to acknowledge, first and foremost, my husband, Philip White. Without his love, advice, motivation, or support this work would not have been possible. I am also grateful for our sweet, petit Simon who would never let me work too long or too hard without reminding me where my priorities lie. Also, I must express thanks to the small one who will arrive in the months to come who has provided me with an extra dose of motivation to finish.

I would like to thank all the French faculty who have inspired and taught me these past seven years in my undergraduate and graduate years. Notably, I would like to thank the very best of mentors and the brilliant forces behind me in this work, Dr. Anca Sprenger and Dr. Scott Sprenger. They introduced me to Honoré de Balzac and allowed me to discover his genius. In addition to these mentors, I am grateful for the members of my committee, Dr. Daryl Lee and Dr. Sara Phenix, whose advice and support have been wise, timely, and helpful.

Of course I would not have made it very far in this endeavor without the love and support of my parents, Charles and Denise, my siblings, and the dear friends in the MA program that I've made along this academic path in whom I have found kindred spirits, specifically Kristen Ballieu and Barbie DeSoto.

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Preface

In accordance with the second thesis option offered by the graduate program of the Department of French and Italian, I co-authored the article “Marriage and the City: Fatal Displacement in *La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote*” with Dr. Anca Mitroi Sprenger. This article will be submitted shortly to academic journals for publication. Following is a critical bibliography of our sources as well as commentary on the process of the production of the article.

The original ideas for this article were conceived in the classes that I took from Dr. Scott Sprenger that focused on the French Revolution, Balzac, and the theme of gothic marriage in early nineteenth-century France. We worked together on choosing this text, *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, as the basis of our article, and we began preliminary readings and work on the proposed study of examining various displacements in the story. However, in September 2014, I began working with Dr. Anca Sprenger on the proposed article. Together we developed a course of study and our foundational argument for the article through our discussions across her desk and in a JFSB conference room.

Since Balzac is detailed and meticulous in the information he includes in his stories, Dr. Sprenger proposed close readings of the references that the text made to words that meant “old” and that would tie Augustine, the main character, and her home to the past. She counseled me to do the same for Théodore and the duchesse de Carigliano but instead to focus on words that signified modern and new as see their ties to modernity. She guided me to undertake research in order to understand the historical significance of the various roads mentioned in the story which would highlight various characteristics of the geographical places within Paris. Under Dr. Sprenger’s mentorship, I read from various sources and developed ideas that we would discuss, sharpen, and modify.

In time, as our argument evolved and the thesis sections solidified Dr. Sprenger lead me to other sources and research that would ground my work in theory and logic, avoiding ideas that could derail our argument while searching for ideas and answers that supported our conclusions. She sent me articles to read and to procure citations from. She helped me with phrasing that would strengthen our points or clarify what I had written. In November 2014, I presented a version of the article in a presentation for the Women's Studies Conference at BYU. This conference gave me confidence as well as the boost of motivation I needed to get the article rolling and progressing to its final state.

Dr. Sprenger and I both worked on all aspects of the final article. I would send her drafts daily and she would offer counsel on what to add, where to better place and how to better phrase ideas, and she would recommend new sources that would uphold our argument. We would also return to sources, especially the primary text itself, to find additional support and background for any new avenues of the argument we were exploring or needing to solidify. At the end of December, we met with other MA students in the program to have a writing session where we spent three fifteen minute blocks typing away at our ideas. After each block, we would share our writing, offer and accept criticism, and begin writing again. This session was helpful to ignite and expand on avenues of thought. In January 2015, Dr. Sprenger and I held weekly meetings in a JFSB conference room where she, having read through a draft, would offer suggestions for amelioration, clarification, and necessary additions. We convened at her home one Saturday morning in February, near the completion of the article, where we spent hours reading though the article, identifying and rectifying weaker areas.

The process of reviewing changes and additions to our sections (especially the conclusion, which has seen the most recent modifications) continued through February 2015

until we were satisfied with each section and the overall article. Through the process of writing and revision, the completed article has become a combination of our research, thought, and prose. With a revised and nearly final draft of the article, I went to the Research and Writing Center for further revisions in style, grammar, and formatting. Afterwards, Dr. Sprenger and I completed a few more final revisions together before submitting it to the thesis committee.

Introduction

Honoré de Balzac is one of the most notable and prolific of French authors of the nineteenth century. Known for his presentation of realism, many consider him a type of human anthropologist who offers descriptions not only of the various people and minds of nineteenth-century France but also of places, especially the city of Paris. *La Comédie humaine* is his seminal collection of interlinked novels, stories, and analytical essays which is split into three major subsections: the *Études de mœurs* with its various *scènes* from different lifestyles and places in France, the *Études philosophiques*, and the *Études analytiques*. Together this sequence of stories presents a panorama of French life in the years following the French Revolution and, most especially, after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte.

The opening story of *La Comédie humaine* in the first section, *Les Études de mœurs*, is *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*. The title of the story, with its portrayal of a curious sign of a cat playing *jeu de paume*, announces the home and boutique of the bourgeois draper/clothier, Monsieur Guillaume and his family who live in the first arrondissement neighborhood of Paris. The narrative, focused around the trajectory of the mismatched and eventually fatal marriage of Augustine Guillaume with the noble artist, Théodore de Sommervieux, seems to draw its inspiration from an unfortunate event in the life of the author. Balzac's younger sister, Laurence, seems to haunt the story due to the striking similarities between her destiny and that of Augustine. Both married aristocrat men even though both came from less noble households, the Balzac family having struggled to achieve respectability since the father came from poor beginnings. Though the marriage between Laurence and her noble husband began well, time revealed significant, accruing debts that her husband had not mentioned from the outset. In time, Laurence was made miserable in her union and died four years later, still in her twenties.

Augustine, likewise, is made unhappy in her marriage to Théodore (though their problems do not stem from financial difficulties) and she dies in her twenties. It is believed that the conception of *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* would not have come about without this tragic familial drama.

Despite the specific and personal implications behind the genesis of the novel, *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, the tragedy of Laurence's death does not impose itself wholly on Balzac's creation of Augustine. He reveals her to be a bourgeois girl unprepared by her instruction to adapt to a marriage to a modern man and to a modern society. In her world of the Chat-qui-Pelote, Augustine is herself. However, once she is ushered into Théodore's world through marriage and a move, her inability to change her identity to one that is appropriate to her new milieu destabilizes her.

Balzac places this novel and its themes among the general subjects he often deals in: man's (and woman's) place in society and the influences of environment, love, and wealth. In particular, many of his œuvres are concerned with early nineteenth-century Paris, the capital of modernity, and specifically with the lives of those who thrive in the city and with those who die in their attempts to prosper there. He uses the city of Paris and how people flourish and decline there as a way to comment on French life at that time and as a way of understanding the effect of the events of the recent past (the Revolution) on the human mind in real places. For Balzac, Paris contains every situation and every phase of life possible, and he, through his novels, studies and analyzes specific humans from these situations and phases to see how they are living out the effects of the past. He observes how their pasts and their memories surface into concrete actions in the course of their lives.

To further explore other aspects of Balzac's life and his writing, an annotated bibliography of the sources used in our research for this article follows. It contains many of the

works of Balzac that we examined to identify patterns and many of the most important contributions to the literature surrounding Balzac. We also include the various sources that helped us understand ideas and theories of space and movement, aided in the justification of our argument on fatal displacement, provided insight into the geography of Paris as well as into the institution of marriage at the time, and offered insight into the effects of the French Revolution on nineteenth-century thought.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Balzac, Honoré de. *At the Sign of Cat and Racket*. Trans. Clara Belle. Hazleton, PA: The Electronic Classics Series, 2002. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

This is the main text that we study and analyze in the article. This translated edition was helpful in providing some clarifications of the original French, and it also enriched personal understanding of the novel. In light of certain translations, sometimes the words in English evoked different meanings than the words in French, so we had to make sure that we focused on the original meaning intended by the author. But, for example, the idea of the “fenêtre à la Guillotine” in the English version (even though the translator uses this French phrase) provided clearer meaning behind the phrase “la croisée qui a valu un nom odieux à naïve invention de nos ancêtres” (Balzac, “Maison” 14). This scene of the window that shuts between Augustine and Théodore and the translation of it aided in our argument that there exists a separation between the two main characters from the beginning.

---. L'avant-propos de *La Comédie humaine*. Paris: Gaillimard, La Pléiade. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 11 Feb. 2015.

The introduction to *La Comédie humaine* provides Balzac's method and structure for the collection as well as his reasoning behind writing the volumes. Balzac provides a list of authors and works that inspired and influenced him to write, and he also describes his need to transcribe his society's history and the contexts that interpellate them. In the Avant-Propos, Balzac also describes why he often uses Paris as the main place of action

for his characters. This is the main place of action for the characters in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*.

---. *Les Chouans*. Lausanne: Éditions Rencontre, 1968. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 16 Feb. 2015

This is one of Balzac's novels that appears in *La Comédie humaine* in *Scènes de la vie militaire*. The narrative describes a group of royalists who rise up against the new government of the post-Revolution. They are called the Chouans. This anti-revolutionary group are not only bourgeois merchants but they held ideals that we compare in our argument to those of the draper, Monsieur Guillaume.

---. *Le colonel Chabert*. Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1964. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

In this story, Balzac describes the life of a colonel who goes to war with Napoleon's army, is buried alive, and somehow survives and returns to Paris. However, the Paris he returns to is different and everyone still believes him to be dead. We use the example of colonel Chabert to establish our argument on fatal displacements to Paris given that Chabert declines to a type of death by returning to Paris to be buried among and by the living.

---. *Illusions perdues*. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

This book by Balzac, consisting of three-parts, describes the course of Lucien, a country boy who finds his way to Paris (through a love affair) and, once there, ends up being becoming destitute. He falls in love with a prostitute, Coralie, who dies. Soon after he returns to his home in disgrace. We use this book in conjunction with *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* to explain Lucien's displacement from the country to Paris, a displacement which eventually causes his death.

---. *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*. Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1963. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

The primary text that we draw from for the article, *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, is the opening story in *La Comédie humaine*. Published in 1829 under the title *Gloire et Malheur*, the title was later changed to its current name in 1842. There are minor changes between these two editions. The story tells of the love and marriage between a religious, bourgeois girl from an old quartier in Paris and a noble, secular artist who lives in a modern neighborhood in the city. The text details the misfortunate nature of their marriage and Augustine's inability to return home or find happiness in her new life. She dies of chagrin in the years after their union. This story is the basis for our argument for fatal displacements that represent an inability for the past to persist in modernity.

---. *Le père Goriot*. Paris: Alexandre Houssiaux, 1855. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

One of Balzac's more well-known texts, this narrative is included in *La Comédie humaine* and tells of Father Goriot's move to Paris to be near his daughters. In time, these selfish daughters leave their father completely destitute, and he soon dies alone, having been displaced to death in the city. We use the example of Goriot to strengthen our argument as well as give an example of a religious figure (he is called "a Christ of paternity") that no longer is pertinent in modern France

---. *Le réquisitionnaire*. Paris: Alexandre Houssiaux, 1855. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 5 Feb. 2015.

One of the lesser known novels of *La Comédie humaine*, *Le réquisitionnaire* describes the story of an aristocratic, pious mother, Madame de Dey, who impatiently awaits the return

of her son, Auguste, who joined an anti-revolutionary group and is fighting in a battle. Madame de Dey is an example of a noble woman who remains religious after the Revolution and is, thus, a normal example of an aristocrat of that time that is unable to enter into modernity. We use her character in juxtaposition to the aristocrat Théodore who adapts easily to modernity since he has relinquished the traditions of nobility and mocks Christianity.

---. *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*. Paris: Alexandre Houssiaux, 1855. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

This novel, which comes after *Illusions perdues*, follows the final trajectory of Lucien de Rubempré from the country to Paris, where his associations with Vautrin and prostitutes leads him to prison and then to self-inflicted death. We use the example of Lucien in our preliminary argument since his final displacement to Paris is deadly.

---. *The Works of Honoré De Balzac, Volumes 35-36*. New York City: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1901. Print.

In this book we focus on the section in part II entitled “Repertory of the Comédie Humaine” which describes specific historical information about various characters presented in the collection. We use this section to find out detailed information about the duchesse de Carigliano and her husband, so we can understand her background, from what social class they come from, and how they gain their nobility. We discover that the duchesse begins as a bourgeois that marries de Carigliano and gains a noble title.

Although the title was given to him during the Napoleonic wars for his service in the army and thus they are both of new nobility and not connected to the Ancien Régime.

---. *La vieille fille*. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 11 Feb. 2015.

Centered in the provincial town of Alençon, *La vieille fille* describes the fight between two rivals to gain the favors of the rich Rose Carmon and marry her. The town itself and the house of Rose are described in great detail by the author, and we employ a quote from the narrative that describes the purifying nature of Provence and the country in contrast to the corrupting nature of Paris.

Balzac, Honoré de, and Pierre-Georges Castex. *Histoire des treize*. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1956. Print.

The opening sentences of this book describe the humanity in the geography of Paris. Balzac understands that much of the literal space in the city has been imbedded with human characteristics and by the people who inhabit each neighborhood. This supports our argument since it is our belief that Augustine's literal displacement in the city is dangerous due to the fact that her neighborhood has instilled in her certain characteristics that will not transition well in other quarters.

Dumas, Alexandre. *La dame aux camélias*. Paris : Nelson Éditeurs. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 5 Feb. 2015.

La dame aux camélias is a novel by Alexandre Dumas, published in 1848, and is the account of Marguerite, a high-class Parisian prostitute who falls in love with a provincial bourgeois man and lives with him for a time in the country. However, she returns to Paris when the father of her lover, unhappy with the match, tells her to leave. Displaced to Paris, she soon dies. We use this story as an example of a contemporary author who, like Balzac, describes a fatal displacement to Paris.

Fournier, Edouard, P. L. Jacob, Jules Cousin, and Louis Édouard Fournier. *Histoire des enseignes de paris*. Paris: E. Dentu, 1884. Print.

This extensive work explores the historical background of various signs in Paris and examines their meaning. Fournier explores the sign of the Chat-qui-Pelote and the significance of the action depicted within the image.

Lazare, Félix. *Dictionnaire administratif et historique des rues de Paris et de ses monuments*.

Paris: 1844. Print

This all-encompassing dictionary of the streets of Paris provides historical information for each street in the city and includes dates of construction, arrondissements in which streets are situated, dates of admission into the Paris city limits, and important events that occurred on the streets. This source proved invaluable as we hunted out the history of the rue Saint-Denis as well as the rue des Trois-Frères to support our claims concerning the nature of the streets as related to the people who inhabit them.

Saint-Allais, Nicholas Viton, M. De. *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de la noblesse de France*. Vol.

1. Paris: Chez L'Auteur, Rue De La Vrillière, N.10, 1816. Print.

Saint-Allais' extensive dictionary on the specific subject of nobility in France allowed us to discover the historical context to the images of heraldry in the sign of the Chat-qui-Pelote.

Tausin, Henri. *Les devises des villes de France, leur origine, leur historique, avec les*

descriptions des armoiries et quelques reproductions. Paris: Francis Campbell, 1914.

Print.

As an historian of nomenclature, Henri Tausin's extensive work on identifying, detailing, and providing historical background on French mottos and coat of arms was, for our purposes, essential in gaining an understanding of the meaning, origin, and symbolism contained in the motto of Paris: *fluctuat nec mergitur*. We connect this devise to

Monsieur Guillaume who considers the Chat-qui-Pelote his unsinkable vessel. We believe that this connects the house/boutique to the old city and to the coat of arms that shows Paris as a large vessel that will never sink.

Toqueville, Alexis De. *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*. Paris: Les Éditions Gallimard, 1952. Print.

In this influential book, Toqueville analyzes French society of the Ancien Régime and the causes of the Revolution in order to provide insight into the state of the French psyche in the nineteenth-century. Our article similarly is concerned with the tensions that existed between pre and post-Revolution and how the rutted transition to modernity left the post-revolutionary world haunted by a past that it strove to demolish.

Zola, Émile. *Nana*. La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec. Web. 26 Jan. 2015.

Nana is one of the most prominent of Émile Zola's works. Completed in 1880 as the ninth volume in a twenty volume collection, *Nana* is the account of Nana, a high-class Parisian prostitute, who lives a debauch lifestyle in the city. However, after a sojourn in the country where she seems to be purified, she returns to Paris and dies soon afterwards. We use this story an example of a contemporary author who, like Balzac, describes a fatal displacement to Paris.

Secondary Sources

Amar, Muriel. "Autour de 'La Maison du chat-qui-pelote': Essai de déchiffrement d'une enseigne."

L'Année balzacienne 14 (1993): 141-55. Print.

Amar's article provides an intricate and essential study of the sign that announces the Guillaume's home and shop. She situates the symbol of the cat in an historical context that connects it with *jeu de paume* and reveals the irony of the cat, who represents a bourgeois home, displayed in the image as playing a strictly noble game. This reading allows us to understand more fully the symbolic implications of the marriage of a bourgeois girl to a noble man.

Andréoli, Max. "Une nouvelle de Balzac : La Maison du chat-qui-pelote. Ébauche d'une lecture totale." *L'Année balzacienne* (1972): 43-80. Web.

Andréoli's article discusses the significance of the linguistic paradigm of high vs. low that is key to understanding Balzac's works. In *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, this paradigm of high vs. low reveals a foundational opposition that exists in the novel between the bourgeois merchant home and the people within and the noble, modern artist and his milieu of friends. Andréoli claims that the house of the Chat-qui-Pelote, though it expresses a permanence that is not changed or bound by time, has a type of indestructibility (or inflexibility) to it that Balzac characterizes as an inferior sphere in comparison to modernity.

Bachelard, Gaston. *La Poétique de l'espace*. 3rd ed. Paris: Les Presses Universitaires De France, 1961. *Philo-online*. Daniel Boulagnon, 21 Sept. 2008. Web. 17 Feb. 2015.

In this philosophical work, Bachelard explains the meaning and depth of impression that home spaces have on the mind and memory of those who grow up in them. His analysis of

the country home and the city home is based on lived experience. Furthermore, his insight on these spatial types allows us to argue the importance of the Chat-qui-Pelote, especially as a place of home life, business, and religious life, in the education and formation of Augustine Guillaume. Additionally, it permits a discernment of how a displacement from such a place would incur a profoundly harmful effect.

Beck, Bernard. "Jardin monastique, jardin mystique. Ordonnance et signification des jardins monastiques médiévaux." *Revue d'histoire de la pharmacie*, 88.327 (2000): 377-94. Web.

Beck's study of monastic gardens in the Middle Ages and the symbolism of flowers is useful to a specific section of our study since he discusses the symbolism of the "lys" and the "rose." Beck presents the "lys" as a symbol of purity and virginity, and in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* Augustine is compared to a flower in a valley or a lily. This "flower in the valley" makes reference to Balzac's other work *Le lys dans la vallée* which describes a similar trajectory for the main character, and thus we can connect Augustine to the "lys" and to the symbolism of this flower.

Benjamin, Walter. *Sur le concept d'histoire, IX*. Paris: Gallimard, 2000. Print.

From paragraph number nine of Benjamin's philosophical essay on history, we read of the painting "Angelus Novus" that depicts an angel, the angel of history, looking back on the past before being tossed into the future, into progression. The angel seems ill-equipped to encounter the future, and we interpret this angel to be similar to Augustine who is called "an exiled angel" in the novel. She too stares at the past, unprepared as well for her ensuing encounters with the storms of modernity.

---. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*. By Francis Francina and Jonathan Harris. London: Phaidon, in Association with the Open U, 1992. 297-306. Print.

Benjamin's 1936 essay is a significant treatise on the revolution of art and how the understanding of art develops in modern contexts. In the excerpt that we use in our argument, we discuss Benjamin's notion that though art is reproduced progressively in more modern ages, the moment of its creation can never be reproduced and that part of it, that moment of conception, is significant to the creation of piece of art itself. This plays into our argument of Théodore's fleeting love for Augustine as primarily based on the moment of her creation into a piece of art.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Bhabha's book on post-colonialism and his developed theories on the issue are relevant to our stance at the end of the article where we discuss the rupture of and psychological debris coming from the French Revolution. His theory on hybridity as the cross between two separate races or cultures explains, though perhaps anachronistically, a way to perceive the mix of the old culture and the new culture that is ushered in after the Revolution. This mix reveals, through literature such as *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, the persistent incompatibilities implied by the dialogue between these two worlds that define themselves as opposites of each other and yet cannot exist separately.

Blix, Göran. "Social Species in the Comédie Humaine: Balzac's Use of Natural History." *Of Elephants & Roses: French Natural History, 1790-1830*. By Sue Ann Prince. 1st ed. Vol. 267. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2013. Print.

Blix's article investigates Balzac's use of a model of natural history in his study of contemporary society in *La Comédie humaine*. His findings inform our article because they allow us to understand how Balzac viewed the world and the people around him as analogous to types of species to study and how these "species" differentiate as they encounter different environments. The new environment in the novel that we discuss is the post-Revolution and how some of Balzac's characters are able to transition and adapt to the new society-environment and how some cannot and die.

Bologne, Jean-Claude. *Histoire du mariage en occident*. Paris: Lattès, 1995. Print.

Bologne's informative book explains the various changes that marriage, as a religious and civil institution, has seen in the last two thousand years in the Western world. The changes in the institution were especially drastic following the Revolution in France, and thus the variances between perceptions of marriage caused societal problems. Bologne's historical details add depth to our argument on how Augustine's ideal of sacred marriage was not aligned with her secular husband's and therefore caused her to be fixated on attaining an impossible spiritual union.

Calaça, Fausto. "Le portrait d'Augustine dans *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* de Balzac (1830).

D'une expérience de subjectivation par la médiation artistique." *Revue Orages: Littérature Et Culture 1760-1830* (2013): 1-15. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.

Calaça's article is somewhat relevant to our study, not necessarily in his explication of artistic meditation or the application of Michel Foucault's hermeneutics in Balzac's novels but in his description of Théodore de Sommervieux and his nature as an artist and aristocrat. This two-fold nature places him doubly against the bourgeoisie of the book. This insight allows us to make inferences about Théodore that support our theory of him

as being, though aristocrat, a modern man that eschews the old bourgeois nature of his wife.

Castex, Pierre-Georges. "La Maison du chat-qui-pelote." Introduction by Honoré De Balzac. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1963. 3-17. Print.

In the introduction to this three-volume book, the first volume being *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, Castex provides ample information behind the formation and the historical context of the novel. He offers insight into the troubled marriage between Augustine and Théodore, which supports our arguments. Nonetheless, he does ultimately chalk up the failure of the marriage to class and educational disparities, which we argue as only the surface of their problems and not the veritable causes of Augustine's ultimate death.

Clark, Christopher M., and Wolfram Kaiser. *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-century Europe*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

This book of essays explores the separation of church and state in European countries, specifically France, as not being absolute during the nineteenth century. The authors describe how the battle between religion and secularism was concerned largely with their roles in society and culture. These readings inform our understanding of the lacunas that existed at this time between Christian faith and secularism, the latter becoming the new "religion" of modernity.

Cropper, Corry. *Playing at Monarchy: Sport as Metaphor in Nineteenth-century France*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 2008. Print.

Cropper studies sports in nineteenth-century France as a way of uncovering significant social and political problems that arise when the nation changes from monarchical rule to an empire and then to a republic. His section on *jeu de paume* and on the sign of the Chat-

qui-Pelote is essential to understanding the implications and symbolism of the bourgeois cat depicted as playing the noble game of *paume*. Cropper, however, argues that the downfall of Augustine is that she contracts a marriage with a symbol of the “past” since she is marrying old nobility. Nonetheless, we assert the opposite since we interpret Augustine to be a symbol of the past and Théodore a symbol of modernity.

Darnton, Robert. “Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Séverin.” *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. New York: Basic, 2009. 77-104. Print.

In the section of Darnton’s book that we explore, the author interprets an unusual story which describes the murder of cats in Paris, France in the eighteenth century. These cats, killed in a worker’s protest, were killed as symbols of the bourgeois class. This is pertinent to our argument since, in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, similar implications of cat and the bourgeoisie are obvious. The title and course of the story are then made clear when we understand that the “chat-qui-pelote” of this narrative is Augustine, the ancient and bourgeois “cat” of rue Saint-Denis.

Faccarello, Gilbert, and Philippe Steiner. “Political Economy and Religion in Early 19th Century France.” *History of Political Economy* 40 (2008): 26-61. Print.

Although Faccarello and Steiner focus on the new approach to industrialism in the modern society of early nineteenth-century France, there is a section where they discuss how the turmoil of the Revolution and intellectual onslaught on religion causes Christianity to lose its power over humanity. This thought helps us understand, in the article, how many characters in Balzac’s works are able to bridge the gap into modernity since they reject religious support due to its unsuitable nature in their contemporary society.

Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Columbia UP, 1998.

Print.

Gandhi's introduction in her volume on postcolonial theories familiarizes her audiences with the scope and study of post-colonialism. We compare the lingering trauma and anxieties of nineteenth-century, post-Revolution France to her definition of the theory and conclude that there are similarities between both, even though one comes more than a decade before the other.

Gouritin, Patricia. "Portée sémiologique de l'enseigne et de son tableau dans *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* de Balzac." *Textimage* 4 (2012): 1-25. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.

Similar to Muriel Amar's study, Balzac scholar Patricia Gouritin studies the historical significance, symbolism, and treatment of the ensign of the Chat-qui-Pelote in the two editions of the novel (1829 and 1842). She provides relevant connections to elements of the sign to ancient French heraldry and emphasizes its connection to the past and to the Guillaume family. Furthermore, Gouritin discusses pertinent links between Augustine's unfortunate, fatal marriage to a noble and the unhappy, fatal marriage of Balzac's younger sister, Laurence, to a noble.

Guichardet, Jeannine. *Balzac "archéologue" de Paris*. Paris: Editions Slatkine, 1986. Print.

In this meticulous study and almost encyclopedic book, Guichardet presents the Paris of Balzac and connects the multitude of archeological details that he provides in all his books such as the various parts of the cities (including all references to roads), the transformation of the city in the nineteenth-century, and she explains how Balzac interprets Paris as an archeologist. This study is helpful in supporting our thesis since we are concerned with

how the Paris of the past on the rue de Saint-Denis (represented by Augustine) collides with modernity.

Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson. "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology* 7.1 (1992): 6-23. Web.

In this oft-cited essay on the topic of post colonialism, Gupta and Ferguson argue that cultural anthropological methods are a debris of colonialism. They discuss how colonialism displaces individuals in space as well as figuratively separating them from their past. This argument allows us to see similarities between the break that occurs in societies that have been colonized and the state of the French nation after it was, in effect, "colonized" by the leaders of the Revolution and modernity and separated from itself.

Harvey, David. *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

David Harvey is an acclaimed commentator on the nineteenth century. His book on Paris as the center of modernity in the nineteenth century is a densely packed history of Parisian society of the century. His goal is to demonstrate, like contemporary author Roger Callois does before him, that Paris underwent serious modernization but that this process was not abrupt but gradual. Harvey calls Balzac the creator of the powerful modern myths of this new Paris because of his novels and their characters that display the city and the society of the time. This book explains modernity and Balzac's observations of modernity in the city and is thus pertinent to our study.

Hunt, Lynn. *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. Berkeley: U of California, 1984. Print.

Lynn Hunt's book expounds upon the history of the French Revolution and the effect of the Revolution on French culture and its role in modernization and the rise of capitalism.

Her argument proves particularly useful in our understanding of how the leaders of the Revolution tried to eliminate the power of the Church and the culture of before. She explains that they imposed in its place a new “religion” with its new gods such as *la Raison* and *la Justice*, a new calendar, and a new language in their attempt to decompose what was left of the Ancien Régime.

Israel, Jonathan I. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.

Israel, a scholar of the Age of Enlightenment, focuses in this book on the necessity of understanding the philosophical works of Spinoza in order to comprehend the extent of the high Enlightenment. Although his book offers an account of the history of thought in early modern Europe, the book becomes pertinent to our study when Israel discusses Rousseau’s philosophies concerning corruption and nature. We see that Rousseau’s ideas are used by Balzac to render Paris and modernity as places of corruption and the country and natural places (sites that embrace past structures and institution) as places of purification.

Kadish, Doris Y. “The Ambiguous Lily Motif in Balzac’s *Le Lys Dans La Vallée*.” *The International Fiction Review* 10.1 (1983): 8-14. Print.

Kadish’s essay on Balzac’s *Le lys dans la vallée* discusses the double symbol of the lily in the story as both a sign of purity and, as the fleur-de-lis, a symbol of the monarchy. This insight into the lily is essential to part of our argument since in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* Augustine is compared to a flower in the valley. With this imagery in place, we understand then that Augustine is not only a symbol of purity but of the defunct Ancien Régime.

Lanskin, Jean-Michel. "Cocottes à la ville et colombes aux champs: dichotomie spatiale dans *La dame aux camélias* et *Nana* ou l'écologie de deux demi-mondaines." *Perceptions of Values*. By Freeman G. Henry. Vol. 22. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995. 105-18. Print.

Lanskin's article discusses the nefarious nature of the city of Paris to those who come there seeking to make something of themselves. However, in contrast, he describes the moral cleansing that overcomes even the most unsavory of characters, the prostitutes Nana (from Zola's *Nana*) and Marguerite (from Dumas' *La dame aux camélias*), when they leave Paris and spend time in the country. Their return to the city, however, brings their demise. This direct thematic link to our idea of fatal displacement proves a valuable source for supporting our inclusion of Nana and Marguerite as contemporary examples.

Larousse, Pierre. "Montmartre." *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*. 1982. Print.

This entry in this celebrated dictionary of France of the nineteenth-century was key in expounding the history of Montmartre, the arrondissement to which Augustine is displaced and dies. The history of the area presented in Larousse is particularly supportive because it tells of the death of the martyr, Saint-Denis, in Montmartre. Interestingly enough, Augustine, the girl from the rue Saint-Denis, also dies as a type of martyr in Montmartre.

Lascar, Alex. "Le début de *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* : de la seconde ébauche à l'édition Furne", *L'Année Balzacienne* (1989): 43-59. Print.

Lascar's article on *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* describes the stylistic and word changes that the author has made from the first edition in 1829 to the second edition in 1849. He emphasizes Balzac's word changes that stress the ancient nature of the Chat-qui-Pelote (and the people within), suggesting that Balzac is concerned with accentuating upon the

presence of the past within the present, progressive modernity. This supports our article because the main reason we believe that Augustine cannot persist in modernity is due to being anchored to the past.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell, 1991. Print.

Lefebvre's book discusses the ideas around the construction of space and that space is essentially a product of society since it is saturated with morals and practices. He argues that every society produces its own specific type of space in its cities. This work is important in establishing and understanding how the spaces, whether ancient or modern, in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* have been established and the types of societies that have created them.

Myers, Nicole. "The Lure of Montmartre, 1880–1900". In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*.

New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mont/hd_mont.htm (October 2007)

Myer's article offers a description of the geography, culture, and society of Montmartre in the late nineteenth-century. Myers also describes the beginnings of this modern neighborhood earlier in the century. This is supportive of our argument because it describes the area where Théodore and Augustine begin their marriage and where Augustine's past crashes against a modernity she cannot cross into.

Scobie, Stephen. *The Measure of Paris*. Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2010. Print.

Scobie's recent book on the city of Paris discusses the literal measures of Paris (the roads, the geography) but also how it is figuratively measured in the eyes of its lovers and its critics. Scobie's discussion on how the urban architecture and the humanizing of streets through the naming them adds a human discourse to the non-human geography of the city.

We use this to support our claim that Balzac's detailed description of roads and areas of Paris is more than him simply creating images of different parts of the city. Instead he uses roads and neighborhoods as a means of introducing a human discourse into the novel or a way to describe the nature of those who live in those specific areas.

Smart, Ariane. "The Darkness and Claustrophobia of the City: Victor Hugo and the Myth of Paris." *Modern & Contemporary France* 8.3 (2000): 315-24. Web. 21 Oct. 2014

Smart's essay discusses the representation of Paris in the literature of the nineteenth-century as dark, claustrophobic, and oppressive in contrast to the ideals of a society that dreamt of progress. She sees Paris as a city where the pure and innocent are ruined and where those who cling to ideals of the past are demonized. This supports our argument because it provides answers to why some sincere, religious characters in the novels we examine (especially Augustine) are unable to survive in the city since it is an oppressive space to them (to the point of death).

---. "In the Shadow of the Guillotine: The Question of Collective Memory in Post-Revolutionary France." *The Journal of Romance Studies* 3.1 (2003): 17-27. Web.

Smart's concern in this article is why France of the early nineteenth-century is still so traumatized by the Revolution. She perceives that despite discourses and steps toward progression and modernity that the nation is still characterized by deep anxieties that point back to the rupture in 1789. Her idea of "collective haunting" allows us to situate Balzac's story in a social sphere where debris of the past persist in and perturb the present.

Sprenger, Scott M. "Le Cousin Pons", ou l'anthropologie balzacienne du goût." *L'Année balzacienne* 10.1 (2009): 157-79. Web.

Sprenger delves into a study of how Pons relationship with his wife (in this Balzac story) is strained and unsatisfying while his relationship to science has become perverse due to the displacement of the nature of marriage after the Revolution. He explains, citing many sources on the topic including Denise Gigante and Jean-Claude Bologne, how the institution of marriage changed after the Revolution from a sacred union of both body and spirit into a secular contract devoid of any sort of spiritual basis. This constitutes one of the major reasons that Augustine's marriage to Théodore is so fatally displaced—she, a religiously Christian girl, seeks for a union of spirit in her marriage to Théodore (as marriage once provided before the Revolution) while he perceives his union to Augustine as secular and stripped of any sacramental significance. This leaves her impossibly unfulfilled.

---. "Death by Marriage in Balzac's *La Peau De Chagrin*." *Dix-Neuf* 11.1 (2008): 59-75. Web.

Sprenger argues that the failed unions in nineteenth-century France reflect not only the normal differences in social class, age, taste, money, etc., but also reveal a newer type of division between the sacred and the secular. This divide was opened after the Revolution ruptured with Catholicism. This argument is the avenue by which we support the idea that the divide between the two main characters is so fatal; it is lethal because it contrasts the sacred to the secular or the past to the present, which is impossible to overcome.

---. "In the End Was the Word: Balzac's Modernist Absolute." *Anthropoetics - The Journal of Generative Anthropology* 7.1 (2001): 1-22. Web.

Again, Sprenger's focus in this essay is on the idea of displaced desire in modernity that stems from the rupture of the Church and the nation in the Revolution. This rupture with the notion of the sacrament of marriage and its ability to unify body and soul is in time no

longer supported by communal belief. It therefore leaves those who identify with the past and still cling to its ideals unable to be fully fulfilled in marriage. For many, including Augustine, it causes them to die since their desire is impossible.

---. "Mind as Ruin: Balzac's "Sarrasine" and the Archeology of Self." *Histoires De La Terre: Earth Sciences and French Culture 1740-1940*. By Louise Lyle and David McCallam. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 119-36. Print.

Sprenger's chapter addresses the idea of Balzac's creation of a narrative consciousness that wills readers to examine the layers that make up the construction of characters' minds and to understand what parts of their conscious, or memory, will inevitably lead them to catastrophe. Sprenger's idea is that many of Balzac's characters, when we come across them in his novels, are already fated to a certain destiny because of their past. Once Augustine marries Théodore, she is fated to unhappiness because she cannot ever enter into his world of modernity because of her inextricable connection to the past. She cannot expel herself from who she is and must die.

---. "Union risible, union impossible. Gautier et le mariage au 19e siècle." *Bulletin De La Société Théophile Gautier* 23 (2001): 291-97. Web.

Sprenger again discusses the importance of the idea of displacement in marriage due to nineteenth-century France's modern marriages that have been emptied of spiritual and affective substance. Since Théodore's conception of marriage is modern in this sense, Augustine's desire for a spiritual union is stymied and displaced.

Stevenson, Norah W. *Paris dans La Comédie humaine de Balzac*. Dissertation. Université de Paris, 1938. Paris: Libraire Georges Courville, 1938. Print.

Stevenson's doctoral-dissertation-become-book is a meticulous study of Balzac's Paris wherein she describes Balzac's theory of the reciprocal influence of the individual on the city and the city on the individual. She shows how he doubly compares Paris not only to the country as a type of corrupting power but to the Ancien Régime as a progressing and demolishing power. He sees in the modernizing city a subtle and complete transformation, a new order that is establishing itself in a way against its past self. The supporting quotes that Stevenson's book offers are in the vein of how the city influences the individual, each person educated by his physical and social milieu. This is essential in our understanding of how geography has formed Augustine and her family in a way that conflicts with the progressive, modern areas of the city.

Sample of Changes

As Dr. Anca Sprenger and I wrote our article, we would correspond with each other weekly through e-mail, telephone conversations, and we would hold meetings often and especially as we neared the end. At the beginning, much of the focus was on researching our ideas and possible paths before even commencing the writing process. As we brainstormed and as I began to write and create sections, we would meet to discuss our progress and Dr. Sprenger would review the state of the paper and offer ideas for improvement and changes that needed to take place. Our system of noting changes, feedback, and addressing problem areas would be that she would offer me ideas out loud in our discussions and I would write them directly onto the version of the article I had. Many times I would note the desired changes in the margins or on the back of the article in bullet points. Directly after our meetings, I would make the necessary modifications to the article so that I would not forget her comments or suggestions. This process of discussing, noting, and changing was helpful to me in improving my ability to write concise prose. Furthermore, as we discussed our ideas out loud, the argument we were aiming for would become clearer. I also feel that my ability to research, think, and glean ideas from secondary texts improved. The process and practice of writing, researching, identifying problems, finding answers, finding sources that corresponded with my conclusions, rewriting with clearer prose, and expressing my ideas intelligently allowed me to gain confidence in myself. I learned many things as well in connection with formatting my thesis, knowing when to add footnotes and when it was valuable to include citations in the text, and the importance of word choice and supporting ideas with quotes from sources.

Throughout the writing process, there were sections of the article that I struggled to compose. Many times I had paragraphs that I wanted to include that were pertinent to the

argument but I was not sure where to place them or how to integrate them smoothly in the paper. Figuring out how to introduce the points I wanted to make with clean transitions was a challenge. In the conclusion, I found it difficult to decide what other avenues the article could take and how to introduce those ideas well. Also, making sure that we included and elaborated on the finer points and nuances that would be vital to the argument lacked for some time. However, Dr. Sprenger's careful eye and immense background knowledge on the century as well as the Center for Research and Writing proved to be excellent resources to manage those problems.

I began writing in the way I felt most comfortable: about the story. I had read it multiple times and began to record the ideas that seemed to fall into place within the topic of displacement. After that, the first real write-up I did for the article was an extensive outline, beginning first with evidences of fatal displacements involving Paris in other works by Balzac, an analysis of the displacements that happen to Augustine in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, the meaning of certain roads mentioned in the story, and describing the connection of the sign of the Chat-qui-Pelote to our analysis of the narrative. After this initial outline, we decided to fortify the article by including displacements described by other authors in the nineteenth-century. Then we worked on explaining the two different types of displacements that cause Augustine's death in the novel: marriage and geographical displacement. We added a section about social displacement and nature after our analysis of the two displacements, and we then elaborated further on our interpretations of the Chat-qui-Pelote ensign and its foreshadowing of the drama. After these two final sections, we wrote the conclusion. The introduction evolved throughout the process of writing the article, and both it and the conclusion received the most work and refinement at the end before the final form of the paper was achieved.

Throughout the writing process, I saved fifteen drafts of the article in order to preserve various states of our work as well as preserve ideas that I was deleting in future drafts that I might need to refer back to later on. Below I will provide a sample of several changes that we have made in these past few months.

The prospectus that I turned in at the beginning of January 2015 was reworked into the introduction of the actual article with Dr. Sprenger's help. However, we decided that we needed to begin the article with more of a bang. Dr. Sprenger suggested that we use a good quote that would allude to the underlying problems that cause so much upset in the nineteenth century and, ultimately, cause the decline and death of Augustine in *La Maison du chat-qui-Pelote*. The introduction was originally the paragraph below:

19th century France was a place of tremendous movement, especially at the heart of the country: Paris. It was here that the French Revolution hit its peak in the late 18th century and ushered in a modernity that was bent on clearing out the past religious and monarchical ways of life. While this change may seem abrupt, the transition from the Ancien Régime to modern France was not only gradual, but also paradoxical, and the post-revolutionary world was haunted by its past. David Harvey states, in his *Paris: Capital of Modernity* that “one of the myths of modernity is that it constitutes a radical break with the past...[so as] to see the world as a tabula rasa, upon which the new can be inscribed without reference to the past—or, if the past gets in the way, through its obliteration” (Harvey 1). And, as Ariane Smart describes it, “uncomfortable with the past, uncertain about the present, France rushed frantically into the future, a process which, far from healing its deep anxiety, increased it dramatically” (Smart 316). Balzac, author of

the vast *Comédie humaine*, depicted through allegorical stories, the brutal, unyielding modernity sweeping through the country, eradicating the past with all its imprints on the human mind through the characters of his novels—their predicaments, their inability to adapt, and, for many, through their death. His belief was that modernity was a killer of those that could not conform to it; it suffocated the past and displaced those who could not merge into the present, a present that required an abandonment of the old and, for many, of self and of memory. Many characters in his novels and in the works of his contemporaries (including Hugo, Flaubert and Zola) unconsciously enter into modernity. Some negotiate the transition while others, unable to surrender their past, die. In this paper we will explore how the protagonist, Augustine Guillaume from Balzac's *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* is a fated feminine figure emblematic of the dying past in a post-revolutionary, modern Paris, unable to return to the times bygone or survive in the present.

This introduction evolved into the following introduction, which we felt was clearer in presenting our main argument and quotes more sources that are significant to our argument.

France of the early nineteenth century was a place of paradox, decidedly detached from the troubles of the Ancien Régime yet indelibly marked by them. Alexis de Toqueville declares, “Les hommes de 89 avaient renversé l'édifice [l'Ancien Régime], mais ses fondements étaient restés dans l'âme même de ses destructeurs, et sur ces fondements on a pu le relever tout à coup à nouveau et le bâtir plus solidement qu'il ne l'avait jamais été” (Toqueville 90). In the aftermath of the Revolution, France achieves tremendous social and political advancement, but

this movement forward is not without impediment. As Ariane Smart reveals, “despite the dominant discourses of progress, modernity and science, the period was indeed characterized by deep social anxieties and phobias, which it is tempting to explain by the trauma of the French revolution” (“Guillotine” 17). This paradox of the past existing within and, in a sense, haunting the progressive present is clear since nineteenth-century France was “living in the shadow of the guillotine uses an appropriate metaphor to express a form of collective haunting” (17). Moreover, this juxtaposition of past and present is especially apparent at the heart of the country: Paris. It is here that the Revolution apexes in the late eighteenth century and ushers in a modernity that was bent on clearing out the past religious and monarchical ways of life. While this change is often seen as abrupt, the evolution from the Ancien Régime to modern France was not only gradual but markedly uneven, and incomplete. This rutted transition is why the post-revolutionary world is disturbed and haunted by its past. David Harvey states, in his *Paris: Capital of Modernity*, that “one of the myths of modernity is that it constitutes a radical break with the past [. . .] [so as] to see the world as a tabula rasa, upon which the new can be inscribed without reference to the past—or, if the past gets in the way, through its obliteration” (Harvey 1).

Author of the vast *Comédie humaine*, Honoré de Balzac, as we know, depicted through allegorical stories the brutal, unyielding modernity sweeping through the country. This modernity collided with the past and all its institutions and impressions on the human mind through the characters of his novels—their predicaments, their inability to adapt, and, for many, through their death. His

belief was that modernity was a killer of those who could not conform to it; it suffocated the past and displaced those who could not merge into the present, a present that required an abandonment of the old, self and memory. This abandonment or repression of the past, again, “is grounded in an historical rupture; the sudden break with feudalism and Catholicism realized in Republican modernity” (Sprenger, “Mind as Ruin” 123). However, the consequences of this repression are that “the ‘other-of-self’ emerging from the rupture is thus a conglomeration of residual feelings, habits, and memories” (123). Many of the characters in Balzac’s novels and in the works of his contemporaries (including Hugo, Flaubert, Zola, and Dumas) enter into and face this modernity with these residual reflexes. Some, who can abandon them, negotiate the transition well while others, unable to surrender their past, die. In what follows, we will explore how the protagonist, Augustine Guillaume from Balzac’s *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* is a fated figure emblematic of the vanishing past in a post-revolutionary, modern Paris. Her displacement in Paris, spurred by a catastrophic marriage, proves fatal since she is unable to return to times bygone or survive in the present.

In the second section, we establish the pattern of fatal displacement in works by Balzac that demonstrate the various trajectories of characters that are displaced in Paris and die. Dr. Sprenger felt that it would be useful to also include similar examples of deadly displacements in Paris written by other contemporary authors. In one of our first drafts, we included Emma Bovary from Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, but soon decided that her’s was not the best example for our argument since she never actually is displaced to Paris—instead her ruin is on the decline

in Rouen. We also included Nana from Zola's *Nana* in that draft, who we do keep as an example. This section from an early draft reads as follows:

Madame Bovary is a smart and beautiful country girl whose marriage to Charles allows her access to luxury and, eventually, other men. The movements in the novel move her from her country home, to Tostes, to the larger market town of Yonville, and eventually to the bigger city of Rouen (comparable to Paris) are also indicative of her movement away from her past morality and into adulterous relationships. However, it is in the city that her moral and financial decline meet up with her and where she realizes that her seeking for an ideal love is banal and impossible. With that in mind, she kills herself by gruesome suicide.

But, it is not only the provincial who come to Paris that cannot adapt, but even those who are accustomed to the city and have "la teinte presque infernale des figures parisiennes" (Smart 318). In Zola's *Nana*, the famous Parisian prostitute, Nana, is at ease in Paris living a lifestyle devoid of morality. The city, representative of a modernity that crushes the purity of a moral, sacred past, is Nana's playground. However, after a time spent in the country where she seems to be purified, her return to Paris is a displacement from newfound innocence to the nefarious nature of city. It seems strange that this sort of displacement, bringing her back to the city that she was once so very accustomed to would kill her, but it seems that the purification that happened in the countryside was so powerful as to negate the possibility of her becoming corrupt again in the city. This time, the corruption kills her. Paris kills her. Jean-Michel Lanskin says also that the lack of love in Paris is a killer for Nana since in the country she experiences love and

is deprived of that in the city. In Paris, she may make love as a prostitute but she has not experienced love. He says that “C’est aussi à la campagne que, selon Zola, Nana éprouvait ‘des choses qu’elle ne savait pas’ (1238): comme, par exemple, d’être sincèrement aimée et d’aimer pour la première fois. Si le Cœur fut et sera...absent des palais parisiens, c’est à la campagne que Nana en redécouvre la sensation neuve” even though she is “déjà chevronnée à l’âge de vingt ans” (Lanskin 115). This shows that there was a change that came about Nana in the country. She wears the color white and Lanskin explains that “le blanc étant considéré comme la couleur de la pureté, le symbole de l’innocence et de la virginité, c’est en partie sous ces signes que se déroule le séjour provincial de...Nana.” (Lanskin 111).

As mentioned above, in the final version we delete the reference to Emma Bovary and add further commentary to the paragraph on Nana to be clear in our argument concerning her type of displacement to Paris. Dr. Sprenger also suggested including an analysis of Marguerite from Dumas’ *La Dame aux camélias* as another reference to a contemporary author who narrates a similar phenomenon. This section now reads:

Balzac is not the only nineteenth-century author who crafts characters who experience death by displacement. Later on in the period, authors such as Émile Zola and Alexandre Dumas compose narratives (Zola’s *Nana* and Dumas’ *La Dame aux camélias*) where their characters die after they are displaced to Paris. Though Zola and Dumas, like Balzac, see Paris as a place of corruption that is in conflict with the pureness of the rural, they, unlike Balzac, are not concerned with the past’s encroachment on the present. They do not focus on the effects of

modernity in the city, but center their attention on the social and moral environments of Paris. Nonetheless, in these two stories, it is significant to observe a similar theme of death by displacement in Paris as in the stories of Balzac.

In Zola's *Nana*, the famous Parisian prostitute, Nana, is a Paris native (like Colonel Chabert) and is at ease in the city living a lifestyle devoid of morality. The city is Nana's playground where she is known and desired by many men. One man, who is about to watch her perform affirms, "Depuis ce matin, on m'assomme avec Nana. J'ai rencontré plus de vingt personnes, et Nana par-ci, et Nana par-là" (Zola 8), and at her show the text tells us that the city is at her fingertips—"Paris était là" (23). However, "devant [un] réveil navré de Paris, elle se trouvait prise d'un attendrissement de jeune fille, d'un besoin de campagne, d'idylle, de quelque chose de doux et blanc" (221-2), and Nana decides to leave Paris to sojourn in the country. It is in the country that she seems to be purified from her Parisian depravity (or, at least, is less immoral) since "elle croyait avoir quitté Paris depuis vingt ans, [. . .] éprouvait des choses qu'elle ne savait pas, [. . .] et elle tomba en vierge" (319, 321). However, her return to Paris, a displacement from newfound virtue to the nefarious nature of the city (Lanskin 117), is a return to her ensuing death.

Similar to Nana, Alexandre Dumas presents Marguerite in *La Dame aux camélias* as a *demi-mondaine* and mistress to many. However, she is persuaded by her love for Armand Duval, a provincial bourgeois, to leave her Parisian life and lifestyle as a prostitute. She leaves to live with him in Auteuil, in the country. Armand

explains that over time in the country “la courtisane y disparaissait peu à peu” and that Marguerite becomes “la plus chaste fiancée” clothed in a white dress (Dumas 287), symbolic of purity. However, their idyllic life in the country is interrupted when Armand’s father is apprised of the relationship and convinces Marguerite to leave and return to Paris. Upon her arrival back to Paris, Marguerite “croyant qu’Armand ne l’aimera plus jamais, se laisse entraîner dans un tourbillon suicidaire” (Lanskin 110); the author expresses that “elle ne dort presque plus, elle court les bals, elle soupe, elle se grise même [. . .] après un souper, elle est restée huit jours au lit; et quand le médecin lui a permis de se lever, elle a recommencé” (Dumas 387). Soon after she is “morte jeune et belle” (450) in Paris. In an ending that is remarkably parallel to that of *Nana*’s, Marguerite’s return to Paris triggers her death, and it is evident that “Paris s’oppose radicalement à la campagne” (Lanskin 118) since it is a contradiction to the symbolic purity embodied in the rural.

Dr. Anca Sprenger also felt that many of the ideas I was addressing in the article made references to much of her husband, Dr. Scott Sprenger’s work in the field of gothic marriage and the idea of fatal marriage or failed unions due to the desacralization of Christianity (and, by extension, of church sacraments such as marriage) after the Revolution. However, she noticed that I never actually cited his research or included much of an explanation of the state of marriage at the time of the story. An excerpt from an analysis of Augustine and Théodore’s marriage in an early draft is below:

Their marriage appears ill-fated since both Augustine and Theodore are incongruous. Augustine, just as her name alludes to the early Christian theologian,

is a religious, sensitive, bourgeois girl who grows up in a strict home with a mother who “se tenait si droit sur la banquette de son comptoir, que plus d’une fois elle avait entendu des plaisants parier qu’elle u était empalée” (24). Theodore, quite her opposite, is a secular, learned, aristocrat artist “au caractère fougueux” (44) that profits from yet has “une espèce de dédain pour la richesse” (102) and religion. Nonetheless, the two live passionately and happily for their first two years of marriage in Theodore’s home. However, in time, Theodore “reprit, avec la tranquillité d’une possession moins jeune, sa pente et ses habitudes” (78-79) as they were in his life before he met Augustine and he “retourna chercher quelques distractions dans le grand monde” (78).

This was evidently not only a poor elaboration on Augustine’s and Théodore’s expectations and thoughts on marriage, since they would both have different opinions on the matter, but it does not even cite the source of why the marriage between these two vastly different people would cause such a dangerous displacement for Augustine. The final version of this section on marriage, after several revisions, is much more articulate and expresses clearer thought on the differences between the two lovers and the ideals of marriage held by both. It reads:

Nevertheless, it is significant to recognize that their strong emotions of love are primarily inspired by “un moment de folie [. . .] [et] une ivresse qui [les] livrait en quelque sorte à la nature” (41), and even though they fall in love, Augustine and Théodore are quite each other’s opposite. Augustine, just as her name alludes to the early Christian theologian, is a religious, sensitive, bourgeois girl who grows up in a strict home (“qui ressemblait assez à une succursale de la Trappe” (33)) with a mother who leads the household with “sa prudente main” (21) as the

“premier ministre” (22). Augustine is naive and Balzac explains that for both her and her sister, Virginie, “leurs idées n’avaient pas pris beaucoup d’étendue” (26) since they are “élevées pour le commerce” (26). Théodore, conversely, is a secular, learned, aristocrat artist “au caractère fougueux” (44) that profits from yet has “une espèce de dédain pour la richesse” (102) and religion. Fausto Calaça explains that Théodore’s “origines sociales – artiste et aristocrate – le placent doublement à l’écart de la bourgeoisie [. . .] [et qu’] il appartient à la jeunesse de l’Empire” (Calaça 5, 10). He is considered to be one of the first of “le dandysme balzacien” (10), and though noble he is not the traditional aristocrat of the century. Instead, he has progressed smoothly in modernity as a type of paradox to his class.

However different they are from each other, the two do fall in love and marry at “le maître-autel de Saint-Leu” (Balzac, *Maison* 73). Their perceptions of marriage though prove to be as dissimilar as they are and, in time, cause trouble. Marriage at the time of Augustine and Théodore was much changed from the institution that existed before the beginning of the Revolution in 1789. Scott Sprenger explains that there is a “crucial distinction between the pre-Revolutionary ‘marriage sacrament’ and the post-Revolution, secularized version of marriage, the ‘marriage contract’” (“In the End” 6). For Augustine, a girl who grew up in a religiously Catholic home focused on the traditions of the past, the sacrament of marriage which was grounded in “Christ-mediated ‘grace,’ [that] magically fuses two bodies and two souls into one [. . .] [and] was thought to be metaphysically indissoluble” (6). This type of union was surely the one she believed she

contracted in her marriage to Théodore. Thus, she is continual search of being unified, body, mind, and spirit, to her husband, “fixated on a form of spiritualized/patriarchal marriage no longer supported by communal belief”⁽⁷⁾. However, Balzac explains, through a response to Augustine from her mother, that Théodore, though an aristocrat, “n’a jamais mis le pied dans une église que pour te voir et t’épouser” (“Maison” 96-7) —the first instance spending his time staring at her (“Théodore qui, debout derrière un pilier, priait sa madone [Augustine] avec ferveur” (60)).

A final example of changes comes with the conclusion. Even into the later drafts, the conclusion was still lacking in length as well as exploration into further implications that could come out of our research. The conclusion was, at that point, as follows:

Displacement, both literal and figurative, is a common theme throughout the works of Balzac. Whatever their reasons, his characters and those of his contemporaries seek to come to the city from the country to make a name for themselves, they escape Paris for the country and return again within its walls, or they move from one neighborhood to another within the city. Whatever the displacement, it is in the dark “Ville de Lumière” that they must come to terms with their displacement or die, many unable to avoid the latter. In *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*, Augustine’s displacement by marriage within Paris goes beyond the apparent banality of the loss of a “petite bourgeoise” in the Parisian world. She is a relic of the past and a past life that tries to survive in modernity and simply cannot.

This conclusion was sorely underdeveloped, and thus needed major revision. Dr. Sprenger and I believed that we should add a paragraph to the end of the conclusion that would summarize the residual effects of the Revolution on the nineteenth-century and do a comparison of these problems as almost anticipating the problems that would arise during post colonialism in the twentieth century. The final version of the conclusion is much more detailed and summarizes our argument. Below I include the final three paragraphs of our conclusion which tie up our claims while introducing, what we believe, is an interesting way to understand what the effects of the Revolution were on the minds of the generation that followed. It reads:

We could say, in a way, that Balzac's analysis of cultural, social, and historical displacement anticipates the post-colonial discourse. Our approach differs though from modern post colonialism in its specific address of the shift of the Ancien Régime to modern France. Nonetheless, while we discuss the specific phenome of displacement in Balzac's works of fiction, one could see the reverberations of these traumatic events in contemporary issues that have to do with other cultures and territories. The violent infliction of a new Western world on local populations has proved disastrous in the twentieth century in a way similar to the imposition of a severely new system and way of life was after the French Revolution in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century France.

In the vein of post-colonial discourse, contemporary anthropologist Akhil Gupta strikes a chord that resonates with Balzac's portrayal of fatal displacement in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote*. Gupta states that "it is not only the displaced who experience a displacement [for] even people remaining in familiar and ancestral places find the nature of their relation to place ineluctably changes, and the

illusion of a natural and essential connection between the place and the culture broken” (Gupta 10). In Balzac’s novel, each member of the Guillaume family experiences a change, or displacement, in their relationship to their home even though it is only Augustine who dies directly from this change. Though, it is true that Balzac’s representation of displacement in his novels is often that the effects of these changes in time and space are more extreme—causations that lead the displaced who cannot transition to death.

One could also identify that the idea from Leela Gandhi that “postcoloniality can be described as a condition troubled by the consequences of a self-willed historical amnesia” (Gandhi 7) is foreseen in the lingering trauma and anxiety that occupies the nineteenth-century. Gandhi continues by quoting Albert Memmi that “the lingering residue of colonization will only decompose if, and when, we are willing to acknowledge the reciprocal behavior of the two colonial partners” (11). Therefore, there is an important relationship between the person or nation who colonizes another person, people, or nation and the colonized themselves. In a way, the leaders of the Revolution had imposed a new “religion” with its new gods such as *la Raison* and *la Justice*, a new calendar, and a new language in their attempt to decompose what was left of the Ancien Regime (Hunt). Yet, similar to the case of colonialism, a total disintegration was not possible. The residues of the past continued to disrupt and haunt the new power that was trying to establish itself on the ruins of the old world. Now more than two centuries after the Revolution, modern France and the *vieille* France still struggle to acknowledge their “reciprocal behavior” (Gandhi 11). The vehemence of recent debates about

marriage in France may prove that some old wounds have not yet healed and the dialogue between the two worlds remains difficult. In *La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote*, Balzac not only examines the failure of a *mésalliance* and the disaster of social and cultural displacement, but also predicts the tragic misunderstandings, awkward compromises, and persistent incompatibilities implied by the dialogue between the worlds that define themselves as opposites of each other and yet cannot exist separately.

The sample changes I include here are just some of many that we saw during the revision process. Often, the revisions included many small changes, additions or deletions, which allowed the article to be more concise and avoid ambiguous statements or generalizations. Some modifications were bigger however, such as rewriting entire sections and adding in new paragraphs to elucidate an important point. Whether they were big or smaller though (e.g. the difference between changing the entire conclusion and adding an extra sentence in order to make a smoother transition) none of the changes brought to the final paper were inconsequential. The process of being detailed, concise in wording, fluid, unified in voice and direction, and consistent throughout the article taught me vital skills that I will retain from this co-authoring experience. It taught me to accept criticism willingly and showed me that the need to focus in on all the aspects of good writing, albeit time staking, is necessary in creating a complete, cohesive, readable, well-supported thesis.

Conclusion

This meta-commentary should prove useful for anyone who desires to gain further understanding of Honoré de Balzac as a major contributor to tradition of French literature as well as a social commentator on the state of the French people in their transitions from the Ancien Régime to modernity. While our focus has been on Balzac's treatment of literal and figurative displacement in *La Maison du chat-qui-pelote* and his contributions as a social critic, Balzac is not a political figure who proposes concrete ideas or means to improve social problems. He is the observer and the recorder (through the form of allegorical stories) of the French psyche in the early nineteenth-century, relaying through his narratives how some transitions into modernity prove fruitful and others fatal. Balzac considers that those who have been displaced to or within Paris and succeed in being able to *franchir le seuil* of modernity have only done so by relinquishing their past self and disassociating themselves from it. Oppositely, those who died do so because of their sincerity to themselves as well as their inability to detach from ancient traditions and institutions.

Our study suggests multiple directions for further research. One could undertake the study of continuing to search out further examples of geographical displacement to or in Paris in the works of Balzac as well as his contemporaries. This avenue may suggest that more authors besides Balzac also perceived the growing chasm that isolated the old and favored the new in Parisian society. One could also look further into the similarities between Augustine in *La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote* and the trajectory of the Henriette in Balzac's *Les lys dans la vallée* since their stories are remarkably parallel. In our conclusion we suggest a further study into the similarities that exists between studies of post colonialism of the twentieth century and the French revolution, its break and rupture from the Ancien Régime, and the after-effects. We could

say, in a way, that Balzac's analysis of cultural, social, and historical displacement anticipates the post-colonial discourse, and a further study of the ideas and theories that surround both genres would prove interesting. Another avenue of further research that could be undertaken is that of a study on the imagery of cats in early nineteenth-century literature as emblems of the bourgeoisie. Also, although there have been some studies done on the subject, researching the ideas of painting, aesthetic beauty, theories of representation, how the works of art in the story are created (the sign, the portrait, the scene of the shop), formed, and displayed, may prove a fascinating research opportunity.

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