The Representation of Jewelry in Nineteenth-Century French Literature

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In
Foreign Languages, Cultures, and Literatures

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April 28, 2023
Blacksburg, VA

Keywords: French, French literature, Baudelaire, Maupassant, Zola, Rachilde, jewelry,
Nineteenth Century France

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ABSTRACT

Often overlooked, yet still a significant and visible social code, jewelry and its symbolic power are barely analyzed in literary criticism. In this thesis, by tracing jewelry's various functions and representations throughout the 19th century, one discovers its ability to also blur and reinforce boundaries that so typifies the tensions and redefinitions happening throughout this era. With the rise of the bourgeoisie and industrial production, jewelry became more available to the masses than it ever had before. Its transformation occurred alongside the newfound desire for women to be seen, perhaps as a direct result of patriarchal society's attempt to relegate them to the private sphere where they were to carry out their domestic duties. For women, the beginning of the century marked itself as an "[époque] stricte, corsetée, guindée et protégée," the *fin-de-siècle* was an era that promoted the sensual liberation for women whose existence had been relegated to the private sphere to perform only domestic duties (Coupeau 85). Thus, by tracing jewelry's representation in the 19th century, I unveil how women broke through social restrictions by transforming their literal chains of submission and *esclavage* into pieces of adornment that brandished their desire to be seen, to be liberated, to be desired.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Jewelry and its symbolic power are barely analyzed in literary criticism. In this thesis, by tracing jewelry's various functions and representations throughout the 19th-century, one discovers its ability to also blur and reinforce boundaries that so typifies the tensions and redefinitions happening throughout this era. With the rise of the bourgeoisie and industrial production, jewelry became more available to the masses than it ever had before. For women, the beginning of the century marked itself as a period of restrictions and protection while the *fin-de-siècle* promoted the sensual liberation for women whose existence had been relegated to the home to carry out their domestic duties (Coupeau 85). Thus, by tracing jewelry's representation in the 19th century, I unveil how women broke through social restrictions by transforming their literal chains of submission and *esclavage* into pieces of adornment that brandished their desire to be seen, to be liberated, to be desired.

Dedications:

This project is dedicated to my loving husband, Austin, who enhanced my love for jewelry with his extensive expertise and his eye for design.

And to my children, Jackson and Silas, who are my most treasured precious gems.

And to the 32 Hokies who tragically and senselessly lost their lives on April 16th, 2007, including my dear French professor, Jocelyne Couture-Nowak. Always living, teaching, and learning for 32.

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Introduction

> "Que ce soit au paléolithique, au Moyen Âge ou au XIXe siècle, la parure s'impose dans l'histoire occidentale moderne des idées comme un véritable marqueur de culture et d'identité" (Coupeau 49).

Throughout the nineteenth century, France was the site of continual political and social upheaval and transformation. After the Revolution of 1789, France struggled to establish its identity due to the rise of modernity, industrialization, and the deconstruction of social categories. Often overlooked, yet still a significant and visible social code, jewelry and its symbolic power are barely analyzed in literary criticism. In this thesis, by tracing jewelry's various functions and representations throughout that century one discovers its ability to also blur and reinforce boundaries that so typifies the tensions and redefinitions happening throughout this era. With the rise of the bourgeoisie and industrial production, jewelry became more available to the masses than it ever had before. Its transformation occurred alongside the newfound desire for women to be seen, perhaps as a direct result of patriarchal society's attempt to relegate them to the private sphere where they were to carry out their domestic duties. After all, as Mme Girardin, a 19th-century French author, declared, "La réalité parisienne est toute dans l'aspect […] Être n'est rien. Paraître est tout" (qtd. in Coupeau 52).

At the end of the 18th century, during the French Revolution and the subsequent Reign of Terror, the donning of jewelry was an immediate death sentence (Bishop Kent 109). Wearing it ostensibly symbolized wealth and status so distinct that it resulted in an immediate journey to the guillotine. However, that all changed under Napoleon Bonaparte's empire. Wanting to appear as a ruler of the ancient Greek or Roman tradition, the emperor was said to have worn massive gold chains and wreaths, signaling his desire to establish a world empire of his own. He understood

the importance of his likeness being distributed throughout the country, as dictators often do. He commissioned the fashioning of cameos that bore his profile, which were often carved in onyx and stone, to be given as gifts for diplomatic and propagandistic purposes (Bishop Kent 109). His first wife, Empress Josephine, was also renowned for her trendsetting and the way in which her style, especially her jewelry, influenced the aristocracy. Just as his *Code Civil* imposed laws and rules of men's dominance over women in French society, a code for the art of decorum in jewelry was indirectly established. Aristocratic women, such as the Marquise de Pompeillan, wrote articles for *les revues* that guided women on how to wear jewelry, what was acceptable and when and what was neither *de mise* nor appropriate (Coupeau 61). Various types of jewelry even became signs of submission, and sometimes slavery, for women on their wedding day. In addition to the traditional symbol of marriage, the ring, women were given necklaces that had three stations of either cameos or an enameled design fastened together with three chains, a literal sign of slavery (Coupeau 58). Bracelets and rings were also considered "un signe de soumission" with their symbol of eternity as well as a lack of a clasp that could unfasten the infinite circle (Coupeau 58).

As the century progressed, the wearing of jewelry metamorphosed from a sign of submission into one of distinction. As French society and laws attempted to push women out of the public sphere and more into the private, the desire to be seen increased. Freud characterized women as "passive exhibitionists" who not only yearned to be noticed but also to be examined. They wanted "…être contemplé…c'est fait admirer, ce n'est pas seulement attiré sur eux l'attention, c'est amener le spectateur à regarder avec complaisance l'objet orné ou la personne embellie" (qtd. in Coupeau 58). Such adorned women were subjects of the masculine, feminine and the *flâneur*'s gaze in public spaces, such as the theater, balls, exhibitions, and strolling along

the wide Haussmannian boulevards; all sites served as the locales to display one's jewelry. Women could parade their finest pieces to outwardly display their (or rather their husband's) social status with their *rivières* of diamonds or other highly coveted gemstones, such as emeralds and rubies. The newly formed *ancienne* and *grande* bourgeoisie often taking their cues from the aristocracy's adornments with the intent of replicating or even imitating them. Fortunately for them, industrialization allowed for increased production, in other words cheaper materials and more efficient manufacturing processes, making all kinds of jewelry more available to the masses.

With Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's presidential election eventually evolving into France's Second Empire (1852-1870), the emperor supported the development of jewelry by bolstering its manufacturing and financing its artisans (Coupeau 77). Taking cues from his uncle, Napoleon III understood jewelry's power in its "optique d'ostentation" (Coupeau 76), and his grand imperial balls were the ultimate opportunity for those in power to show off their jewels, never daring to wear the same piece twice (Coupeau 76). Therefore, jewelry was always in demand with those of the élite constantly commissioning new pieces. Because less expensive materials were more available to fashion rings, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, brooches, and other ways to adorn oneself, the lower classes were able to perpetuate the circular effect of fashion, wherein the lower classes attempt to imitate those of a higher, elite social stratum. Therefore, as the century progressed under the Second Empire, jewelry became "considéré comme un trophée…" (Coupeau 82) for all the social classes of 19th-century France.

For women, the beginning of the century marked itself as an "[époque] stricte, corsetée, guindée et protégée," the *fin-de-siècle* was an era that promoted the sensual liberation for women whose existence had been relegated to the private sphere to perform only domestic duties

(Coupeau 85). While women still aimed to be seen and to parade themselves as a spectacle, the goal was no longer to show off their husband's or their father's status but to dominate both seductively and artistically (Coupeau 85). With the collapse of Napoleon III's Second Empire giving way to the Third Republic in 1870, "le bijou Art Nouveau s'adapte donc aux contraintes et plus encore aux mentalités de cette Belle Époque (Coupeau 90). Coupeau also states that by resisting the notion that women were created for men's pleasure as initiated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, women strove to surpass the traditional roles they were previously boxed into. During that era, avatars of women started to appear *on* jewelry, often depicted in the image as the *femme fatale* that the patriarchy tended to fear due to their newfound social liberation (Coupeau 92). Thus, by tracing jewelry's representation in the 19th century, I unveil how women broke through social restrictions by transforming their literal chains of submission and *esclavage* into pieces of adornment that brandished their desire to be seen, to be liberated, to be desired.

In Chapter 1 of my thesis, I outline the progression of access to jewelry for the bourgeoisie in the middle of the 19th century in Charles Baudelaire's poem "Les Bijoux" from *Les Fleurs du Mal* as well as Guy de Maupassant's two short stories, "Les Bijoux" and "La Parure." Both Baudelaire and Maupassant's use of "Les Bijoux" in their titles as well as selecting a necklace as the title for another, "La Parure" all three texts serve to dazzle readers in a similar manner that lustrous jewelry enchants its admirers. I explain how in fitting with other phenomena of the 19th century the blurring of categories which served to make "reality" decipherable, clear, and identifiable, jewelry was used as a kind of tool or representation that muddied polarities, such as between authenticity and falsehoods. In the second chapter, I expose how Maupassant's novel, *Bel-Ami*, takes jewelry's ability to reinforce the boundaries of abundance and lack. Its symbolic function of wealth and power goes a step further in declaring it

the pinnacle of social status for women in addition to exploring its divergent perceptive power. In Chapter 3, I delve into Émile Zola's usage of jewelry in *Le Ventre de Paris,* in which he exposes the complex existence of "les marchandes" of Les Halles during the Second Empire. Because they were constantly under scrutiny by government authorities and often accused of being prostitutes or mendicants in disguise, these women had to pay close attention to their appearance, in addition to their behavior, to maintain their jobs in the market. Zola's depiction of jewelry highlights its usage for "les marchandes" in not only distinguishing them from prostitutes but also highlighting its covetousness because of its symbolism of refinement and power. In the final chapter, I explore Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus* and the way in which the author explores jewelry's performative ability as a representation of its wearer, its tendency to reinforce gender binaries and social class disparities as well as its ability to be expressive and seductive in its own unique manner. Taken together as a whole jewelry ties all works together to reinforce or to muddle representations of class, gender, and often the desire for social ascension.

Chapter One: Boundary blurring in the works of Baudelaire and Maupassant

The three works included in this chapter, Baudelaire's poem "Les Bijoux" and Maupassant's short stories "Les Bijoux" and "La Parure", use jewelry, or a specific kind of jewelry, in their titles to captivate the readers' interest. In keeping with the progression of access to jewelry for the bourgeoisie in the middle of the 19th century, before the rise of the grand bourgeoisie together with the industrial revolution, the prospects of purchasing valuable jewelry had previously been regarded as a luxury only the aristocracy could enjoy. Both Baudelaire and Maupassant's use of "Les Bijoux" in their titles or "La Parure" serve to dazzle readers in a similar manner that lustrous jewelry enchants its admirers. According to Charline Coupeau, the definition of "bijou(x)" in French is "désigné dans le dictionnaire du Petit Larousse comme un objet de parure, d'une manière ou d'un travail précieux…" (262). In English, the word "jewelry" signifies all kinds of jewelry, whether it is costume, fashion, or fine, whereas in French "bijoux" is typically reserved for the more valuable and highly sought-after precious metals and gems. However, according to Sonya Stephens, the word "bijoux" has a double meaning, "…'bijou' is common eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slang for male and female genitalia" (65), making them fetishized objects that often produce desire. Stephens, when analyzing Baudelaire's "Les Bijoux" submitted that the poet used this phrase as a double entendre, it was first used literally and second, in a discreetly ironic and risqué manner, suggesting that jewelry has a greater function than just a simple accessory in that it represents various desires that are unique to the subject who covets them.

In this chapter, I argue that jewelry serves to blur the boundaries between what is genuine and what is fictitious. In fitting with other phenomena of the 19th century in the blurring of categories, which served to make "reality" decipherable, clear, and identifiable, jewelry was used

as a kind of tool or representation that muddied the polarities of social constructions. Mary Donaldson-Evans emphasizes that both Maupassant's stories, "Les Bijoux" and "La Parure" "[were] published eleven months apart, in two different journals, and [that they] rel[ied] on for their meaning upon the well-worn dichotomy of appearance versus reality…" (163). Therefore, the function of jewelry within these three works serves as a representation of an object of desire that melds reality and fantasy, truth and falsehood, and the genuine with the fake.

Recent scholarship on these texts have focused on Orientalism in "Les Bijoux" by Baudelaire (Burton) and the comparison of the work(s) and the implications that their descriptions and plots reveal about the authors themselves in the context of the 19th century (Donaldson-Evans, Färnlöf). Stephens's analysis looks at Baudelaire's "Les Bijoux" as Freudian fetishism and its relationship to desire. This chapter draws from those studies but foregrounds the representation of the jewelry itself and its function in not only the titles but also throughout each of the texts. The trilogy of texts--Baudelaire's "Les Bijoux" at Maupassant's "La Parure" and "Le Bijou"--offer new insights as to how jewelry serves to blur boundaries. When analyzing the three works together we see clearly that the function of jewelry within the texts serves as a representation of an object of desire that melds reality and fantasy, truth and falsehood, and the genuine with the fake.

Baudelaire's "Les Bijoux" reveals how jewelry entices and arouses the onlooker; the poem engages the senses, especially those of sight and sound, unveiling how the sheer beauty of the jewelry itself elicits a certain kind of eroticism. The first two lines of the opening stanza describe the poet's lover wearing nothing but jewels: "La très-chère était nue, et, connaissant mon coeur, / elle n'avait gardé que ses bijoux sonores…" (Baudelaire, lines 1-2). His lover is wearing the jewels due to an expressed wanting that came from deep inside of the poet's heart,

and his desire is satiated upon seeing the jewelry juxtaposed with his très-chère's naked body, with "chère" also being a homophone for "chair", or flesh, doubly reinforcing her nakedness. The poet explicitly describes the feeling that numerous ornaments against flesh induces: "Quand il jette en dansant son bruit vif et moqueur, / Ce monde rayonnant de métal et de pierre / Me ravit en extase, et j'aime à la fureur / Les choses où le son se mêle à la lumière" (Baudelaire, lines 5-8). Because she is unclothed and moving her body in a dancing-like motion, the jewels, including both the precious metal as well as the gems, are sonorous and reflect the light in various ways. It is highly possible that she was wearing precious metals such as yellow, rose or white gold, and platinum because they have high reflectivity, so their appearance is shiny and scintillating as a result of their inability to oxidize or tarnish. In addition, most precious gems are often faceted, which allow them to refract and reflect not only light but also whatever surrounds them, including the precious metals, enhancing the brilliance of the shimmer. In addition, it is not just the jewelry itself that excites him but the way in which the senses of seeing and hearing play off of each other as a result of the mixture of sound and light. Stephens has also suggested their intermingling in similar ways, "Here, the 'bijoux'…are fetishized objects which, like the poem itself, are a combination of light-reflecting images and sounds that consume the poet's attention and imagination" (65). In order for the "bijoux" to be "sonores," they must be numerous and heavy since one piece of jewelry does not typically create sound when worn alone. The clinking and jangling of precious metals against one another often produce a sound, especially since Baudelaire uses the adjectives "vif et moqueur," respectively conveying "plein de vie" and "qui se moque" ("Vif", def. 2) ("Moqueur", def). Such sounds could also align with the lover's jewelry described as "attirail"—either the jewels are so bulky as to be ridiculous, therefore vulgar and mocking, or operate as "equipment" "pour l'exécution de quelque chose"—what the

lover dons, in a sense her “appareil” to arouse and satisfy her lover’s desires. The poet’s lover is also dancing while making these sounds to certainly produce the most amount of sound possible, making them come alive, knowing that it is seductive in generating his “extase.” Stephens, who focuses on jewelry as a fetishized object that is rooted in desire, submits that not only has it played an integral role in the social construction of femininity and sexuality, but also is what “Freud makes clear, of course, that objects of desire are not so much found as recovered (from memory)” because “they are symbolically charged carriers of individual (and especially shared) memory and experience—and so of secret histories and desires, too” (66). Thus, for Baudelaire, it is not just the image of the jewelry as an expensive accessory that attracts the poet, but the way in which its reverberations of light and sound produce an arousing effect on him when this interplay of the senses begins. Following Stephens, they elicit previous memories and experiences which augment the poet’s pleasure. In fact, his simple gaze upon the jewels activates a latent and subconscious desire of the adventitious as he continues to explore in the next stanza.

Together with this exchange of perception and aurality, his lover’s jewels also add an element of exoticism, and perhaps Orientalism to the scene, in turn highlighting the relationship between perception and power. As Burton suggests, French writers and poets of this period developed an “Orientalist obsession” (218) due to France’s invasion of Algeria in 1830, marking the inception of colonization (217). These artists used “exotic” imagery in order to perpetuate the perception of the Other, “…to ‘feminize’ (in the sense of rendering passive and malleable) a whole area, culture, and people in order to more easily dominate and appropriate them: the oriental woman…becomes a figure of the passivity and possessibility of the ‘Orient’ as a whole” (Burton 218). There is no doubt that Baudelaire engages in this type of “Othering” as he continues to compare his lover to a Moorish slave. Sporting the jewels makes her seem

otherworldly and powerful, “Dont le riche attirail lui donnait l’air vainqueur / Qu’ont dans leurs jours heureux les esclaves des Maures” (Baudelaire, lines 3-4). According to the 19th-century dictionary, “attirail” was often associated with artillery used in the army as well as the navy. For example, “Le canon ne marche point sans un grand attirail. Le bagage & l'attirail de cette armée occupaient bien du terrain. Il faut bien des cordages, des voiles, & de l'attirail pour équiper un vaisseau.” Therefore, the excessive number of jewels is equivalent to equipment used for battle with the mission of conquering, which here is in a sexual sense. In addition, Baudelaire uses the word “vainqueur,” portraying her as the subjugator ready to conquer her lover with the enchantment of her jewels. She is in a position of power as well as one of passivity. She takes a hold over her lover’s desire, but in the next line, “Qu’ont dans leurs jours heureux les esclaves des Maures” she could also become the submissive and enslaved one.

The transposition of poet as monarch or authoritative leader and his lover as a Moorish concubine would have put her at the top of the hierarchical harem in Islamic North Africa or Spain yet still essentially a slave. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Moors established a particular hierarchy through which their female slaves could potentially ascend or descend, depending on their ability to satisfy their master’s desire for reproduction. In fact, according to the ordered structure, if a slave achieved the title of “umm walad,” received upon delivering a child, she could buy not only her own freedom upon the death of her master but also that of her child. Once the child was born, he or she became a rightful heir to the master and was guaranteed to be free and held claim over any kind of inheritance. Therefore, a Moorish slave in Baudelaire’s poem during “les jours heureux” seems to convey that of a female concubine who has achieved “umm walad,” the ultimate status for a Moorish slave during that time. Baudelaire’s comparison is ambiguous: a woman adorned in jewels is represented as either an active agent

who seduces her lover successfully as victor, or an object, being forced into having sex, like a sexual slave. This contrast exposes the various transformations of perception that jewelry causes, from that of one in a position of domination or superiority to a slave who is at the mercy of her master but still luxuriated in accessories to match her status in addition to the desire of the sultan who owns her. Therefore, according to Baudelaire, jewelry is a symbol of both perceived power as well as that of submission for women in the 19th century, especially during the period of colonization, when symbols of domination are a strategy to perpetuate the myth of the superiority of colonial empires.

In the third stanza of the poem, Baudelaire continues to highlight the way in which his lover's wearing of the jewelry plays between activity and passivity. Burton has also noted the active-passive subject-object binaries in "Les Bijoux" and intriguingly details this metamorphosis in the following manner: "The aesthetic-erotic-exotic *object* gradually becomes a fully human sexual *subject*, and as she does so, she turns her master's Orientalism on its head, and in forcing him to confront *his* humanity, *his* sexuality, consigns him once more to the realm of the body…" (218). The poet's arousal that results from the sight and sound of the jewels allows for the transformational play that ensues, in which the corporeality flips from the poet's lover to the poet's own body, where his desire originates. The jewelry is the catalyst for this reciprocal interplay of subject and object, serving as the external stimuli that produces an internal effect. Baudelaire writes, "Elle était donc couchée et se laissait aimer, / Et du haut du divan elle souriait d'aise / À mon amour profond et doux comme la mer, / Qui vers elle montait comme vers sa falaise." It is here that his lover submits to him by inviting him to ravish her, which fulfills his deepest desires. Whereas before she was the active agent, she now takes on a passive role, comparing his love to her as that of the sea whose tide consistently caresses a seaside cliff.

Baudelaire continues to engage in these exotic and transformational aspects in the following stanza with his description of his lover wearing nothing but jewelry as a comparison of her to a tamed tiger. “Les yeux fixés sur moi, comme un tigre dompté, / D’un air vague et rêveur elle essayait des poses, / Et la candeur unie à la lubricité / Donnait un charme neuf à ses métamorphoses;” (Baudelaire, lines 13-16). Once she finishes her seductive dance, she lies down, and their desirous playing resumes. She continues her seduction by captivating his gaze with her various postures along the sofa on which she is lying. Here she is playing both the roles of passive and active agent. She is a docile tiger and a seducer and controls the situation by moving between the two performances. As a result, the poet’s desire is palpable throughout the verses. Moreover, he situates himself squarely in the scene by invoking himself: “les yeux fixés *sur moi”* (emphasis added) and he expresses his inner responses or thoughts about her posturing; they possessed “un charme neuf.” She revels in her power, how she is able to feel his desire for her through the arousing effect of the amalgamation of jewelry and her nudity. He revels in it too, comparing her to a trained or domesticated tiger, typically portrayed as one of the most exotic felines, exuding great strength and bravery. In giving the jewelry many transformative effects, such as giving his lover confidence, and ultimately the power to perpetuate her magnetic and enchanting movements, he perceives her in a multitude of different lights, and relishes the various metamorphoses that she undergoes.

As the poem progresses, Baudelaire is so entranced by her enactments as the vanquisher and the vanquished, he seems to lose sight of where her physical body starts and the jewels end, creating a fusion of the two. He takes in various parts of her body in the fifth stanza as they become part of him too: “Et son bras et sa jambe, et sa cuisse et ses reins / …Et son ventre et ses seins, ces grappes de ma vigne.” These parts of her body are clearly touching him now,

becoming what he describes as a cluster of grapes against his vine, using the alliterative "s" sound to emphasize "ces" as demonstrative as opposed to the possessive "ses". Baudelaire is elucidating that each part pleases him to no end, so much so that in the next stanza, he has difficulty distinguishing her physique from the "bijoux". As he continues on in the next stanza, he perpetuates the interplay between active and passive agent, "Je croyais voir unis par un nouveau dessin / Les hanches de l'Antiope au buste d'un imberbe." Antiope, one of the queens of the Amazonian warriors in Greek mythology, is an image of great strength and beauty. Conversely, he compares her chest to that of a pre-pubescent child in the same line, rendering her juvenile and deferential. All the various fragmentations of her body parts with the jewels have such an intense effect on Baudelaire that they create a liminal space between activity/passivity and object/subject, which, according to Stephens, is fetish, "…he is directly engaging with a process of representation, intermedially, and, to some extent, at least, creating a certain culture of fetish that is both sexual and aesthetic" (68). The intertwining of her corporeality, the jewels, and her sexuality produces a visual representation that is all together pleasing to the onlooker (Stephens, 68). Finally, he closes the poem with his description of her skin juxtaposed with the light of the flame from the candle burning in the room, "Chaque fois qu'il poussait un flamboyant soupir, / Il inondait de sang cette peau couleur d'ambre!" Her skin itself now represents an entire gemstone—amber. These fragmentations represent the whole of her body, which now appears to him as a singular "polished" jewel itself in the denouement, metamorphosizing her into pure object in the eyes of the beholder.

As we have seen in Baudelaire's poem, jewelry functions as the central focus. It is not just his lover's nudity that arouses him but the contours of her body with the jewelry's dazzling mélange of sound, light, as well as touch that flame his deepest desires. Therefore, using the

word “bijoux” as his title highlights the significance of the beauty of the precious metals and gems to its author which becomes a metonym for his lover’s body—she *is* amber. “Les Bijoux” depicts his lover as a highly valued being, just as enchanting as actual jewels of great value. The title of Baudelaire’s poem is as sparkly and brilliant as the stones and metals themselves. It is likely that the poet understood not only an individual’s but also the construction of society's desire to covet valuable jewels, adequately understanding that using “Les Bijoux” as the title would immediately generate interest in the subject of the poem. Even though his poem does involve an intense depiction of his lover’s seductiveness, the title helps to emphasize that it is the jewels that create a liminal space between two opposing constructs, activity/passivity, or subject/object—which is their mutually ignited passion. By the conclusion of the poem, his lover’s body becomes a jewel in and of itself, blending her nudity with the jewels and blending the two entwined bodies together, the reader not knowing where each one ends and begins.

It is possible that Maupassant used “Les Bijoux” for the title of his short story for similar reasons as Baudelaire, but they pique the readers’ interest in the story to an even greater degree. One has to wait until the second third of the story for the jewels to appear, when we learn of M. Lantin’s wife’s penchant for collecting what he believes to be fake jewelry. For him she has two faults: collecting and wearing her jewelry on her excursions to the theater. Otherwise, he deeply adores her. Even then, the jewelry does not seem to be a central theme to the story. While Baudelaire opens his poem with the description of his nude lover wearing her gems, the jewelry as the central focus does not enter the scene in Maupassant’s story until closer to the end. At this point, M. Lantin’s wife is now deceased, and he discovers that her vice of wearing fake jewelry was in fact a valuable collection of real gems and precious metals, the likes of which he sold to various *bijoutiers*, ultimately making him a comfortably wealthy man despite his anger towards

his wife for her deception. Therefore, Maupassant used “Les Bijoux” as his title to keep the reader engaged throughout the story since it is clear that the jewelry must be integral to the plot since it is the only word in the title of the story. It heightens one’s expectations without giving anything away, keeping the reader guessing about how it is all going to play out until the very end. In addition, it adds an allure by almost giving the reader what feels like a stake in the outcome of the value of the jewelry. In fact, there is a certain satisfaction in the ending for M. Lantin, a widower left alone heartbroken and desolate without his doting wife who sought to take care of his every need. Because he cannot wear the jewelry himself and enjoy it the same way in which his wife had, he still benefits from its considerably high value, leaving a legacy that keeps her memory alive long after her death. Yet, after his wife’s death, he is not a happy man enjoying luxury on account of money received for his wife’s jewels; conversely, he feels betrayed and deceived by the woman to whom he devoted his life. He remarries and lives out the rest of his life in misery with a woman who is honest yet insufferable. While the ending provides some closure, the overall moral of the story remains ambiguous and open for interpretation. It forces the reader to consider which is a better storyline: a life with a woman who has flaws but showers her husband with love while simultaneously satisfying her own pleasures, or that with a “virtuous” woman who appears miserable due to her unfulfilled desires. Was living a life in deception better than a life of honesty? Where is the balance between the devotion of a woman who represents falsity versus living with an impeccably truthful but intolerable wife? Contrastive irony presents an inverse relationship between two values that do not concord, with the implication that M. Lantin was much more satisfied with his first wife, despite her proclivity for deceiving him and purchasing expensive jewelry, with the final line regarding his second wife, “Elle le fit beaucoup souffrir.” Furthermore, Donaldson-Evans takes M. Latin’s dissatisfaction

one step further, "having exposed as myth the notion that happy marriages are necessarily built upon traditional notions of fidelity and monogamy, he now suggests…that the converse is also true, i.e., that marital fidelity does not ensure bliss—and further, may even be the cause of considerable suffering" (167). The reader is also left with a second interpretive aporia. How did Mme. Lantin acquire the necessary money to purchase her jewels? Deceit drives the narrative forward in terms of the *bijoux*–how they were paid for and their actual value. Both husband and readers were duped into believing they were false and of little value; the truth can be horribly destabilizing and bitter.

Throughout "Les Bijoux," Maupassant explores the various functions of jewelry during the 19th-century. At the start of the story, M. Lantin, "alors commis principal au ministère" ("Les Bijoux" 1), seemingly a member of the petty bourgeoisie, marries a young and poor girl, about whom "Tout le monde chantait ses louanges ; tous ceux qui la conaissaient répétaient sans fin : 'Heureux celui qui la prendra. On ne pourrait trouver mieux" ("Les Bijoux" 1). Despite her working-class status, her beauty and charm allow her to be highly regarded as a potential wife for a respected public servant. Lantin is wholeheartedly devoted to his wife and fully appreciates the effort she puts into managing their affairs, "Il fut avec elle invraisemblablement heureux. Elle gouverna sa maison avec une économie si adroite qu'ils semblaient vivre dans le luxe" ("Les Bijoux" 1). However, as mentioned earlier, Maupassant identifies two of her flaws as being both her affinity for theater as well as for what her husband believes to be fake jewelry: "Il ne blâmait en elle que deux goûts, celui du théâtre et celui de bijouteries fausses." ("Les Bijoux" 1). As discussed, the jewelry actually ended up not only to be very much real but also evolved into a jackpot of an inheritance that she left behind for him. It is not until M. Lantin has practically ruined his life in grief and despair from her death that he attempts to sell her jewels, thinking he

will get only 4 or 5 francs for each piece. When he stumbles into a *bijouterie,* the jeweler instantly offers him a sum larger than M. Lantin had possibly imagined that he faints and then takes several strolls around Paris to come to terms with the implications of what has transpired. In the end, he ends up with a large bequest, reversing his misfortune that had befallen him as a result of his wife's death. However, he does not seem able to grasp the fact that she enhanced his estate and thereby his quality of life by sneakily purchasing, or perhaps receiving, as her method of acquisition is left ambiguous, all the valuable jewelry behind his back, knowing full well he never would have agreed to it.

Because jewelry holds its value, often serving as a form of currency, and considering that Mme Lantin was a doting caretaker and financial savant for her husband, she understood the return on investment that would benefit either her or her husband, depending on whoever would meet their fate first, upon their respective deaths. As he pronounces in response to the *bijoutier*'s proclamation that she had put all of her money in jewelry, "Lantin prononça gravement : "C'est une manière comme une autre de placer son argent." ("Les Bijoux" 5). For Maupassant, jewelry is not only a way for women to adorn themselves but also a way to ensure their financial security upon their husband's deaths, or vice versa, when estate planning and inheritances were not accessible for women in the 19th century.

Both female protagonists in "Les Bijoux" and "La Parure", which I will further explore in the next section, possess a desire to wear valuable jewelry because of its significance as a symbol of social ascension due to their birth into the working class in 19th-century France. Even though M. Lantin's wife typically wore modest clothing but festooned herself in jewels "...elle prit l'habitude de pendre à ses oreilles deux gros cailloux du Rhin qui simulaient des diamants, et elle portait des colliers de perles fausses, des bracelets en similor, des peignes agrémentés de

verroteries variées jouant les pierres fines" ("Les Bijoux" 2). For Mme Lantin to make the lucrative investments that she did in her collection of highly valuable pieces of jewelry, she must have been well educated in various nuances of the value of precious gemstones as well as metals. Despite her proletariat upbringing and her marriage into the bourgeoisie, her taste and know-how for the value of jewelry matched that of someone who belonged to the aristocracy, or that of a *bijoutier* well experienced in buying and selling merchandise. However, considering she was able to run her household in such an economically efficient manner as to appear to live in luxury, or whether she was actually collecting expensive items unbeknownst to her husband, it seems highly plausible that she understood the intricacies of the jewelry industry as well as their nuanced values.

The problem for M. Lantin was not that his wife wanted to wear jewelry but that she would dare to wear something that was not genuine, as if she was pretending to be of a social class to which she did not belong. He admonished her by repeating, "Ma chère, quand on n'a pas le moyen de se payer des bijoux véritables, on ne se montre parée que de sa beauté et de sa grâce, voilà encore les plus rares joyaux" ("Les Bijoux" 2). During this time of the 19th century, one did not decorate themselves with genuine jewelry unless they had the means to. It was socially sanctioned if one were to pass as or pretend to belong to a higher social class than the one into which one was born or married. Instead of wearing fake jewelry, the only decoration was one's natural beauty, just as M. Loisel had implied when suggesting his wife don two or three roses around her neck in "La Parure." However, his wife pushed back against this argument by stating, "Que veux-tu ? J'aime ça. C'est mon vice. Je sais bien que tu as raison : mais on ne se refait pas. J'aurais adoré les bijoux, moi !" ("Les Bijoux" 2). She then holds the pearl necklace in her hands, letting them roll between her fingers, and says, "Mais regarde donc comme c'est bien

fait. On jurerait du vrai" ("Les Bijoux" 2). At this point, she knows that the necklace and the pearls are actually real since she possesses them, by what means is unclear, but she would rather leave her husband in ignorance than for him to know the inordinate price that they cost. Ironically, he replies to her, "Tu as des goûts Bohémienne" ("Les Bijoux" 2). Little does he know that with these pricey jewelry purchases, she is actually presenting herself as belonging to the upper bourgeoisie or aristocracy when she frequents the theater, a far cry from his description of her as Bohemian, or one who flaunts societal conventions and lives free of hierarchical constraints.

Maupassant describes the metaphysical effects that both wearing and perceiving genuine and valuable jewelry can have on women. One night as M. Lantin's wife is sitting by the fire admiring her various pieces of jewelry with M. Lantin, who is still under the false impression that they are fake, Maupassant describes her emotional reaction while regarding her jewels. He writes:

> ...et elle se mettait à examiner ces bijoux imités avec une attention passionnée, comme si elle eût savouré quelque jouissance secrète et profonde ; et elle s'obstinait à passer un collier au cou de son mari pour rire ensuite de tout son cœur en s'écriant : 'Comme tu es drôle !' Puis elle se jetait dans ses bras et l'embrassait éperdument ("Les Bijoux" 2)

The simple act of gazing at her jewelry elicits obvious joy shown both in her gestures as well as the affection that she lavishes on her husband. The spiritual and metaphysical effects of jewelry have long been declared since the beginning of civilization with the earliest finding of jewelry being around 25,000 years ago. Ancient civilizations wore jewelry for a variety of reasons, but almost all of them believed in the spiritual power that transpires when metals and rocks of the earth adorn a person's body. In this scene, the jewelry produces a calming effect in her, perhaps

proud of how she was able to procure such valuable pieces or because staring at their beauty keeps her focused on them, as the appreciation of glamor is wont to do. Either way, what is clear is that the jewelry catalyzes a metamorphic effect, altering her state of consciousness into one that is simultaneously peaceful and mirthful.

Maupassant's implication that M. Lantin's wife had obtained a diverse collection of valuable jewels exposed the understanding of how jewelry was often used as currency for women that helped to provide a life for themselves that their husbands had failed to do. During his extensive bout of grief after his wife's death, M. Lantin frequently wonders how his wife was able to afford "des vins excellents et manger des nourritures délicates qu'il ne pouvait plus se procurer avec ses modestes ressources" ("Les Bijoux" 2). Once he takes the first diamond necklace to have it appraised by the jeweler, he is obviously in a state of shock when it comes to find out that they are worth 18,000 francs as opposed to the six or eight that he thought they were worth. Realizing that his wife could not have possibly been able to afford the jewelry that she bought on his salary alone, he concludes that the money must have come from elsewhere and exclaims, "Mais alors, c'était un cadeau ! Un cadeau ! Un cadeau de qui ? Pourquoi ?" ("Les Bijoux" 4). As a result of this revelation that his wife may not have been as "virtuous" as everyone had believed her to be, he falls into despair at how she could have been so deceiving and allegedly promiscuous. However, once he obtains the total sum of 196,000 francs, one of the first pleasures in which he partakes is to visit a brothel to enjoy the company of several prostitutes, "Pour la première fois de sa vie il s'ennuya pas au théâtre, et il passa sa nuit avec des filles" ("Les Bijoux" 6). His wife, a woman of the 19th century, whose freedom was denied her to pursue financial freedom of her own to enjoy the pleasure of wearing expensive jewelry, was considered amoral and unprincipled because of the possibility of her taking on a lover to obtain

the jewelry. However, her husband, who loved her so deeply that he fell into deep depression after her death, and for whom his wife worked tirelessly to ensure that his life was one of delicacies and small luxuries, immediately discarded her memory upon learning of her betrayal. He considered no other possibility for how she had obtained all the expensive jewelry, for bourgeois women in the 19th century, unless they owned or worked in their husbands' businesses could only possibly make their own money through prostitution or taking on a wealthy lover. Not only did he essentially curse her existence, but he also visited these same working women whom he regarded as inferior for his own selfish pleasure and enjoyment, not even for the benefit of anyone else. Therefore, a woman's pleasures and desires, such as a taste for jewelry, were dictated as either being acceptable or unacceptable by men even though they pursued whatever desires they pleased without fear of judgment or repercussions. Because women of the 19th century were not always free to pursue their own financial pursuits, the sharpest among them understood the value that jewelry holds in order to provide a cushion for themselves.

Maupassant assigns a numerical value in francs to the jewelry and therefore describes it as so valuable as to be inaccessible to those who belonged to the lower social strata in 19th-century France, adding to its myth of an unattainable luxury item. In "Les Bijoux", M. Lantin seeks to sell what he deems to be costume jewelry, not expecting more than six to eight francs for her most coveted piece, he learns that the diamond necklace is in fact worth 25,000 francs. As previously mentioned, M. Lantin faints from the shock when discovering its true value. As a result of the use of these astronomical values in his stories, Maupassant plays off the idea that one has not socially ascended until in a position to afford a valuable piece of natural jewelry,

perpetuating its symbolism of belonging only to those in the higher social classes of the 19th century.

The conclusion of this story exposes the deception to both readers as well as the main characters of the jewelry's authenticity, refuting the idea that the pursuit to attain social status through outward appearance is authentic in and of itself. M. Lantin is devastated to learn that his supposedly doting and nurturing wife had been deceiving him all along. The jewelry that she loved so deeply and that he had believed to be fake had turned out to not only be real but also highly valuable. Once again, Maupassant is refuting the notion that appearance tells the whole story, proving that the opposite can often be true. In fact, Maupassant is showing that it is not just material items that can be authentic or inauthentic but so can the subjects. Not only do the jewels turn out to be false but so does M Lantin's supposedly virtuous and faithful wife. M Lantin concludes that she must have taken a lover, as there really seems to be no other possibility to how she had acquired such luxurious jewelry. Perhaps this is a result of cultural conditioning because surely a *woman* in the 19th-century could not be so economical with money that she managed to afford the jewelry herself. Either way, "sa beauté modeste avait un charme de pudeur angelique, et l'imperceptible sourire qui ne quittait point ses lèvres semblait un reflet de son cœur" ("Les Bijoux" 1) turned out to be a ruse, if one is to believe that she did deceive her husband in such a way simply to procure jewelry for herself. Therefore, Maupassant amplifies the adage to not judge based on outward appearances, and that a subject's true self is what remains on the inside, and the jewelry in his stories represent the liminal space between the two.

In Maupassant's other tale, "La Parure", the values of truth and falseness are equally dominant, requiring interpretation and evaluation. The use of the word "La Parure" in another of Maupassant's famous short stories has more complexity than the other two due to the variation in

meanings of the word "parure." While, according to Coupeau, it simply means "se dit d'un ensemble de bijoux réalisés en harmonie et faits pour être portés en même temps," (270), the story itself centers on a diamond necklace that Madame Loisel borrows from Madame Forestier to fulfill her desire to decorate herself with expensive luxury because she is going to a fancy ball. On the way home, she somehow loses the necklace, and because she and her husband are never able to locate it, they must borrow money to replace the necklace, spending over ten years working tirelessly to pay off their debts. However, another definition that appears more suitable for this story and is also considered a literary significance of the word "parure" is "ce qui orne, embellit" ("Parure, def. 2). This illustrates more succinctly the way in which women of the grand bourgeoisie used jewelry as a representation of their social status, whereas beautiful women of the petite bourgeoisie, like Mme Loisel, whose beauty was comparable to that of aristocratic women, sought more expensive looking jewelry to compensate for the divergence between the reality of their social status and the fantasy of achieving a more prestigious position in society. If only Mme Loisel had the means to afford the jewelry that she felt she deserved and could have attained on account of her looks, her frustrations with her lower-class status would be cured. Both married and unmarried women during this period wore jewelry as an outward symbol of a higher social strata, either in hopes of finding a husband that would help them earn their desire for extravagance and leisure or simply to flaunt their higher position as was only possible via their outward appearance. Maupassant illustrates how others wore and collected various pieces to enjoy the transformational effect of jewelry, such as raising their self-confidence and increasing their eroticism or exoticism. Thus, jewelry was a way for women to express themselves as individuals within the patriarchal social hierarchy, from which they were typically excluded.

In "La Parure," Maupassant critiques the way in which capitalism produces vanity and greed in the bourgeoisie in 19th-century France, especially in women since their only means of ascending the hierarchy in this story is via their physical beauty. He illustrates this with his depiction of Madame Loisel, "…une de ces jolies et charmantes filles, nées, comme par une erreur du destin, dans une famille d'employés," ("La Parure" 3) whose desire for social status manifests itself into an obsession with and a craving for the material luxuries more often accessible to the aristocracy or the grande bourgeoisie at that time. Färnlöf lauds Maupassant's "art nouvellistique" emphasizing that he "joue fréquemment sur l'implicite" and uses repetition to highlight Madame Loisel's dissatisfaction with her social stature (135, 140). There is no doubt that she lives in a world of unsatisfied hunger, incessantly fantasizing of attaining luxuries typically reserved for the upper class. While seated at the dinner table with her husband, who proclaims, "Ah ! Le bon pot-au-feu ! Je ne sais rien de meilleur que cela…" ("La Parure" 5), she cannot help but imagine an abundance of extravagances that would surpass the ordinary and common pot-au-feu, a dish typically prepared by those in the lower classes with its inexpensive ingredients and its capacity to be made in large batches.

> Elle songeait aux dîners fins, aux argenteries reluisantes, aux tapisseries peuplant les murailles de personnages anciens et d'oiseaux étranges au milieu d'une forêt de féerie ; elle songeait aux plats exquis servis en des vaisselles merveilleuses, aux galanteries chuchotées et écoutées avec un sourire de sphinx, tout en mangeant la chair rose d'une truite ou des ailes gélinotte. ("La Parure" 5)

Maupassant illustrates how distressed and unhappy Mme Loisel will remain until these desires are fulfilled. She *dreams of* refined dinners, table settings, decors and gallant conversations. When invited to a high-ranking ball, she is still dissatisfied because she has nothing suitable to

wear. Furthermore, even though her husband gives her 400 francs for a new dress to wear to the ball, she pouts for several days afterwards. When her husband inquires as to what is bothering her, she responds, “Cela m’ennuie de n’avoir pas un bijou, pas une pierre, rien à mettre sur moi. J’aurai l’air misère comme tout. J’aimerais presque mieux ne pas aller à cette soirée” (“La Parure” 9). When he suggests that she sport a few roses in her hair to accessorize her new dress, she refuses. It is not the accessory itself that is the problem, but its lack of a signification of wealth. She explains to her husband, “Non … il n’y a rien de plus humiliant que d’avoir l’air pauvre au milieu de femmes riches.” (“La Parure” 9-10). The thought of exposing her lowly social status at a soirée of higher-ranking public officials is equivalent to a nightmare. She would rather not attend the party at all if she has to go without jewelry to adorn her. It is not until her husband suggests that she pay a visit to Mme Forestier, a perceived wealthy friend, to borrow a piece of jewelry to wear to the ball that she perks up, finding a newfound desire to flaunt her luxurious ensemble and achieve recognition for moving up to a higher station in the 19th century social hierarchy.

Despite Mme Loisel’s night of elation as an ephemeral “member” of the aristocracy, Maupassant exploits her lust for materialist pleasures as her own undoing. On the way home from the ball, she loses the necklace, and despite her husband’s seven-hour long search, it is gone. They travel to *bijouteries* throughout Paris, searching for a necklace that resembled Mme Forestier’s “rivière” to replace it. Once they finally find one, the price tag is so exorbitant, “trente-six mille” (“La Parure” 17) francs, that it requires inheritances, loans, in addition to ten years of work to pay it off. Not only does she lose her one night of aristocratic status, but she also falls to the bottom of the social hierarchy in 19th-century France, the working class. “Mme Loisel connut la vie horrible des nécessiteux…on loua sous les toits une mansarde. Elle connut

les gros travaux du ménage, les odieuses besognes de la cuisine" ("La Parure" 18). After ten years, she becomes unrecognizable, having aged at an accelerated pace due to her hard manual labor compounded by her misery. At the conclusion of the story, she sees Mme Forestier on the Champs-Élysées walking her infant, and the contrast between the two women is striking, "C'était Mme Forestier, toujours jeune, toujours belle, toujours séduisante" ("La Parure" 20). For Maupassant, Mme Loisel possesses no longer any of those attributes, yet she has no one to blame but herself for her downfall. Had she not been so focused on a fantasy, on an obsession of living well beyond one's means, she probably would not have ended up in even a lower the hierarchical strata. As a result, he exposes the superficial side of the bourgeoisie, one that focuses solely on appearances and materialistic pleasures in an attempt to climb the social ladder, essentially widening the gap between the working class and the aristocracy. Shortly, I will discuss the valances of truth and falsehood mentioned earlier.

Moreover, Maupassant depicts another transformation that the simple perception of natural jewelry can have on a woman during the 19th century just as he did in "Les Bijoux." When Mme Loisel searches through Mme Forestier's collection of jewels, she finally procures "dans une boîte de satin noir, une superbe rivière de diamants ; et son cœur se mit à battre d'un désir immodéré. Ses mains tremblaient en la prenant. Elle l'attacha autour de sa gorge, sur sa robe montante, et demeura en extase devant elle-même" ("La Parure" 11). To clarify, the description of the diamonds set in the necklace as "rivière" refers to an archaic classification of diamonds that jewelers utilized before the existence of the classic "4 C's" of diamond grading (i.e. cut, clarity, carat, color). "Rivière" refers to a rather high grading, similar to a contemporary E or F color (i.e. colorless), making it highly valuable. The simple event of gazing upon the necklace and fastening it around her neck elicits euphoria in her heart and satisfies her deepest

desires. However, Maupassant is critiquing her wishing for that particular necklace by saying her desire was "immodéré." Shortly after this scene, "Le jour de la fête arriva. Mme Loisel eut un succès" ("La Parure" 11). By borrowing this ostensibly precious necklace, which no one seems to be able to identify as fake, Mme Loisel experiences the most joyous evening of her life. "Elle était plus jolies que toutes, élégante, gracieuse, souriante et folle de joie" ("La Parure" 11). Clearly, the transformational effect did not warrant just one adjective to describe her elation but five were necessary. Whether this feeling was simply an amplification of her own self-confidence, or whether it had a visceral effect that was visible to all the guests at the party is answered in the next line when Maupassant writes, "Tous les hommes la regardaient, demandaient son nom, cherchaient à être présentés. Tous les attachés du cabinet voulaient valser avec elle. Le ministre la remarqua" ("La Parure" 12). According to Maupassant, this necklace not only created an abundance of self-assurance on the wearer herself but rendered the men desirous to possess her as a result—or her combined effect—dress, hair, attitude-allure and the diamonds. For Madame Loisel, this effect made her feel powerful, similar to Baudelaire's lover, as if she had been victorious in a competition of who is the most beautiful and desired among women. Maupassant describes her victory, "Elle dansait avec ivresse, avec emportement, grisée par le plaisir ne pensant plus à rien, dans le triomphe de sa beauté, dans la gloire de son succès, dans une sorte de nuage de bonheur fait de tous ces hommages, de toutes ces admirations, de tous ces désirs éveillés, de cette victoire si complète et si douce au cœur des femmes" (12). The writer is careful to use vocabulary associated with the act of conquering, such as "la gloire," "le triomphe," "cette victoire" to signify that her vanquishing of men's attention with her beauty more than the others is what women would deem to be a social victory, associating beauty with social class—and Maupassant states this directly. The more beautiful a woman is, the more men

in higher positions would want to marry her, which also means that the more expensive, or perceived to be, jewelry a woman wears, the more beautiful she becomes. Just as M. Lantin's wife experienced pure joy in the moment of admiring the jewels, Mme Loisel was also able to live fully in the present moment while her mind was overcome with the intoxication of ecstasy that sporting the necklace produced.

Once again, Maupassant assigns the jewelry numerical values in "La Parure" to enhance its covetousness as an expensive luxury item only the élite could afford. After having lost Mme Forestier's necklace, M and Mme Loisel scour the jewelry stores of Paris in hopes of finding a necklace that resembles the one she had lost. The one they found that resembled it the most was at a Palais Royal jeweler's, costing forty thousand francs. The jeweler sold it to them for thirty-six thousand francs. Since jewelry had only recently become accessible to those in the bourgeoisie as it was previously reserved for the aristocracy, the likelihood that French citizens in the petit bourgeoisie or working classes would have any notion of what precious metals and gems would be monetarily worth is quite low. In engaging with the text, the reader finds out the exact prices of these highly sought after and coveted pieces, making jewelry to be the top tier of luxury items. Once a member of the bourgeoisie or the grande bourgeoisie is able to afford an item of such extravagance, they are able to outwardly show their social status, in ways that clothes or other accessories are not always able to do. Because of Maupassant's inclusion of the cost of the jewelry in all three stories, those who might never step foot into a bijouterie are now informed of just how costly they are, making the jewelry that much more enticing and desirable of an accessory. In addition to the prices, the reactions of his characters upon learning of the various pieces' values also serve to perpetuate the myth of jewelry's unattainability to the masses.

It is not until the penultimate line of “La Parure” that the reader and Mme Loisel herself discover that Mme Forestier’s “rivière” is fake. “Oh ! Ma pauvre Mathilde ! Mais la mienne était fausse. Elle valait au plus cinq cents francs !” (“La Parure” 22). Donaldson-Evans indicates, “As numerous critics have pointed out, it is this last line, the revelation that the jewels were not real, which changes the entire thrust of the story and induces the reader to reinterpret” (170). There could not possibly be a more devastating revelation for Mme Loisel, who essentially ruined her own life so that she could provide Mme Forestier a real diamond necklace, for which they paid 36,000 francs. Maupassant ends the story in this way because it is not what comes after this revelation that is essential to his critique but that this seemingly valuable necklace that she wore for one night and aided in transcending her social status was all actuality a fake. Therefore, the transformational effect the jewelry had that night was artificial and superficial, and everyone attending the party was guilty of it. For Maupassant, Mme Loisel was not the only one to blame for the deception, but society’s materialistic superficiality, a social construct perpetuated by perception and appearance, was equally to blame.

Baudelaire’s poem together with Maupassant’s two short stories expose the perceptive power that the adornment of jewels carries. For Baudelaire, a play between activity and passivity caused by the sound and light emitting from her jewelry occurs throughout “Les Bijoux” with his lover taking on various roles of seduction that satisfy his desires until she and the jewelry meld into an amalgamation of flesh and precious stone, rendering her as pure object. While Baudelaire’s poem primarily deals with sexual desire, Maupassant’s stories focus more on social desire, with a secondary focus on sexual desire. He exposes the superficiality of bourgeois women with their endless desire to mimic the aristocracy using jewelry as the pinnacle for their social status, even when it turns out to be false in “La Parure.” The cautionary tale of wariness of

what appears “valuable” ends with bitter, tragic irony. Nevertheless, when readers come to discover the authenticity of the jewelry in “Les Bijoux,” Maupassant sheds light on the hypocrisy of men’s denigration of seemingly promiscuous women, no matter how much Mme Loisel enriched her husband’s life. Following her death, her husband villainizes her, accusing her of accepting the jewelry as gifts from a probable lover in spite of the valuable inheritance she left him, his seeking of comfort in the beds of prostitutes after discovering his newfound wealth, and his subsequent unhappy marriage with an “honest” woman. Both authors showcase the cultural significance that jewelry possesses in making it the central focus of their prose, without there would be a greater paucity of layered meanings for the stories as a whole.

Chapter Two: Perceptive power in Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*

While "La Parure" and "Les Bijoux" focus on social class and wealth and blur boundaries between authenticity and imitation, Guy de Maupassant represents jewelry's function in another manner in his novel, *Bel-Ami*. Maupassant takes jewelry's ability to reinforce the boundaries between abundance and lack as well as its ability to create what Heidi Brevik-Zender terms "an eternal trace," which for the literary critic means a subject's presence remains even in spite of his or her absence, or as Brevik-Zender quotes Gayatri Spivak's interpretation, "the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present" ("Fashion, Modernity, and Materiality" 114). However, jewelry's symbolic function of wealth goes a step further in *Bel-Ami* than in Maupassant's two previous stories in declaring it the pinnacle of social status for women in addition to exploring its divergent perceptive power, sometimes hypersexualized, which differs according to the subject who gazes upon it.

The protagonist of *Bel-Ami*, Georges Duroy, is attracted to brilliance and scintillation, or anything that emits light, such as jewelry, is highlighted from the beginning of the novel with Maupassant's use of vocabulary associated with luster and shine. From the second line of the story, Maupassant makes it clear that Duroy places much importance on outward appearance, as Brevik-Zender suggests, "…Looking enviously at the men drinking on the café terrace, Duroy begins to judge their worth by their dress…" ("Fashion and Fractured Flânerie" 231). Though he is penniless, he still dresses well, "Comme il portait beau, par nature et par pose d'ancien sous-officier…" (*Bel-Ami,* 201). Duroy has found himself in a less-than-glamorous situation when he has hardly a sou to pay for his meals, let alone any to purchase decent *toilettes* to sport for proper sartorial protocols while attending social engagements. His penchant for finer attire defines his aesthetic for shiny or glittery luxury items. While describing Duroy's desire for "des femmes

d’amour” (*Bel-Ami* 202) and his journey through the city as *flâneur*, Maupassant uses precise vocabulary associated with light that elucidates his attraction to flashiness and ostentation:

> Il tourna vers la Madeleine et suivit le flot de foule qui coulait accablé par la chaleur. Les grands cafés, pleins de monde, débordaient sur le trottoir, étalant leur public de buveurs sous la lumière éclatante et crue de leur devanture illuminée. Devant eux, sur de petites tables carrées ou rondes, les verres contenaient des liquides rouges, jaunes, verts, bruns, de toutes les nuances ; et dans l’intérieur des carafes on voyait briller les gros cylindres transparents de glace qui refroidissaient la belle eau claire. (202)

Because he finds himself in the darkness of poverty, he sees other people enjoying the “light” wherever he goes and is utterly overwhelmed with a literal and figurative thirst that he is unable to quench due to his poverty. As Susanna Lee suggests, “Indeed, Duroy…focuses consistently on present insufficiencies rather than on gratification. He envies the wealth of others…” (225). He continues his walk through the city, still afflicted by his lack. “Il passa devant le Vaudeville…[et] se demandait s’il n’allait pas prendre son bock, tant la soif le torturait. Avant de se décider, il regarda l’heure aux horloges lumineuses, au milieu de la chaussé.” (*Bel-Ami* 203). The surrounding light distracts him from his overwhelming thirst. Thus, while he is literally thirsty and hungry for food and drink, his lack of wealth makes him eager and greedy in a more figurative sense for the glitz that inundates his vision. It simultaneously engrosses and detracts him from his destitution.

When he meets Mme de Marelle for the first time, it is no surprise that her diamond earrings are the catalyst for his imminent seduction. After meeting his friend, Charles Forestier, the previous night, he is invited to dine at their house later with their friends. Seated next to Mme de Marelle, nervous to make even the slightest error, he remains silent, “Il regardait parfois sa

voisine, dont la gorge ronde le séduisait. Un diamant tenu par un fil d'or pendait au bas de l'oreille, comme une goutte d'eau qui aurait glissé sur la chair." (*Bel-Ami* 220). It is not the woman herself that arouses his desire in this moment, but the diamond, hanging by a thin chain of gold, and the way that it glistens beside her neck that captivates him. Maupassant returns to the metaphor of water, comparing the diamond hanging so delicately to a drop of water that glides over her skin. His thirst, or desire, is once again reactivated and, "Une gaieté délicieuse entrait en lui ; une gaieté chaude, qui lui montait du ventre à la tête, lui courait dans les membres, le pénétrait tout entier. Il se sentait envahi par un bien-être complet, un bien-être de vie et de pensée, de corps et d'âme" (*Bel-Ami* 220). Duroy is not just smitten with Mme de Marelle, his body is completely overtaken with a yearning for luxury that stems from his subconscious. While he may not yet be consciously aware of the origins of this feeling, his body is steps ahead of him in responding to this arousal that has been elicited by a simple pair of diamond earrings.

Because Duroy served as a military officer in Algeria, he often compares Parisian culture to his experience in the Maghreb, which Maupassant uses to critique elements of Orientalism and colonization, as Brevik-Zender nuances: "…Maupassant distances himself from Baudelaire and others by reproducing nineteenth-century exoticism, not to celebrate it as aesthetic escapism, but rather to condemn it along with the reprehensible violence of French colonization" (235). When the subject of Algeria arises during the dinner, Duroy will eventually join the conversation. Nicholas White proposes that "only when wine loosens his tongue does he dare to intervene on his specialist subject of North Africa" (209). However, it is more so the arousal that stems from the subject's gaze of the dangling diamond earring against Mme de Marelle's throat that produces both his overall feeling of contentment and his wish to speak to be heard, noticed, and valued. (*Bel-Ami* 220). Though the exchanges among the dinner guests shifts from subject to

subject, it finally lands on the topic of the colonization of Africa. Given Duroy's 28 months spent in the country during his military service, he dialogs with the guests. The men go back and forth about the effects of France having "…ouv[ert] largement ce pays neuf à tout le monde" (*Bel-Ami* 221). Duroy catches himself in surprise when he proclaims that the Algerians are being exiled to the desert because of the Parisians' buying up of all the fertile land. Norbert de Varenne then inquires about his time in Mzab, "cette étrange petite république arabe née au milieu du Sahara, dans la partie la plus desséchée de cette région brûlante" (*Bel-Ami* 221). Maupassant once again revisits the metaphor of dryness and thirst in highlighting the struggles the Algerians of this region face due to a lack of water. Then, as the protagonist is still seated next to Mme de Marelle at the dinner table, the thought of her diamond earring and its effect on his entire physical being are every present. Maupassant writes, "Duroy avait visité deux fois le Mzab, et il raconta les mœurs de ce singulier pays, où les gouttes d'eau ont la valeur de l'or" (222). With the continued use of the metaphor of a drop of water, Maupassant is not only highlighting the struggles of the colonized but is also illuminating just how valuable her earrings are, not just in Paris, but also to the rest of the world. There is a clear emphasis on the superiority of French culture over Algerian culture in that Duroy's, also representing France's, thirst is for luxury, whereas Algeria's is for actual water to ensure their survival.

Completely enchanted by Duroy's recounting of his experience in the Maghreb, Mme de Marelle turns her attention towards him, further augmenting his attraction to her. Duroy remains dazzled by her earrings, which have generated a newfound confidence in himself. "Mme de Marelle s'était, à plusieurs reprises, tournée vers lui, et le diamant de son oreille tremblait sans cesse, comme si la fine goutte d'eau allait se détacher et tomber" (*Bel-Ami* 223). Here the earring is acting as a mirror for Duroy's inner emotional state, a personification of his excitement in

which he is emerging from his shell and "shining" among the dinner guests, yet also the precarity of the whole situation. He has taken his place, "conquered it" among those who belong to a higher social stratum than he while all the while knowing his position is as tenuous as the diamond hanging from its golden chain. Like the diamond/water drop metaphor, he could easily fall back down to his lower rank. Yet, it is as though the diamond earring is transmitting the confidence directly to him urging him to speak to the object of his desire:

> Il se sentait dans les membres une vigueur surhumaine, dans l'esprit une résolution invincible et une espérance infinie. Il était chez lui, maintenant, au milieu de ces gens ; il venait d'y prendre position, d'y conquérir sa place. Son regard se posait sur les visages avec une assurance nouvelle, et il osa, pour la première fois la parole à sa voisine… (*Bel-Ami* 223)

He believes himself to belong among this class of people, which drives him to act accordingly. His longing and appetite for luxury (and for Mme de Marelle) is satisfied by gazing upon those earrings, which are the pinnacle of social status for a person who places much importance on his dress. This cannot be found simply through one's clothing because of its lack of glamour and light that jewelry emits so seductively. Coupeau explains how jewelry falls under one of the four categories of flattery according to Socrates, which generates a "hyper sexualization du bijou" (54). She quotes the cosmetology studies of Auguste Caron, "La parure double la valeur d'une femme ; elle augmente nos plaisirs et nos jouissances en relevant ses charmes" (qtd in Coupeau, 54). He finally musters up the courage to address her and compliment her jewelry while he has her attention:

> —Vous avez, madame, les plus jolies boucles d'oreilles que j'aie jamais vues.

> Elle se tourna vers lui en souriant : —C'est une idée à moi de pendre des diamants comme ça, simplement au bout d'un fil. On dirait vraiment de la rosée, n'est-ce pas ?
>
> Il murmura, confus de son audace et tremblant de dire une sottise :
>
> —C'est charmant…mais l'oreille aussi fait valoir la chose.
>
> Elle le remercia d'un regard, d'un de ces clairs regards de femme qui pénètrent jusqu'au cœur. (*Bel-Ami* 223)

Just as the diamonds trembled from her ear, Duroy is also trembling, perhaps because not only are these the most beautiful earrings he has ever seen that have produced a euphoric-like effect in his being, but also because she was the one who had commissioned their design. Their singularity, originating from her own conception and her "penetrating gaze" render him awestruck. Finally, he leaves the dinner utterly transformed, with an abundance of hope for a brighter and more successful future as a prospective journalist.

In a later scene, Maupassant uses jewelry to not only further emphasize its value as the pinnacle of social status but to also differentiate a masculine and feminine look. When Duroy confesses to Mme Forestier that he was completely seduced by Mme de Marelle at the dinner, she explains to him how she lives an unconventional lifestyle, "Et si vous saviez comme elle est drôle, originale, intelligente ! C'est une bohème, par exemple, une vraie bohème. C'est pour cela que son mari ne l'aime guère" (*Bel-Ami* 238). Once Duroy and Mme de Marelle succumb to their desire for one another, in spite of her marital status, for amusement she takes him to working-class haunts and locales, rather than high socialite venues. Mme de Forestier was quite accurate in that she was a Bohemian, or unconventional, so much so that she dresses down in order to blend in with the lower-class, essentially disguising herself so that those around her do not

discover that she is bourgeoise. On one of their nights on the town, she dresses down but refuses to remove her jewelry:

> Elle arrivait au rendez-vous habituel vêtue d'une robe de toile, la tête couverte d'un bonnet de soubrette, de soubrette de vaudeville ; et, malgré la simplicité élégante et cherchée de la toilette, elle gardait ses bagues, ses bracelets, et ses boucles d'oreilles en brillants, en donnant cette raison, quand il la suppliait de les ôter : "Bah ! On croira que ce sont des cailloux du Rhin. (*Bel-Ami* 281).

She goes to such great lengths to appear to be a maidservant in sporting a dress made of canvas together with the signature bonnet. She seems to think that she can get away with still wearing her jewelry, that clearly appears quite valuable to Duroy since he begs her to remove them. This stark divergence in how one perceives jewelry demonstrates how one's gender and social class affects one's worldview. For Mme de Marelle, far removed from how an "ouvrier" regards the world, places no importance on wearing such a luxury item, totally ignorant of the way in which one from a poorer background might dream of the opportunity to afford an item so highly coveted. On the other hand, Duroy, perhaps remembering the effect that her tiny diamond had on his entire being, pleads with her to remove them, knowing that she will be immediately discovered as an outcast. In the next line, Maupassant highlights her ignorance, "Elle se jugeait déguisée, et, bien qu'elle fût en réalité cachée, à la façon des autruches, elle allait dans les tavernes les plus mal famées" (281). The writer uses the comparison of her being as disguised as an ostrich, sticking its head in a hole that does not obliterate its obvious size, just like her jewelry is a dead giveaway as to who she really is. She quickly finds out that she is not as stealthily clad as she had hoped, with the gaze of the entire tavern upon her, she quickly leaves the tavern and is relieved once she gets out, "comme si elle venait d'échapper à quelque danger terrible" (*Bel-Ami*

281). Thus, while a woman in the 19th century can ascend or descend the social hierarchy in disguising herself with her clothing, this possibility does not exist while wearing expensive jewelry.

As Duroy continues his quest to rise up in the social ranks with his newfound career as a newspaper reporter, but arguably more so via his relationships with well-to-do, older, and married women, his thirst for wealth only increases. Having been humiliated at her first visit to the Folies-Bergère upon discovering Duroy's recent tryst with Rachel, a prostitute, Mme de Marelle leaves him alone at the opera. He wakes up the next morning penniless and depressed but wanting to pay Mme de Marelle back for the money that she had been discreetly slipping him. In an interesting turn of events, he pays Mme Forestier a visit, who recommends that he go see Mme Walter, despite her penchant for piety, a woman who eventually becomes quite the hindrance in Duroy's life. Upon his visit, Duroy sits with her and some other ladies who have gathered to converse and socialize in the salon. He feels a bit awkward and uncomfortable about this interaction at first, and then a woman enters the scene, and everyone's interest is suddenly piqued, "Dès qu'elle apparut dans le boudoir, une des visiteuses se leva, serra les mains, puis partit ; et le jeune homme suivit du regard, par les autres salons, son dos noir où brillaient des perles de jais" (*Bel-Ami* 300). While Brevik-Zender suggests Maupassant's description reduces the woman to "nothing more than a represent[ation of] the woman's body not in organic terms but rather as the visually arresting, glittering jet-back sequins that line the back of her dress" ("Fashion and Fractured Flânerie, 232), the symbolism of this scene goes much deeper than that. First of all, the use of "perles" signifies beads, as opposed to sequins, which are "paillettes". Sequins are typically used to decorate clothing and not used for jewelry, whereas beads are strung on a strand of thread or wire, are larger and are more valuable. Second, the woman's back

together with the jet beads would rather symbolize an outfit of mourning, most likely for her husband or a child. Coupeau details "le thème du deuil au XIXe siècle" and the restrictive guidelines that women in mourning were to follow regarding fashion. She explains,

> En sus du port d'une robe de laine noire, étoffe lourde absorbant la lumière, il est recommandé de ne porter aucun bijou dans la première période du mois. Par la suite, les marques symboliques du veuvage féminin en matière de bijoux sont fort variables, mais il est à noter que les bijoux en jais ou en onyx sont de mise (Coupeau, 62).

Maupassant ensures to use not only her clothes to symbolize mourning but adds the jewelry to emphasize the theme of death. While this description does not symbolize much in and of itself, the exchange that follows between Duroy and the other women, namely Mme Walter, carries much denotative weight. It is worth noting that Maupassant does not simply remark on the woman's outfit but emphasizes that Duroy follows her all the way through the drawing rooms with his gaze. The reader can feel a shift in the energy in the following passage: "Quand l'agitation de ce changement de personnes se fut calmée, on parla spontanément, sans transition…" (300). The author uses the word "agitation" to attract the reader's attention to this seemingly meaningless exchange in addition to the woman's funereal ensemble, especially the jet beads, a stark contrast from. After some more pleasantries are exchanged between the women, ranging from topics about Morocco to the theater to l'Académie Française, Maupassant employs another symbol of darkness to symbolize Duroy's transition from lover to exploiter of older women, "Mais elle [Mme Walter] s'aperçut que la nuit venait…" (301) and then casually mentions her advanced age, "Elle était un peu trop grasse, belle encore, à l'âge dangereux où la débâcle est proche" (301). What is most captivating about these symbols is the already stark

contrast to those of light that were often used with his experience with Mme de Marelle previously mentioned.

It is not until the end of his conversation with the ladies that one can understand the direction in which all of the symbolism of darkness, old age, and death is progressing. Noticing Duroy's uneasiness in engaging in the chatter, Mme Walter invites him to give his opinion regarding the most suitable candidate for a position in the prestigious Académie Française. Duroy astonishes the women when he explains how a candidate of ill-health and advanced years would appeal to him the most. When asked to explicate his unimaginable point of view, he wryly reveals, "Je suis comme vous d'ailleurs et j'aime beaucoup lire dans les échos de Paris le décès d'un académicien. Je me demande tout de suite : « Qui va le remplacer ? » Et je fais ma liste. C'est un jeu, un petit très gentil auquel on joue dans tous les salons parisiens à chaque trépas d'immortel…" (*Bel-Ami* 302). Seeing the looks of disconcertion on their faces, Duroy leaves them with one last piece of advice before his departure, "Choisissez-les donc vieux, très vieux, le plus vieux possible, et ne vous occupez jamais du reste" (*Bel-Ami* 302). Considering that Duroy had already hatched his plan to seduce Mme Forestier, one can understand why Maupassant mentioned her husband's poor health and coughing fits. The symbols and allegories, the black back, the jet beads, the darkness of night, the reference to old age, illness, and death all serve as a harbinger for both Mme Forestier and Mme Walter's fate at the mercy of Georges Duroy, whose appetite for wealth and luxury only increases as time passes. Claudine Giachetti advances the idea of the importance of space in the novel, as "un thème structural qui est étroitement lié au désir de la conquête et de la possession à la hantise de la perte et de la spoliation" (219). Giachetti also delineates the way in which its hierarchy functions, with the Walter salon positioned at the top due to his eventual marriage of his daughter. He has thus begun his

ascendancy to the top of the pyramid (220). This transition is one from an enjoyable relationship of love and amusement with Mme de Marelle to one of exploitation, deceit, and ruin for the unsuspecting others along his journey of climbing to the top.

In keeping with the metamorphosis of Duroy as lover turned manipulator, Maupassant neglects to incorporate any descriptions of jewelry for a sizable portion of the novel. This absence of jewelry enhances the notion that Duroy is not pursuing these relationships with neither Mme Forestier nor Mme Walter for love, but solely for money, status, and power. While the earrings that glistened against the neck of Mme de Marelle spawned a subconscious and rather sexualized desire to seduce her, there is a notable lack of description that induces the same kind of yearning for the others, including the daughter of Mme Walter, whom he eventually marries on the last page of the novel. Though he successfully continues his pursuit of these older women for their status and their wealth, eventually marrying the newly widowed Mme Forestier and pursuing the very much married Mme Walter, Mme de Marelle doesn't stray far from his mind nor the plot. She enters the scene from time to time when Duroy seems to tire of his wife or wishes to escape the clinginess of his lover, Mme Walter. Concerning the relationship with Mme de Marelle, it is complicated because she feels betrayed by him and his pursuit of the other women even though she herself is married. She feels used, which she is, but he keeps coming back to her, and she always acquiesces because she truly loves him. Therefore, Maupassant does not describe the other women and their *toilettes* in the same fashion as he did Mme de Marelle's earrings to ensure that the reader understands his pursuit is one of convenience and exploitation as opposed to true desire. Once Duroy gets the slightest taste of the *grande bourgeoisie* and even aristocratic existence, it is nearly impossible for him to think of much else. In fact, according to

Brevik-Zender, Maupassant desribes Mme Forestier's *toilette* the morning after their wedding as a symbol of Duroy's indifference towards her,

> Elle avait passé son peignoir, un grand peignoir, de flanelle blanche, que Duroy reconnut aussitôt. Cette vue lui fut désagréable. Pourquoi ? Sa femme possédait, il le savait bien, une douzaine entière de ses vêtements de matinée. Elle ne pouvait pourtant point détruire son trousseau pour en acheter un neuf ? N'importe, il eût voulu que son linge de chambre, son linge de nuit, son linge d'amour ne fût plus le même qu'avec l'autre. Il lui semblait que l'étoffe moelleuse et tiède devait avoir gardé quelque chose du contact de Forestier. (*Bel-Ami* 376)

What turns Duroy off during this exchange is what Brevik-Zender classifies as "The trace of Charles that lingers on Madeleine's flannel attire…." (110). However, Brevik-Zender's analysis of "the materiality of fashion, a seeming antithesis to the impermanence and degradable nature of clothes as objects" is incomplete in that she does not include jewelry into her category of fashion, which, when well-made, is known to be timeless, enduring, and indestructible.

It is not until after Duroy, now known officially as Georges Du Roy de Cantel, essentially swindles Madeleine out of half of her inheritance from her alleged former lover, the Comte de Vaudrec, that jewelry once again enters the scene. At this point in their marriage, Du Roy is jaded—he is being teased at the magazine for his wife's obvious involvement in his writing, consistently belittles his wife's dead husband to make himself feel superior and continues his affair with Mme de Marelle. However, she once again berates him after discovering a few strands of hair that Mme Walter had tied around the button of his waistcoat in a possessive attempt to leave a "trace" on him in her absence. She deduces that he has been carrying on an affair with an older woman, which enrages her, "Garde ta vieille femme…garde-la…fais-toi faire

une bague avec ses cheveux blancs…Tu en assez pour ça…" (*Bel-Ami* 451). Maupassant depicts her jealousy while employing a symbol of jewelry, a ring made of her hair. Miller elucidates how hair was often used as jewelry during the nineteenth century not only for mourning but also for romantic and nostalgic reasons, "But sentimental jewelry, made with the hair of one who was alive and loving is also common [during the 1800s]… Hair, in and of itself, has long been believed to have extraordinary powers" (89). Thus, Mme Walter was hoping that this act of creating a presence on Du Roy with a powerful symbol of eternity would ensure his loyalty to her and ward off any potential rivals. Mme de Marelle, immediately recognizing Du Roy's betrayal, is so shaken by this latest treachery that she subsequently slaps him on the cheek, leaving him stunned and angry at Mme Walter for her deceptive gimmick.

No sooner had Mme de Marelle left their abode in anger than Du Roy, in keeping with his pattern to plot revenge every time they quarrel, decided to go for a walk while considering how he will exact his retaliation. "Il descendit jusqu'au boulevard, et, flânant, s'arrêta devant la boutique d'un bijoutier pour regarder un chronomètre dont il avait envie depuis longtemps, et qui valait dix-huit cents francs" (*Bel-Ami* 451). Now, Duroy seeks revenge in a way that satisfies his own benefit. Instead of the symbolic ring of eternity that Mme de Marelle had suggested, Duroy considers a piece of jewelry for himself, one that will make him stand out and openly display his newfound wealth and status. At the start of the second half of the 19th century, Coupeau explains how men's fashion evolve into one of unoriginality, with "le costume noir est de mise" (54). However, because adorning oneself was a way to be "seen" during the 19th century, it was necessary for men to accessorize themselves in a way that showcased their social status. This is in stark contrast to the beginning of the novel, when Duroy blends into the crowd as a *flâneur*, his dress "allowed for the anonymity that both journalist and flâneur required" (Brevik-Zender,

226). Contrary to Mme de Marelle's suggestion of adorning himself with a ring of Mme Walter's locks, Duroy seizes upon the idea of a chronometer, wanting to distinguish himself with the funds that he plans to earn from the Moroccan money-making scheme proposed by Mme Walter, no longer wanting to blend in with the crowd. "D'abord, il serait nommé député. Et puis il achèterait son chronomètre, et puis il jouerait à la Bourse…et puis encore…et puis encore" (*Bel-Ami* 451). At this point, he is only entertaining a relationship with her, despite his lack of desire and attraction, in order to secure a payout that will ensure a fortune for himself as well as a continuation of his climb up the social ladder with no end goal in sight. In an unforeseen turn of events, directly after admiring the chronometer in the window, Duroy remembers that his wife asked him to visit the infirmed Comte de Vaudrec, a previously suspected lover of hers. Finding him essentially on his deathbed, Duroy hurries home to inform Madeleine of his imminent death, which he does that evening. It is not long after the Comte de Vaudrec passes away that Duroy discovers he has left the majority of his fortune to Madeleine, virtually confirming their illicit liaison. Duroy convinces her to donate half of her inheritance to him to avoid a scandal and make it appear as though Vaudrec had left his fortune to both of them. Despite her irritation at this proposal as well as Du Roy's insistence on the matter, Madeleine relents, but she is not nearly as happy as he is with the outcome: "Il riait, heureux de tout, tandis qu'elle demeurait songeuse et un peu sévère" (*Bel-Ami* 463-464).

Immediately after going to the *notaire* and ensuring the inheritance of his half of his wife's fortune, Duroy wastes no time in heading back to the *bijoutier*. "Du Roy conduisit sa femme devant la boutique où il avait regardé si souvent le chronomètre désiré" (*Bel-Ami* 464). Maupassant underlines the fact that it was not just one time that Du Roy spotted the chronometer and decided it was to be his, but that he had returned "si souvent" in order to admire it and use it

as motivation for his continual exploitations of these older women. Whether out of subconscious guilt for having swindled his own wife or out of wanting her to quickly forget his deception, or a combination of the two, Du Roy offers Madeleine to pick out a piece for herself. "—Veux-tu que je t'offre un bijou ? dit-il. Elle murmura avec indifférence : —Comme il te plaira." (*Bel-Ami* 464). Whatever his subconscious intentions, it is clear that Du Roy wants to appease his wife so that he can justify purchasing the chronometer for himself.

Understanding the appeal that jewelry has for women of 19th-century France, there really is not a more enticing offer for a woman of Madeleine's status, which becomes clear as she perks up at the sight of the precious gems and various pieces. However, at first she needs a little bit more encouragement from her husband before succumbing to the beauty displayed before her, "—Que préfères-tu, un collier, un bracelet, ou des boucles d'oreilles ? La vue des bibelots d'or et des pierres fines emportait sa froideur voulue, et elle parcourait d'un œil allumé et curieux les vitrines pleines de joyaux" (*Bel-Ami* 464). The overwhelming sight of the jewelry has that transformational effect on her that Maupassant elicited with Du Roy—it literally has the power to change her mood, reinforcing the significance of jewelry's metaphysical properties. Maupassant further showcases these effects: "Et soudain, émue par un désir : —Voilà un bien joli bracelet. C'était une chaîne d'une forme bizarre dont chaque anneau portait une pierre différente" (*Bel-Ami* 464). Here one can see where the influence of the new style of Art Nouveau is starting to take place with the description of the "chaîne d'une forme bizarre", which denotes organic curves and sinuous lines that are the hallmark of this artistic movement. The use of colored gemstones is another indication that the bracelet is made in the Art Nouveau style as they added to the dreamlike quality that was becoming the trend of this time period. Therefore, this bracelet that Madeleine eyes awakens a desire to be adorned and be seen. After the death of her

alleged lover together with the mistreatment by her current husband, she is ready to continue her quest of procuring a lover for herself. Coupeau describes this *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon of women striving for more autonomy and independence and the role in which jewelry played to enhance this desire:

> Le bijou pour sa part participe à la création d'une nouvelle altérité, à la formation d'un masque, celui d'une femme séduisante et séductrice. Nombreuses sont celles qui comprennent rapidement que se parer, c'est être vu, se distinguer. La présence de bijoux permet d'attirer tous les regards. Dans l'espace mondain, la femme parée se pavane. (85)

This newfound desire that awakens in Madeleine foreshadows a relationship with a new lover and her ultimate demise as the wife of Georges Du Roy de Cantel.

However, his wife is not free to pursue her seductive escapades until Du Roy ensures his purchase of his longed-for chronometer that will leave a trace of his *éternité* that will remain in his absence. Once Madeleine chooses her bracelet, Du Roy immediately attempts to negotiate the price for both the bracelet and the chronometer with the *bijoutier,* but he does it in a subtle way that does not appear that he had been wanting the piece all along,

> Georges demanda : —Combien ce bracelet ? Le joaillier répondit : — Trois mille francs, monsieur. — Si vous me le laissez à deux mille cinq, c'est une affaire entendue. L'homme hésita puis répondit : — Non, monsieur, c'est impossible. Du Roy reprit : — Tenez, vous ajouterez ce chronomètre pour quinze cents francs, cela fait quatre mille, que je payerai comptant. Est-ce dit ? Si vous ne voulez pas, je vais ailleurs. Le bijoutier, perplexe, finit par accepter. — Eh bien ! soit, monsieur. (*Bel-Ami* 464)

Du Roy, evidently a master of deception at this point in the novel, slyly throws in the chronometer as if he hadn't been planning on purchasing it all along, clearly duping Madeleine

into believing that the purpose of the trip to the *bijouterie* was to choose a gift for her. She is so taken with the beauty of the bracelet that she doesn't suspect the slightest ulterior motive even when he asks the *joaillier* for an additional engraving, "Et le journaliste, après avoir donné son adresse, ajouta : — Vous ferez graver sur le chronomètre mes initiales G. R. C., en lettres enlacées au-dessous d'une couronne de baron" (*Bel-Ami* 465). Du Roy, indubitably never satisfied with his achievements, realizes that the chronometer in and of itself is not enough to mark his ascension of Paris's social hierarchy. He understands that during this period of modernity, leaving his eternal mark on a product that is made to last beyond his existence is crucial to establishing his legacy. While citing Baudelaire's proclamation of the balance between permanence and the transitory, Brevik-Zender argues that

> "it would seem that a stronger correlation has been established between the 'ephemeral' side of the dialectical coin and the concerns of the nineteenth-century novelists…Paradoxically, though….for some of the period's most influential novelists, it is authorial permanency that is made available in the materiality of fashion, and, moreover, this eternalness is conditioned by the ephemerality inherent to apparently transitory marks as exemplified by fashion traces" (110-111).

Thus, even though Brevik-Zender's discussion deals with clothing as fashion, it seems as though Maupassant understands the eternalness of jewelry and the trace that it will continue to leave long after one's death, which clothing would not be able to do due to its perishable material. In addition, Maupassant was careful to ensure that the initials contained those of his newly established title, with G. R. C. standing for "Georges Du Roy de Cantel", not simply "Georges Duroy", his name given to him at birth. Because the sight of the bracelet and the prospect of owning it has entranced Madeleine, she accepts this, "Madeleine, surprise, se met à sourire. Et

quand ils sortirent, elle prit son bras avec une certaine tendresse. Elle le trouvait vraiment adroit et fort. Maintenant qu'il avait des rentes, il lui fallait un titre, c'était juste" (*Bel-Ami* 465). Unaware of her husband's deceitful scheming, Madeleine, deluded by the purchase of her new bracelet, embraces his newfound status, as it will only benefit her in securing a lover of a higher status from whom she can also gain social advantage.

All in all, Maupassant takes his representation of jewelry to new heights throughout *Bel-Ami*. While there are still elements of jewelry's transformative powers in the way a glimpse of diamond earrings instills confidence in Duroy and an ornately decorated bracelet lightens Madeleine's mood, Maupassant explores jewelry's influence of perception more deeply than in his two stories included in chapter 1. Starting off the novel showcasing Duroy's attraction to glitz and glamor visually showcases his aspirations for climbing the social hierarchy, with the top being the pinnacle of luster and the bottom more represented by the color gray and dullness. In fact, this metaphor broadens to include the country of France, whose aspirations for power are at the expense of the Algerian colony, whose quest to quench its thirst is for literal water that appear analogously like the droplets of Clotilde's earrings, as opposed to France's thirst for dominance. From jewelry's symbolic power of hyper sexualization, death and old age to even its lack of presence, representing a lack of fulfillment or desire, there is no question that Maupassant discerned jewelry's ability to both blur and reinforce boundaries. Not ever wanting to be discarded into history's great abyss, Du Roy managed to find a way to imprint *l'éternel* not only on his chronometer but as a protagonist who managed to climb the social strata from a penniless journalist to a wealthy aristocrat. Finally, Maupassant's distinction between the masculine and feminine look transitions beautifully to a critique of Rachilde's use of jewelry in *Monsieur Vénus* which represents more strikingly this gendered distinction.

Chapter Three: The *marchandes'* battle for jewelry and status in Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*

In his novel, *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873), Zola exposes the complex lives of *les marchandes* who manage stalls at the famous Les Halles de Paris during the 19th century. According to Thompson, the ability for these women vendors to manage their affairs was complicated by the watchful eye of the Préfet de Police de Paris, who sought to remove them from the marketplace. The authorities wanted "to limit participation in the public sphere" (Thompson, 86) and "were able to justify measures designed to limit access to the trade of street vendor and remove merchants from public view" (Thompson, 90). These *marchandes* counted on their stalls as their means of making income, with a number of them being the sole provider for their families. While it was essential to be conscientious of their behavior and of their interactions with others, their clothes, including their jewelry, carried their own messages, not only to the authorities but also to their fellow market vendors, whether they be friends or foes. With the novel's representation of the continual battle between "les Gras et les Maigres" throughout the plot, Zola unveils the importance of appearances, especially for *les marchandes*, during the Second Empire. He showcases how jewelry became their most preciously and highly sought-after accessory for those who appeared in public. For Zola, jewelry symbolized wealth and power, was a mark of distinction, and served as an emblem of protection because of its ability to alter the perception of those who gaze upon it.

At the beginning of the third chapter, Zola represents *les poissardes* as the most powerful female market vendors in Les Halles which was true in the actual 19th-century marketplace (Thompson, 107). Thompson also documents how the female fish vendors were considered the most outspoken and direct with regard to their rights (107). It is not surprising that they were targeted by the authorities who scrutinized their behavior and loud hawking at the market. True

to the times, Zola positions *les poissardes* at the top of the hierarchical structure of power while describing their merchandise and displays in luxurious terms; the narrator sets the scene with brilliant descriptions of the *marchandes*' fish as jewelry. One is dazzled by

> … l'opale des merlans, la nacre des maquereaux, l'or des rougets, la robe lamée des harengs, les grandes pièces d'argenterie des saumons. C'était comme les écrins, vidés à terre, de quelque fille des eaux, des parures inouïes et bizarres, un ruissellement, un entassement de colliers, de bracelets monstrueux, de broches gigantesques, de bijoux barbares, dont l'usage échappait. Sur le dos des raies et des chiens de mer, des grosses pierres sombres, violâtres, verdâtres, s'enchâssaient dans un métal noirci ; et les minces barres des équilles, les queues et les nageoires des éperlans, avaient des délicatesses de bijouterie fine (174).

The usage of diverse gemstones and metals gives the reader an image of bright colors that shine in an attractive and seductive way. Fish are elevated to become a mysterious beauty; the narrator suggests that this "bijouterie fine" comes from a magical sea creature who disperses its treasures in the market stalls for the clientele of Les Halles. These descriptions produce radiant and sparkly effects not only at the vendors' market stands but also for the women selling these caches of riches. They serve as another indicator of the *marchandes* power and hierarchy; they belong to the highest echelons of popular marketplace, Les Halles. Since *les poissardes* enjoy a formidable reputation in terms of their vulgar language and behavior, Zola employs these luminous descriptions of bright and multicolor jewels as a contrast to their less than refined morals. Nevertheless, their dichotic image may be seemingly paradoxical but is in fact quite realistic.

In keeping with the theme of *les poissardes'* wealth in the third chapter of the novel, Zola uses jewelry to illuminate the rumored wealth of the Méhudins, a powerful family that works at

Les Halles. In the beginning of the chapter, the family makes Florent's life quite difficult by their poor treatment of him because they believe that he is either Lisa's lover, his sister-in-law, or is linked to Quénu, his brother, in one way or another. While providing the contextual information about the Méhudins' background, Zola highlights their wealth, "La mère Méhudin, selon les commérages du quartier, devait avoir fait une grosse fortune. Il n'y paraissait guère qu'aux bijoux d'or massif dont elle se chargeait le cou, les bras et la taille, dans les grands jours" (198). It is clear that her jewelry serves a practical purpose aside from an ornamental one. If she did not wear the jewelry, one would not at all be aware of her wealth, which would lower her to an inferior status to the one that she currently holds. The jewelry holds so much weight in this instance with regard to its influence as well as its symbolic value that the other vendors at Les Halles recognize and gossip about even in its absence, which also perpetuates the matriarchal figure's reputation of prosperity. Furthermore, one of her daughters who is also a *poissarde* and a giant figure in the novel, La Belle Normande, also uses jewelry as her mother does, which "strengthens the impression of her presence, beauty and of her status within the community by her identification with a profusion of baubles" (Kent Bishop, 115). Not only a mark of distinction that influences their reputation, but the jewelry also serves as a type of protection for a continued well-respected reputation for their family, who depends solely on themselves to earn their livings, an arduous responsibility for women of the 19th century.

In the passage that describes "la bataille" between la Belle Lisa and la Belle Normade, an eternal rivalry, Zola underscores the ultimate value of jewelry for women in their position. "Elles trônaient alors, dans leurs grands tabliers blancs, avec leurs toilettes et leurs bijoux. Dès le matin, la bataille commençait" (237). The usage of the metaphor of the battle establishes a close relationship between their rivalry and their potential status, symbolized by their *toilettes* and their

bijoux. It is as though they are wearing the medals of a general in the army who reinforces his superior status to his soldiers. In the same way, the medals symbolize soldiers' victories just as jewelry represents the social success for the *marchandes*. With its symbolic value, jewelry adds a mark of distinction compared to their adversaries, the other *marchandes*. Moreover, Kent Bishop suggests that the women's adornments carry their own metaphorical meaning by positing that they are "…une armure vitale pour la femme, à travers laquelle se dessinent les échelons d'une décence/descente avec ses points de fléchissement. En étant associé à l'armure, le vêtement permet donc de classifier métaphoriquement celle qui le porte, qu'elle soit combattante ou non" (13). In fact, Zola carefully and meticulously uses descriptions of jewelry to establish them as such a precious resource for these women that they will go to any lengths, include a seemingly lifelong battle, to attain them.

Even though the *bouchère* and the *poissarde* participate in a continual battle to gain the greatest number of clients and the most lucrative sales, the variety of jewelry for a female vendor serves as another kind of success. Lisa, perceiving that la Belle Normande is parading around while sporting her diamond earrings, insults her to Augustine, "Est-ce que vous apercevez ses boucles d'oreilles ? Je crois qu'elle a ses grandes poires, n'est-ce pas ? Ça fait pitié, des brillants, à des filles comme ça" (Zola, 237). It seems that Lisa has seen this particular pair of earrings before, with the use of "ses grandes poires", denoting that they belong to la Belle Normande and are not a new pair that she sees for the first time. Assuming that she is jealous of these earrings, she wants to underscore that la Belle Normande doesn't deserve them, that she does not equal their value and prestige, being that they are large and expensive looking. Since she cannot deny the brilliance of the diamonds, she must focus on the person who is wearing them. Augustine agrees with Lisa when she responds, "Pour ce que ça lui coûte !" (Zola, 238). Therefore, Zola

shows how the symbolic value of jewelry in the eyes of the *marchandes* is essentially untouchable. One cannot criticize their beauty, only the person who dons them. Lisa could have pretended that the earrings were fake, old-fashioned or outdated, or even unsightly. However, in a woman's world, the impossibility of hiding or denigrating their beauty shows the highest regard and admiration for these adornments. In the next sentence, Zola celebrates the *marchandes*' esteem for their luxury items, "Quand l'une d'elles avait un bijou nouveau, c'était une victoire ; l'autre crevait de dépit" (238). Just as armies go to war for the control of a country's or a region's natural resources, *les marchandes* fight for the jewelry that displays their triumphs in the market.

In fact, Zola also uses jewelry as a symbol of protection for young girls. Pauline, "…une petite femme de six ans qui craint de se salir…" (Zola, 346), who is the daughter of Lisa and Quenu, finds herself in the company of Muche, the son of la Belle Normande, who lures her to follow him. Zola, attempting to depict her as well-dressed, proper, and innocent young girl, describes her impeccable *toilette* with some accessories that complete it, "Elle portait des boutons de turquoise aux oreilles, une jeannette au cou, un ruban de velours bleu dans les cheveux…la grâce parisienne d'une poupée neuve" (347). Irritated by her flawless clothing and appearance that contrasts with his dirty and torn raggedy dress, Muche plots to get her dirty and ruin her ensemble. Pauline senses the danger that she has found herself in and hesitates by invoking her mother, whom she knows would be angered that she was with Muche, let alone discovering her daughter a filthy mess. She does not leave the threshold of the door in the way that Ilona Chessid reveals as an opposition between authority and desire. Chessid theorizes the threshold in this manner:

> The locus of conflict in these novels is the threshold, symbol of confrontation between proscription and temptation, between authority and delinquent desire. Zola's thresholds oppose an established order to an innovative imagination; they introduce into a closed world the myriad possibilities of opening, and reveal a network of interdictions and permissions, exceptions and deviations. Zola unveils an ensemble of compulsions and obstacles that function according to well-established rules. Thus, he raises a curtain on the society of the Second Empire to speak of desire by showing it at work, and in exposing that desire he revels the system in which it operates (3).

Her approach helps to understand the severity of this decision. If Pauline crosses the threshold, she disobeys her mother, the matriarchy of the unquestioned authority of the Quenu family network. Understanding Pauline's precarious position, Muche returns to the *jeannette*, a small gold cross that hangs from her neck, "Est-ce que c'est à ta maman, ta petite croix ?" (Zola, 347). This necklace clearly gives him pause to clarify its origins before pursuing his plan. Kent Bishop advanced the idea that a cross symbolizes protection, in addition to its religious value (114-115). What is most fascinating about this remark is that Muche considers the possible consequences that could result; not only that her mother would be furious that her daughter was no longer pristinely dressed but also what the cross denoted for her, symbolically speaking. We also know of Lisa's journey to consult the abbey when she weighs the decision to turn Florent into the authorities, "Lisa n'était point devote. Elle ne pratiquait pas…" (Zola, 335). As a result, Lisa likely sufficiently understands the symbolic power of the cross, wanting to take all precautions in order to assure the protection of her only daughter. One sees throughout the novel that Pauline's safety and security is always at the heart of Lisa's worries and actions and are also the principal motivation behind her eventual betrayal of her brother-in-law.

Earlier in the novel, a servant of Mme Taboureau compares la Belle Normande to a prostitute, using her earrings as the focal point of the insult. According to Thompson, *les marchandes* had to pay attention to and be careful of their interactions and their behaviors in order to assure the continuation of their jobs at the market. Because they were under the watchful eye of the authorities who were aiming to expel them from their stalls and ultimately from the market, Thompson declared that "the problematic place of women in the bourgeois public sphere…created a tendency to conflate the woman in public with the *fille publique*, or prostitute" (89). Vulnerable in the face of authorities, it was necessary for the *marchandes* to show that they were earning their livings in the same manner as the "honnêtes gens" (Zola, 182), as Lisa often professed. The servant, indignant at *les poissarde*'s suggestion that she herself had damaged the fish that she had bought earlier as opposed to entertaining the idea that the fish was already spoiled, strove to discredit both the women as well as their way of handling their business. Knowing that the jewelry serves as not only their most prized possessions but also their marks of distinction, she targets her earrings to create the most destructive and negative insult that she could muster, "Et tes boucles d'oreilles, combien qu'elles coûtent ? ... On voit que tu gagnes ça sur le dos" (Zola, 209). By insinuating that la Belle Normande could only afford her precious pear-shaped earrings via prostitution, she is using the jewelry to denigrate as well as slander her business while implying that her products were of such bad quality that it could only be a masquerade for her true profession, that of being a prostitute. This insult strikes at the heart of la Belle Normande because of the gossip that it will create, which is known to spread rapidly throughout Les Halles like stinky cheese. Corbin sheds light on the authorities' goal of targeting prostitutes as a result of "[t]he need to protect the population's health…" (209). Being associated with "refuse dumps, sickness, and death" (213) would provoke so much destruction as to

potentially ruin their entire business, considering the measures that Lisa took to hide Gradelle's death, which took place in her kitchen. The slightest gossip as to a stall's unsanitary conditions, prostitution included, would mean certain financial ruin for the *marchandes*, and it is likely that the servant hurls the insult knowing very well what possible outcomes would result.

In another scene in the fourth chapter of *Le Ventre de Paris*, Zola returns to the brilliance and luster of jewelry and the desire that it provokes with a long passage à la Zola that exposes their scintillating traits. He provides a deep sense of their importance to Cadine, a girl who spent her childhood in Les Halles, eventually becoming a *marchande* of flowers in the market. Because she has not yet attained the status of a true *Gras* because of her young age, Zola uses a comparison of expensive flowers to jewelry, "Cadine n'avait plus que deux respects : le respect du lilas blanc … et le respect des camélias … Elle les prenait, comme elle aurait pris des bijoux, délicatement, sans respirer, de peur de les gâter d'un souffle …" (279). These two types of flowers, lilacs and camellias, are the most expensive due to their relative rarity. Zola describes Cadine as a character who "avait un très mauvais caractère. Elle ne s'accommodait pas du rôle de servant" (279). Despite her obstinacy, she must be intelligent and resourceful in order to start a business at the age of thirteen. One hypothesizes that her ambition allows her to comprehend the significance of the symbolic value of jewelry, especially while seeing it adorned on the bodies of both la Belle Lisa and la Belle Normande. While in the presence of the lilacs and camellias, or, in other words, of jewelry, her stubborn character transforms into one that is rather more affectionate and respectful. She holds her breath while manipulating them with caution, grateful and honored to be in the presence of sheer beauty that renders her humble and servile. What distinguishes this comparison is the contrast between petals of flowers' fragileness and delicacy and the hardiness of precious metals and gemstones that compose pieces of jewelry.

Even though they are on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of their durability, this is not significant to Zola. In fact, it is their symbolic value that concerns him, and the fact that they remain so highly coveted that one must treat them with the utmost care and gentleness in order to admire their beauty as well as their exceptionality.

Furthermore, because of Cadine's appreciation of modern beauty, she dreams of being able to afford "the finer things." Zola continues her quest to satisfy her desire for luxury when "Cadine avait aussi ses heures de coquetteries" (Zola, 293). After having languished while watching *les gourmandises* and *les toilettes*, "Le soir, elle allait recevoir à la face l'éblouissement des grands bijoutiers de la rue Montmartre" (Zola, 294). In keeping with the theme of light and modernity that is prevalent throughout the novel, the following descriptions use vocabulary that reflects the luminosity of her desire. One notices Cadine's

> … yeux emplis de cette splendeur flambante, sous la ligne des réverbères accrochés en dehors à la devanture du magasin. D'abord, c'étaient les blancheurs mates, les luisants aigus de l'argent…Puis, de l'autre côté, la lueur fauve de l'or jaunissait les glaces…moirée d'éclairs rouges…avaient des rondeurs scintillantes d'étoiles tombées…les bracelets, les broches, les bijoux chers luisaient…les bagues allumaient de courtes flammes bleues…Le reflet de tout cet or éclairait la rue d'un coup de soleil, jusqu'au milieu de la chaussée (Zola, 294-295).

The usage of vocabulary that evokes light aids in reinforcing the costliness as well as the longing that Cadine possesses for the life's most refined pleasures. Throughout the novel, Zola contrasts light and dark to underline the distinctions brought forth by both modernity and the *Haussmanisation* of Paris. While the darkness represents "old Paris," the light is often symbolized with the modern *becs de gaz* literally lined along the wide boulevards that are the

hallmark of Paris's new layout, illuminating the city. He continues to characterize the enchantment that the jewelry emits, "Et, Cadine croyait entrer dans quelque chose de saint, dans les trésors de l'empereur. Elle examinait longuement cette forte bijouterie de poisonnières lisant avec soin les étiquettes à gros chiffre qui accompagnaient chaque bijou" (Zola, 295). With this comparison, Zola creates a mythical image of jewelry that is associated with sanctity as well as the empire, according it a stronger acuity of its value. However, for Cadine, this is only a dream, "Elle se décidait pour des boucles d'oreilles, pour des poires de faux corail, accrochées à des roses d'or" (Zola, 295). While authentic coral doesn't cost nearly as much as diamonds or sapphires, for example, Zola emphasizes that the stones are fake in order to affirm that the true, costly jewelry she desires remains far out of her reach. Coupeau advances the idea that those of the lower class also wanting to be seen and adorned with jewelry just like those of the upper class. However, they could only do so through imitation: "Face à ce rapide trombinoscope de la société parée du XIXe siècle, le bijou évolue au sein d'un paysage social délimité. La mode est une barrière qui distingue mais aussi un niveau qui classe" (52). Even if she is a *marchande des fleurs*, she remains inferior to and "out classed" by la Belle Lisa and la Belle Normande because she is unable to afford authentic precious stones.

At the end of the novel, after the inevitable arrest of Florent, a piece of jewelry serves as a metaphor for the victory of *les Gras*. When Claude describes this infamous battle to Florent earlier in the story, he distinguishes the younger *Gras* from the others because they have yet to be fully seduced by envy and "hunger," which perpetuates the struggle, "Mon ami, Marjolin, la petite Cadine, la Sarriette, trois Gras, innocents encore, n'ayant que les faims aimables de la jeunesse" (Zola, 333). These characters are not situated at the same level as the others because of their age, but since they have begun to already work at the market nonetheless, they are still a bit

higher in the hierarchical structure of Les Halles. It is only after having participated in the *commérages* and ultimately in the incarceration of Florent that La Sarriette achieves her complete and official position among *les Gras*. However, Zola does not show this proverbial climbing up of the ranks explicitly. Instead, he uses a subtle symbol that Claude immediately recognizes, "Il vit la Sarriette, avec une montre d'or, chantant au milieu de ses prunes et ses fraises, tirant les petites moustaches de M. Jules" (Zola, 463). Due to the power of this small symbolic representation, an explanation of its meaning and value is not necessary. She is joyous and satisfied while singing and flirting with her lover, and that is enough to depict her triumph. As Zola described the jewelry as a kind of trophy in the rivalry between la Belle Lisa and la Belle Normande, la Sarriette's watch represents the same objective that Claude laments as "les Gras avaient vaincu" (Zola 464).

There remains no doubt that working-class women of the nineteenth century struggled to remain in the public sphere in order to earn their living and support their families. *Les marchandes aux Halles* were particularly vulnerable not only because of their exposure being outside in the stalls of the market but also because of the gossip that could spread like wildfire, as the dénouement dramatically and precisely depicted the tragic end of Florent's time in Paris. In *Le Ventre de Paris,* Zola employs brilliant and luminous depictions of jewelry in order to indicate their supreme value for *les marchandes*. In fact, the jewelry facilitates a hierarchical structure among *les marchandes* who constantly seek new pieces to remain at its summit. The usage of luminous vocabulary adds to the covetousness felt by the women, especially those who aspire to raise their social standing. The jewelry shows not only the hierarchical structure within les Halles, but also serves to distinguish the merchants themselves who wish to put themselves in a position of distinction. Jewelry's incontestable beauty makes it an untouchable accessory in the

world of insults and denigration. Since one cannot find fault in its enormous value, one must instead relegate to insulting its wearer. One could advance that an unspoken agreement exists among the *marchandes*; insults or injuries regarding one's collection of jewels remains off limits. In fact, jewelry's symbol of protection, such as the cross, cause some to reconsider their decisions and others to seek them for security, which is clearly not all guaranteed for *les marchandes* during this period. Thompson succinctly exposes the danger that women faced (risk of removal from the market and thus being cut off from their livelihood) and the justifications that were used to limit their ability to have direct contact with customers outdoors, in front of the market:

> Police and public health authorities, as well as writers and journalists, were increasingly concerned during the July Monarchy with the regulation of public commerce and the presence of women of the popular classes in the city's public spaces. Female merchants, at the intersection of these two main areas of concern, were suspected during these years of engaging in fraud, fomenting revolution, spreading disease, and corrupting the morals of others (88).

The marketplace drama during the years of the July Monarchy (1830-1848) continued through the Second Empire. Haussmann would build a covered marketplace to keep the fish merchants *inside the marketplace* rather than have them sell their goods in outdoor, public spaces for those reasons. Contextualizing the fears of actual merchants help to clarify the reason why these women desired such prized possessions and would wear certain jewelry for protection. It would be difficult to find another accessory that possessed the equivalent of a promise of power and security, a rarity for these working-class characters and actual merchants in the 19th century.

Chapter Four: Jewelry as a marker of identity in Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus*

For women in the 19th century, jewelry was the most forceful exterior symbol of their power, for they were traditionally excluded from hierarchical social structures. Because bourgeois women after industrialization were typically relegated to the private sphere, as opposed to men who dominated the public realm, their social status was dependent on their husband's or family's position in society. Michelle Perrot explains how men's domination over women was decreed by law, "Au nom de la nature, le Code civil établit la supériorité absolue du mari dans le ménage et du père dans la famille, et l'incapacité de la femme et de la mère. La femme mariée cesse d'être un individu responsable : célibataire ou veuve, elle l'est bien avantage" (121). Yet women could enjoy some independence in circumscribed ways as Melanie Hawthorne elucidates: "In the nineteenth century, a woman could aspire to independence only through her economic and class status…. only those who already have some degree of power (in this instance, economic and class-related) are in a position to make any other changes in the system" (169). Coupeau illustrates the importance for a woman to distinguish herself in the 19th century through her choice of jewelry:

> Au XIXe siècle, la bijouterie investit la sphère sociale. Plutôt discrète chez l'homme, la parure se veut parlante chez la femme. Sur la tenue de cette dernière, le bijou est soumis à une grammaire qui codifie son éloquence sur le corps. Les manuels de savoir-vivre et l'émergence d'une presse de mode spécialisée orientent et cadrent les élégantes dans leur choix de parure (70).

Though aristocratic women could wear outfits that outwardly revealed or identified their social status, their sartorial choices lacked the influential and transformative effect that jewelry had. One needed to be well-versed in clothing fashion and fabrics to be able to distinguish the

highest quality of apparel. However, a person of any social class could spot jewels or precious metals and instantly be galvanized by their paramount force. Coupeau continues to depict clothing and jewelry's performative power in marking its wearer by outwardly displaying their social class : "Si les vêtements dévoilent une bonne situation financière, les bijoux qui s'étalent à foison sur les gorges et poignets peuvent également être pensés comme la parure du corps la plus signifiante pour exhiber sa richesse et son pouvoir…Les bijoux du XIXe siècle sont des signaux identitaires grâce auxquels se distinguent les puissants" (76). Jewelry was also such a highly coveted asset because of its uniqueness in its signification for women. Besides sporting an expensive watch, men did not need jewelry in order to demonstrate their positions in society in the same way that women did. The benefit for women was two-fold, an outward symbol of social class as well as a way to exercise their autonomy through self-expression. Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus* explores jewelry's performative ability as a representation of its wearer, which distinguishes itself according to gender as well as its ability to be expressive in perhaps the most powerful way that an adornment can be.

In the opening chapter of *Monsieur Vénus,* Raoule, a woman of the aristocracy, pays the Silvert residence a visit to request "une toilette de bal," where she meets Jacques for the first time. Even though she clearly belongs to a higher social stratum, it is not until his gaze captures a flash of a diamond, used as a fastener for her overcoat, that incites him to submit to her. "Elle avait pris le crayon, pour rectifier certains contours ; lorsqu'elle se pencha vers la lampe, un éclair jaillit du diamant qui fermait son pardessus. Silvert le vit et devint respectueux." (7). Rachilde employs the double entendre of « respectueux » in order to highlight the symbolic power that this single diamond adorning an overcoat possesses, so much so that it transforms the way in which Jacques regards her. The more commonly used meaning refers to an act of

respect towards someone, but also with the connotation of being humble or submissive. However, Larousse suggests that there is a literary meaning to this word as well when used as a noun in its feminine form, signifying “prostituée”. Because Rachilde often subverts the traditional usage of gendered nouns and pronouns throughout the novel in conjunction with the inversion of her characters’ gender roles, it is entirely possible that here she is employing and inventing the masculine noun form in the same manner, as Jacques eventually takes on the role of her “amant,” also benefitting from her wealth and social status. To emphasize this second usage, Raoule et Jacques subsequently discuss payment for his design. He suggests that it will cost him one hundred francs but will give way for fifty as he doesn’t make much profit. Raoule subsequently takes out “trois billets de banque” (7) that she presents to him for payment. Even though the exact amount of the banknotes is not explicitly stated, one can infer that they are more than what he had anticipated based on his reaction. “Le jeune homme eut un mouvement si brusque, un tel élan de joie, que du nouveau, la blouse s’écarta. Au creux de sa poitrine, Raoule aperçut la même ombre rousse qui marquait sa lèvre, quelque chose comme des brins d’or filés, brouillés les uns dans les autres” (7). Thus, Jacques’s transformation into one of submission and servitude commences. Upon her gaze, his chest hair metamorphizes into golden threads, which alludes to his increase of “value” to her, fitting into her world of jewelry that aligns more with her social position.

In the third chapter of the novel, Raoule is in the process of transforming her gender role from that of the typical aristocratic woman into one more typical of males during in the 19th century. According to Hawthorne, Raoule does this not only symbolically, such as through her dress, but also linguistically by using masculine gendered pronouns and adjectival endings (166). She decides to make Jacques Silvert her “amant”, as would have been typical, as well as

acceptable, of men despite their marital status. Because women were denied the opportunity to enjoy the pleasure of a relationship with another man, Raoule must take on a more masculine persona to pursue her lover. When she meets Jacques for the second time, she appears at his apartment dressed more like a male, as he is slowly yet simultaneously evolving to sport more feminine clothing.

> Elle envoya son manteau sur un fauteuil et apparat, svelte, le chignon tordu, très relevé, vêtue d'un fourreau de drap noir à queue tortueuse, tout passementé de brandebourgs. Aucun bijou, cette fois, ne scintillait pour égayer ce costume presque masculin. Elle portait seulement à l'annulaire gauche une chevalière en camée, sertie de deux griffes de lion. (Rachilde 13)

Jacques instantly recognizes that Raoule is not wearing any feminine jewels, this time, marking a stark contrast from her more feminine accessory, the diamond on the overcoat, from the previous encounter. A chevalière, or a signet ring, is a piece of jewelry that was worn by only men during the 19th century. Signet rings came with a variety of designs, from a simple flat gold circle on top of the shank to engraved designs, such as the common family crest, to adorned with gemstones. What distinguishes a signet ring from women's rings is that it was designed with a function in mind, a way for men to easily sign documents by dipping the ring in hot wax and marking it as a seal, which is why the family crest was the most common for signatory purposes. While it is not clear if the cameo of the lion's claws was a family crest from Raoule's family, the use of this image is symbolic in other ways. First, the lion, or the "King of Beasts" is a traditional symbol of power and dominance. For Raoule to not only be wearing a man's ring but also one that exudes strength marks her position of power in her relationship with Jacques despite her status as a woman. While she is naturally hierarchically dominant over Jacques because of aristocratic

status, her “usurpation of the male role” (Hawthorne, 166) enhances her position of power, emphasized by the lion’s claws.

In the next moment, the force of the ring is further underscored in the personification of its power. “Lorsqu’elle ressaisit la main de Jacques, il fut griffé. Malgré lui, une sensation de terreur le pénétra. Cette creature est le diable” (Rachilde 13). At this point, the use of the passive voice makes it difficult to discern who is actually doing the scratching, the ring itself or Raoule’s hands. Nevertheless, the ring’s power clearly affects Jacques’s state of mind by instilling a deep fear into him and questioning who Raoule really is as well as what her motives might be, so much so, that he compares her to the devil. At this point, Jacques is still unaware of Raoule’s goal to make him her lover, and a feminine one at that, but this has clearly already been happening due to her dominance over his powerlessness. The scene continues with even more symbolism of the power imbalances with Raoule demanding that she give Jacques a bath, as a mother might do to a baby. He finds himself confessing to her the most important events that have transpired in his life, including his father’s death in the gearing of a machine and his mother’s subsequent abandonment to pursue a relationship with another man. Even though he seems to be aware of his powerlessness, he cannot seem to control or stop himself from this confession. “Hélas! c’était bien humiliant, et il oubliait les recommandations vicieuses de Marie en contemplant, sous les miroitements de l’eau, l’égratignure qui lui avait faite la chevalière” (Rachilde 13). Jacques not only blames the signet ring for the scratching, but it also implies that the ring itself had the power to relegate him into submission to Raoule. While it was probably widely believed that a woman alone could not possess the strength and status to make a man submit to her as a “mistress,” it must come from another, almost magical or otherworldly source in order to have such an effect on him, which is why he had likened her to the devil. This scene

enhances the idea that jewelry is performative by personifying the image of the lion claws. They not only physically scratched Jacques's hand upon encountering it but also bestowed a mystical power upon him that forced even a man into submission.

While an expensive jewel or piece of jewelry can signify wealth and social class, an inexpensive or inauthentic one carries its own symbolism in the reverse. Jacques's sister, Marie Silvert, is a prostitute and also serves as the opposite of Raoule in her femininity. In the beginning of the fourth chapter, Marie makes a brief appearance while Jacques and de Raittolbe are meeting for the first time, "…Marie Silvert, drapée dans une jupe à volants, la mine haute, l'oeil cynique, entra par la porte de la chambre à coucher. Elle avait aux doigts des bagues en chrysocale ornées des pierres fausses" (Rachilde 24). Instead of simply using a general description to characterize Marie's jewelry Rachilde emphasizes its inauthenticity, using the word "chrysocale," which denotes a metal alloy, also known as pinchbeck, which was typically used for costume jewelry that *resembles* gold, together with her rings' imitation stones. It is Raoule and de Raittolbe who are looking at (or observing) Marie and her jewelry in this scene, hence the emphasis on its inauthenticity, which would most likely be remarked upon in their eyes, given their higher social status. Because Marie belongs to a lower social class as a prostitute, Rachilde is exemplifying how those of the lower class often attempted to imitate the upper classes' adornments. This participation in the cycle of fashion is outlined by Dominique Waquet in five steps, as summarized by Coupeau.

> La première est la naissance ou la remise à jour d'une idée souvent adoptée dans un second temps par un petit groupe, généralement le pouvoir ou les élites. Dans une troisième phase, on parle de transfert en cercles proches du prescripteur. Elle est ensuite

> diffuse, transformée, et adaptée aux morphologies et aux bourses pour être dans un dernier lieu approprié par la masse, généralisée (66).

In contrast to Raoule's diamonds and gold, Marie's rings are clearly inexpensive and are an attempt to imitate those of a higher social class, showcasing her desire to emulate the luxury items that are unattainable for her. The lower social classes, having a deep understanding of the significance to be seen in the nineteenth century, strive to capture others' attention by adorning themselves in jewelry that replicates and emulates the luxuries enjoyed by the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy.

In addition, this description of an abundance of jewelry on Marie's hands exhibits what was *à la mode* at the *fin-de-siècle*, reinforcing the idea that "Séducteur et stimulateur le bijou, parure fatale, expose alors la femme au regard de la société…" (Coupeau 94). She is either angel or devil, a dichotomy that Joan Scott explains in her historical analysis of gender, "…currently available symbols of woman that evoke multiple (and often contradictory) representations—Eve and Mary as symbols of woman, for example, in the Western Christian traditions—but also, myths of light and dark, purification and pollution, innocence and corruption" (1067). For Rachilde, the donning of multiple rings on Marie's fingers represents not only her "danger" as a woman, but especially as a prostitute, a direct contrast from Raoule's diamonds and precious metals that only someone of her aristocratic status could afford. Prostitutes were feared and often met with disgust during the nineteenth century because they were associated with "infectious disease and biological rot" (Bernheimer 4). Once Marie lays eyes upon de Raittolbe, her attempt to seduce him immediately commences, "Elle s'arrêta court devant de Raittolbe et, oubliant la présence *sacrée* de la maîtresse de la maison, elle s'écria : --Dieu ! Quel garçon chic !" (Rachilde 24). It is no mistake that Rachilde describes her multiple inauthentic rings, and then immediately

has Marie flirting with the former soldier. As Coupeau explains, "À la fin du XIXe siècle, la femme parée de nombreux bijoux séduit" (94). Marie sees an opportunity for social ascension in de Raittolbe, perhaps while longing to possess some authentic jewelry of her own. Because he is a member of the aristocracy, if she can seduce him, she will become a *courtesan* as opposed to a regular prostitute. As Bernheimer elucidates, "A 'courtesan' is a prostitute who associates with men of wealth and prestige, is often kept by one or more of these men, and is a public figure, often ostentatiously so" (7). Therefore, the rings symbolize Marie's desire to be *seen*, not only via her adornments but also through the possibility of rising up the ranks—from her lowly, inferior status into a more desirable one. She knows that it would be nearly impossible for her to ascend in the same way that her brother with her reputation as a prostitute, so she looks to de Raittolbe for help. Her only hope is to her elevate her status from that of a common prostitute, to that of a *courtesan* (Bernheimer 7). Thus, her attempt at transformation is signified in her numerous, fake jewels, understanding that her destiny may not be that of luxury and riches in the aristocratic ways, but she can at least strive to elevate herself within her profession. As Coupeau declares, "[La bijouterie] joue un véritable rôle dans la perception que les femmes ont d'elles-mêmes" (95). Marie isn't pretending to be someone that she is not, she is showcasing exactly who she is and what she desires to become.

As Raoule continues her quest to make Jacques belong to her, she offers to marry him in order to give him his "freedom". However, Jacques is indignant at this suggestion, claiming that he does not wish to rehabilitate himself, that he wants to remain below and submissive to her. "…je reviendrai pauvre, je travaillerai, mais quand vous voudrez de moi, je serai encore votre esclave, celui que vous appelez : ma femme !" (Rachilde 32). Rachilde is careful to emphasize that this relationship is not an equal partnership, and that Raoule very much has the upper hand

with reversal of the masculine and feminine gender role that is playing out. The use of the word "esclave" poignantly elicits the chains that enslave Jacques in this relationship, and the fact that he is happy to remain in his state of bondage. Raoule takes Jacques in her lap, soothing him as she would a baby, "Ce triomphe, remporté malgré sa propre conscience, l'enivrait de nouveau" (Rachilde 33). Raoule clearly intends to maintain her control and domination over Jacques, even if it means she must manipulate him to ensure it. However, he falls asleep and is soon woken up by de Raittolbe, who appears disheveled, likely having just spent the night with Marie and who intends to confront Jacques about the prospect of his marrying Raoule. As de Raittolbe gazes upon him in bed, he objectifies him by placing Jacques in a feminine, submissive position:

> Au creux des reins, une ombre d'or faisait ressortir resplendissante la souplesse de la croupe, et l'une de ses jambes, une peu écartée de l'autre, avait une crispation comme en ressentent les femmes nerveuses, après une surexcitation trop prolongée de leurs sens, A ses poignets deux cercles d'or, constellés de brillants, mettaient des éclairs sous les draperies azurées qui s'abaissaient sur lui… (33)

While jewelry symbolizes wealth, social class, seduction, and much more, Rachilde also employs it to underscore its symbolism of slavery—golden bracelets keep Jacques bound and subjugated. While Pelletier suggests that the bracelets are a sign of submission in this scene (281), they are rather a sign of slavery, rendering Jacques in a position where he has no freedom as opposed to some, as the term "submission" suggests. As Coupeau explains:

> Le bijou dit "esclavage" prend également la forme d'un bracelet. Faisant référence aux emprises…du Moyen Âge…sont les témoins de l'asservissement féminin. Réalisés au XIXe siècle à partir de chaîne dit "forçat", une appellation qui explicite sans mal la

> captivité et la subordination dont les femmes sont objet, ces bijoux s'agrémentent de petits cadenas en or…pure allégorie de l'amour qui rend esclave (59).

Even though bracelets are not the only type of jewelry that symbolize slavery, necklaces and wedding rings are also claimed to carry an emblem of bondage (Coupeau, 58), there seems to be no mistake that these bracelets are used to further enhance the image of Jacques's position as "captive" soon after his declaration of wishing to remain Raoule's servant. When de Raittolbe confronts Jacques with indignation about his possible marriage to Raoule, he is so enraged that when he goes to strike him, Jacques attempts to defend himself by inciting the fact that he belongs to Raoule, "Je vous défends de me toucher, monsieur, fit-il froidement, Raoule ne le veut pas" (Rachilde 35). Therefore, knowing that he will not be able to defend himself against the mighty and masculine de Raittolbe, he knows that, as a "slave," his only hope of surviving this attack is to refer to his master, Raoule.

In Chapter 11, Jacques struck up a friendship with the architect, Martin Durand, and invited him to the reception that occurs around the same time as the *Grand Prix*, held by Raoule's aunt, Madame de Vénérande in her Renaissance-inspired mansion in Paris. This significant event was clearly an opportunity to showcase and amuse oneself in order to be seen and simultaneously enjoy the evening. Understanding the symbolic weight that jewelry carries, Rachilde describes Raoule's *toilette* with an emphasis on the jewelry that she sports. It enhances her depiction of Raoule as a kind of goddess who can metamorphose depending upon her audience. Raoule's dress has now shifted to not only that of a more feminine look but also as in the image of a divine being:

> Raoule portait, ce soir-là, une robe de gaze blanche vaporeuse, à traîne de cour, sans un bijou, sans une fleur. Un caprice bizarre lui avait fait lacer sur ses épaules décolletées une

> cuirasse de mailles d'or, d'une finesse telle qu'on eût cru son buste coulé dans un métal liquide. Pour détacher la ligne de chair de la ligne du tissu, un cordon de brillants serpentait et les cheveux noirs, relevés en casque grec, étaient piqués d'un croissant de diamant à pointes phosphorescentes comme des rayons de lune. Le superbe Diane semblait marcher sur un nuage… (Rachilde 43).

The narrator compares Raoule to Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt, as well as to the moon, whose symbols are scintillating in her hair jewels. The phosphorescent points that radiate from the crescent in her hair augment its brilliance, an enduring light that is emitting heat, a power that could only emanate from a celestial being. If we have learned anything about Raoule at this point it is that she is certainly on the hunt, whether it is to subvert traditional gender roles and establish a gender of her own or to render Jacques as her slave, or a combination of the two. She participates in a continual reconnaissance for power, as symbolized by her armor made of gold. However, for a more traditional and masculine figure like de Raittolbe, a goddess Raoule does not make, as we see here: "De Raittolbe, sévère, son masque de Slave impénétrable, songeant à le Gorgone antique lorsqu'il regardait Mlle de Vénérande" (Rachilde 43). The Gorgon to which the narrator is referring is none other than the infamous Medusa. For him, her black hair all piled up on top of her head resembles the snakes that made up Medusa's head, turning whoever was unfortunate enough to gaze upon her into stone. A Medusa was often used in jewelry designs during the fin-de-siècle in 19th century France because of her symbolism as the "femme fatale", the counterpart to the goddess Diana (Athena in Greek mythology) (Coupeau 94). With two contrasting perceptions of Raoule in her *toilette,* simultaneously goddess and monster, Rachilde is exposing the binary ways in which society views women—she is either idealized or villainized, a seductress or a figure of damnation, continuing this play on the dichotomy that was

mentioned earlier with Marie. In Coupeau's work, jewelry functions similarly and can produce fascinating transformations : "Le bijou fin-de-siècle s'étudie comme un moteur de transformations et modifications sociales" (Coupeau 94). In *Monsieur Vénus,* Rachilde not only exposes the binary but also deconstructs it within one character, one who can serve as both Diana and Medusa, using jewelry to help make this distinction between the two.

Because Raoule is "on display" in this scene amongst the most élite in Paris, she switches back to a more feminine role, not at all one of submission but one of dominance. Rachilde's depiction of her as a goddess foreshadows her power in quite literally taking Jacques's fatality in her own hands toward the end of the book. According to Coupeau, this power is symbolized in her jewelry:

> Placés dans une machination séductrice, les bijoux amènent les femmes de ce siècle à se dédier à la distinction et à la prise de pouvoir dans sa dimension privée et relationnelle. Le bijou donne à la femme sa préséance sur l'homme, il se positionne en arme stratégique pour reprendre le contrôle, pour enfin dominer. Avec le joyau fin-de-siècle la beauté féminine fait mal. Ce dernier rutilant, hypnotisant, nous invite dans les entrailles d'une démesure sociale où la femme est alors pensée comme fatale" (95).

Her golden mail or armor establishes her position of power in that it gives her strength like that of a knight. However, it is juxtaposed with her breasts, so finely meshed that they appear to be molded in liquid gold. She is simultaneously a figure of control and of seduction, which is why de Raittolbe, a man of the military, is shaken by her look. With this description, Rachilde is challenging the notion that women do not belong in these positions of power and is establishing a connection between her femininity and her dominance when she writes, "Son petit visage doux, parcheminé, aux yeux d'un bleu de ciel pale, s'abritait sous le blazon de son fauteuil, tandis

qu'au contraire ce blason semblait craquer sous l'effort puissant du bras de Raoule" (43). With her jewels and her gold, the narrator has established Raoule's position as the ultimate "femme fatale" that Rachel Mesch advances regarding the manner in which the author positions herself as such in the late nineteenth-century: "Rachilde, […] cast herself as the perverse antiheroine, the quintessential femme fatale of the most virulently misogynistic Decadent tradition" (162). Thus, Raoule, a mirror to Rachilde's personae, serves as both heroine and antiheroine, countering the previously held notion that women could only be one or the other. For Rachilde, Raoule has transcended her humanity and become a deity, so much so that Jacques's fate rests in her hands, which ultimately does not bode well for him in the end as he dies in a duel with de Raittolbe that was concocted by none other than Raoule.

After this costume ball, jewelry's aura starts to disappear from the novel as Raoule's power over Jacques simultaneously dissipates. They eventually marry, much to her aunt's and French society's chagrin. She is slowly excluded from aristocratic circles. In fact, while a wedding ring is briefly described on Raoule, there is a clear absence of one on Jacques, perhaps symbolizing his newfound freedom as her spouse, who is now free to pursue a relationship with de Raittolbe. Interestingly, Marie's influence seems to head in the opposite direction of Raoule's as she becomes the director of a new brothel. In fact, it is Marie who happily divulges Jacques's infidelity with de Raittolbe, ultimately sealing his fate. As the twisted and tragic conclusion of the novel unfolds and all gender and social class boundaries seem to integrate and synthesize, jewelry is no longer needed as a marker of identity. By tracing jewelry's representation from beginning to end, its symbolic weight in gender roles and social class parallels the continual blurring of boundaries that evolve throughout the novel—those of masculine and feminine roles

in addition to aristocrat versus prostitute. Once these boundaries elide together with the marriage of Raoule and Jacques, jewelry no longer serves its prescribed purpose.

Conclusion

As shown throughout this thesis, the usage of jewelry as a social code and identity marker evolved alongside the political and social transformations that characterized France in the 19th century. From a more restricted and prescribed way to wear jewelry at the commencement of the siècle to a gradual evolution of an unfettered and less constrained style towards the *fin-de-siècle,* jewelry became an influential accessory that delivered a message with its ornamentation. The power of jewelry's multiple representations and symbolism in the selected works analyzed in this thesis needed close readings and historical contexts to discern its financial and sentimental value. It proved its singularity as an accessory that possesses longevity and durability as well. In celebrated French literary works from two eras and three literary traditions, we saw jewelry came to symbolize submission and slavery and denoted marks of distinction, protection, and the desire to be seen. Therefore, by showing the value of jewelry for women of the 19th century, a period that involved the objective to keep them out of public view that ultimately resulted in their resistance and liberation, I challenged the notion that jewelry is just a simple accessory that complements one's *toilette.* Its metaphysical properties warrant being showcased and studied for the way that it influences perception and vice versa. By exploring these works written or set during the Second Empire and the Third Republic, I demonstrated how the social and political transformations that took place in France played a significant role in influencing jewelry's perceptive power by developing a protocol for its adornment as well as by serving to question traditional representations of class and gender.

Due to jewelry's range of functions, attributes and symbolism, future studies are warranted to analyze its financial value and its significant usage as currency for women. While this thesis focused on 19th-century literary works, it is my hope that it serves as a beginning point for continued study in literature and art history--especially painterly works by men and women of 19th- and 20th--century France or 20th-century cinema in order to see how its representations evolved over two hundred years as women continued their fight for further liberation and equal rights. During that time span, as well one witnessed the explosion of visual arts movements that dealt with abstraction, expression, symbolism and surrealism together with unprecedented major world events, namely the World Wars. Lastly, jewelry has great value as a topic of study of literary works and representations in the visual media of the 21st century because of its exhibition of creativity and a reflection of one's individuality.

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