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The Marquis de Cuevas:
Pushing the Boundaries of Self

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The Marquis de Cuevas:
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The Marquis de Cuevas:
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Abstract: Chilean dance impresario Marquis George de Cuevas was born Jorge Cuevas Bartholin (1885-1961) and is best remembered as a fashionable socialite of the 1940s and 50s who married heiress Margaret Rockefeller Strong and founded several ballet companies in Europe and America in the wake of the great Ballet Russes era. This dissertation examines how Cuevas cultivated his fictionalized public persona, an identity that is essentially queer on several levels.

Cuevas participated, reflected and resisted the several labels that were imposed on him. As Spanish aristocrat, American citizen, international ballet patron, Parisian socialite, and heir to the Russian dance avant-gardes, Cuevas distanced himself from his Chilean origins. Proud of having achieved "real" success by triumphing abroad, however, Cuevas was always acutely aware of his shortcomings as a foreigner. Classed as an eccentric other, Cuevas participates in the larger discourse of cosmopolitanism, engaging with the issue of what it means to be foreign in the cities of Paris, New York and Santiago de Chile.

The four chapters that comprise this dissertation explore the ways that boundaries of class, sexuality, gender, race, and citizenship are broken, or momentarily disrupted by

Cuevas. I situate Cuevas's foreign aspirations in the context of the South American obsession with Europe, and Paris in particular. I also examine how Cuevas inhabits the roles of dandy and *flâneur* in an attempt to fit in the modern urban context of Paris. Anxiety regarding the figure of the foreigner and social upstart is perceived in the arguable failure of Cuevas's best-remembered social event, a grand costume ball that was to gather the most fashionable men and women of the international Café Society. Perhaps Cuevas's most successful project was the making of his own chameleonic identity, which emerges in the letters addressed to French-Romanian author Princess Marthe Bibesco, who wrote the libretto for the ballet initially entitled *The Bird Wounded by an Arrow*, which also crucially establishes Cuevas's artistic manifesto.

An account of Cuevas's life and works treads into the swampy terrain of fiction, and this dissertation offers a literary approach that considers Cuevas as a figure of legend.

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Introduction

Before the Curtain: The Marquis de Cuevas as a Literary Character

Whenever I mention in Chile that I have been writing about the Marquis de Cuevas, people from my parents' generation or older will smile knowingly and say, "Ah, Cuevitas!" The diminutive moniker is proffered with a nostalgic tone, and uttered with a sense of admiration and a mild undercurrent of scorn. Cuevitas was a nickname of youth, and Chileans who knew him in this more modest incarnation could never reconcile themselves to his aristocratic title. To my generation the Marquis de Cuevas remains at best a string of words that rings a distant bell. In the social imaginary of Chile he languishes as a somewhat forgotten figure, but one who is periodically trotted out in press articles that mention countrymen who succeeded abroad.

Cuevas had been blessed by fortune all his life, and in this seemed to honor his last name, which is close to the word *cueva*, a slang expression in Chilean Spanish that indicates good luck, as Jorge Edwards notes (389). The charmed life that was observed with envious disdain by Chileans was mostly the product of wonderful charisma and an audacious imagination.

This dissertation examines the intercultural position held by the Europeanized (Latin) American in the mid-twentieth century as illustrated by Chilean dance impresario Jorge Cuevas Bartholin (1885-1961), better known as the Marquis George de Cuevas, who married heiress Margaret Rockefeller Strong and founded several ballet companies in the United States and in Europe in the wake of the great Ballet Russes era. I am

particularly interested in how Cuevas cultivates his fictionalized public persona and uses the company as a way to live in a fantasy world of his own fashioning. I posit that this desire to invent his identity is essentially queer on several levels, understanding queer as deviant and resistant to the heteronormative, and as eccentric—odd, peripheral, other. David Halperin argues that "Queer is . . . *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. . . . [it] demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative" (62). This field of studies also considers sexuality in transnational terms, "investigat[ing] the formation of sexuality alongside race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship and diasporic identities in order to demonstrate the significant ways in which sexual and racial identities are inextricable" (Hall and Jagose xvii). This more inclusive concept of queer as defined by location and temporality will be vital to my analysis of the way that Cuevas constructed his identity abroad.

Cuevas was frequently considered to be a source of embarrassment, to his country of origin, to the Rockefeller family into which he married, and to his adopted countries of citizenship, the United States and France. He is thus permanently being disowned, even as he pushes back, forcing the world to acknowledge his existence. In this sense, I consider how Cuevas reflected and resisted the several labels that were imposed on him in terms of nationality, citizenship, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and occupation. These chapters will examine how he navigated labels such as Chilean, Spanish, American, Parisian, husband, father, dandy, Marquis, Rockefeller son-in-law, socialite, and entrepreneur; markers that he sometimes acknowledged and more frequently disavowed.

There is clear evidence that suggests that the Marquis was homosexual: he surrounded himself with beautiful young men and his union to Margaret was marked by physical distance and personality clashes; several contemporary articles speculate on his sexual orientation and maliciously drop the names of his protégés. The Marquis himself writes rather candidly in his correspondence with friends about several male infatuations, although no letters reveal any long-term same-sex relationships.

The Marquis seems to have loved his ballet company, and considered his dancers as his family. Within the space of this stage, he had a chance to recreate his aesthetic ideals. His elegant refinement, however, was achieved at the cost of backstage vulgarity, namely, financial difficulties that meant constant squabbles with Margaret and the Rockefeller family over money. Cuevas himself also embraced performance in his own life, consciously adopting several, often conflicting identities. He successfully reclaimed the Spanish marquisate de Piedra Blanca de la Guana, won a lawsuit against a French newspaper that mocked his nobility and, despite becoming an American citizen when he married, continued to use the title informally for himself and his dance company. As Spanish aristocrat, American citizen, international ballet patron, Parisian socialite, and heir to the Russian dance avant-gardes, Cuevas distanced himself from his Chilean origins. He became indeed a foreigner everywhere. Arguably, he had always been a foreigner, even in Chile, where he never found himself at home as a young man; after leaving for Europe to find his fortune he only returned to Chile once, to show off his company of dancers in a South American tour. Proud of having achieved "real" success

by triumphing abroad, however, Cuevas was always acutely aware of his shortcomings as a foreigner.

In his old age, the Marquis gathered around him an impressive set of admirers—and panderers—who sought to continue his legacy. Perhaps the most notorious was his young Chilean "nephew" Raymundo Larraín, who sought to imitate point by point the example of his "uncle"—even seeking a nobility title, which, despite being refused, did not hinder him from adding the noble "de" before his last name. Larraín became a choreographer and designer for Cuevas and, at the latter's death, to everyone's dismay, also married Margaret Rockefeller Strong.

Cuevas's improbable story of rags to riches is important because it touches on the lives and careers of many of the key figures in the dance environment of the time, and provides an epilogue for the era of the Ballets Russes. His American company, which included an international cast of stars, held a distinct position within the cosmopolitan world of dance in the mid-twentieth century, which coexisted with more radically innovative dance troupes. To a certain extent, the company also made the transition between classical dance and contemporary dance possible within a financially viable institution. In this light, the theme of temporality appears throughout the dissertation, especially in the Neoclassical inspiration that served his costume ball. Cuevas's company portrays the genius for spectacle that audiences of the time craved; a reassuring performance that promoted new talents in dazzling productions that aimed at pleasing, and thereby teaching the finer tastes of life. The Marquis's philosophy could be summed as an attempt to *éduquer les bourgeois*, to endow the middle class audience member with

the aristocratic sensibility that Cuevas fought his whole life to have the financial and artistic means to express. In this light, my dissertation also considers Cuevas's post-Romantic literary affinities, and understands his idealized aesthetic aspirations within the frame of authors like Baudelaire and Wilde.

Classed as an eccentric other, Cuevas participates in the larger discourse of cosmopolitanism, engaging with the issue of what it means to be foreign in the cities of Paris, New York and Santiago de Chile. The four chapters that comprise this dissertation explore the ways that boundaries of class, sexuality, gender, race, and citizenship are broken, or momentarily disrupted by Cuevas.

Chapter 1 places Cuevas's foreign aspirations in the context of the South American obsession with Europe, and Paris in particular. The Chilean archetype of the *siútico* captures the arriviste snob of the early twentieth century who breaches the boundaries of Chilean upper class society in a desperate attempt to become authentically Parisian, often losing not only his money but also his life in the attempt. Specifically, I examine this conflict in Alberto Blest Gana's *Los trasplantados* (The Transplants, 1904), Joaquín Edwards Bello's *Criollos en París* (Creoles in Paris, 1933), and Cuevas's only novel *El amigo Jacques* (Jacques, the Friend; 1912).

Chapter 2 looks at the roles of dandy and *flâneur* and understands them as occupying opposite viewing positions that respond to conflicting desires within the modern city; the first seeks to be the centre of attention, and the second, to anonymously record what goes on around him. Through the creation of his ballet company, which acts as an extension of his public self, Cuevas acts both as spectacle and spectator. This

chapter focuses particularly on how these roles emerged and were historically developed in Paris, where Cuevas primarily lived, as a foreign *siútico* who imitates the aristocratic stance of his friends and acquaintances to climb the social ladder.

Chapter 3 focuses on Cuevas's best-remembered social event, a grand costume ball with a pastoral theme that was supposed to gather the most fashionable men and women of the cosmopolitan Café Society of the 1950s. This arguably failed party was an extravagantly luxurious affair generally viewed with disapproving eyes by the world. I argue that the anxiety surrounding the event responded not only to a sense of moral outrage at the expenses incurred, but also to how Cuevas trespassed on unspoken boundaries of social propriety, actually grounded on the *carnivalesque* potential of costume balls and masquerades.

My last chapter focuses on the fragmented corpus of letters assembled by examining the archives of different artists and socialites with whom Cuevas came in touch; within these, I focus mainly on the correspondence held with French-Romanian author Princess Marthe Bibesco, who wrote the libretto for the ballet initially entitled *L'oiseau blessée d'une flèche* (The Bird Wounded by an Arrow), which crucially establishes Cuevas's artistic manifesto. These letters reveal a consciously created persona, and show the rhetorical strategies that Cuevas uses to establish social prominence. Written mostly in the last decade of his life, Cuevas's correspondence presents an epistolary voice that can be described as queer in its feminine, bird-like posturing; it is the voice of a man who bemoans his frail health and old age, and

illustrates the violent encounter with what Kristeva understands as the abject horror of death.

These chapters thus explore how Cuevas uses discourse to frame his identity, ultimately pushing the limits between fact and fiction. They also portray our very human dependence on these fragile and illusory borders that shape our sense of selfhood.

Sources and Methodological Approach

Most histories of twentieth century dance overlook Cuevas, and mention him only as a secondary figure marginally connected to the Ballets Russes. There is very little readily available information about the creative development of the Cuevas ballet companies, which, though not particularly innovative, were key in connecting and funding dancers and other artists who were ground breaking.

My methodological approach is mainly based on a historicist reconstruction of the legend of the Marquis, through archival sources that include personal correspondence, as well as press clippings and material from the performances of his ballet companies. In my discussions of specific works within the repertoire of the company, I have selected for the most part those that were original creations, often with renowned librettists and choreographers, since these show a creative effort and artistic choice that is much greater and more revealing than the staging of canonical ballets.

Considering the notion of queerness, I take into account not merely the rumoured sexual orientation of the Marquis, but, more importantly, the identity creation of a man who invented himself anew in order to fit in the highest social circles, looking at how he

conforms and how he deviates from the norm. Judith Butler's concept of *performativity* as a sustained performance of gender identity takes on several layers of complexity in a man who not only created mythological versions of himself, but who also set up different stages within which to re-enact these performances. In her chapter on "Subversive Bodily Acts," in *Gender Trouble*, Butler proposes that gender identity as a coherent whole is a fantasy that is produced on the surface of the body, by means of repeated acts, gestures, etc., i.e. by means of a sustained performance. In Cuevas's case, the performance is frequently undertaken in a conscious manner, and results in an identity that is eternally shifting, and not entirely consistent.

Biographical sources on the Marquis de Cuevas are scarce and rather poor in their analytical considerations, despite the fact that he was a famous face in the European social landscape, especially during the 40s and 50s. There is one recent biography written in French by Gérard Mannoni and published in 2003, which gives a good overall description of the extensive touring of the company and of the Marquis's picturesque life. It contains interviews with some of the dancers of his company, but offers no sources, and neglects to take a longer look at the years that he lived in Chile. Given how Cuevas thrived on making a legend of his life, the veracity of many of the stories remains uncertain. There are also two other books that consider the Marquis directly: Pierre Daguerre's *Le Marquis de Cuevas* (1954), and Patrick de Saint-Leu's *Le Marquis de Cuevas, mon ami* (1956), which position their accounts from the point of view of friendship. Both books, published during Cuevas's lifetime, offer a very brief account of his life, but include poetic elements that render them closer to lyrical homages than fact-

driven biographical accounts. In this sense, my research for this dissertation sheds light on several key aspects of Cuevas's life that have hitherto gone unrecognized, and contributes to understanding the significance of his role as a dance entrepreneur and ubiquitous socialite in a comparative historical and cultural context.

Many of my claims are based on archival material, especially on the letters found among the papers of artists with whom Cuevas corresponded. The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center has correspondence between the Romanian writer Princess Marthe Bibesco and the Marquis. The bulk of the correspondence is from the late fifties, and a lot of it discusses the ballet that they are creating together. The Ransom Center also houses a collection of Marquis de Cuevas related material, which comprises clippings, photographs and programs from the 40s, 50s and early 60s. This includes reviews from *Dance News* and other articles that trace the professional and social activities of the Marquis and his dance companies. I also researched correspondence to and from Cuevas held at the Rockefeller Archive Center, specifically in the Nelson Rockefeller, and the Charles Strong Papers. The Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Public Library holds the archives for Cuevas's first dance company, Ballet International (1944-47), as well as several other artists' collections that contain correspondence from the Marquis.

A visit to Biarritz and Paris to research the collections of local critics and dancers who belonged to his company was unable to be carried out, and will be left for further study.

Comparative Literature and The Marquis de Cuevas

The accounts of Cuevas's life and work do not fit comfortably in any one discipline and it is partly because of this that I became interested in using him as a focus for my dissertation in Comparative Literature. As a world socialite, Cuevas is often considered as an amusing historical footnote. He is a relevant if not radical figure in the dance-scape of the twentieth century, who contributed to the success and endurance of dancers, choreographers, musicians, and artists in general. As a writer, Cuevas published a rather bad novel in Spanish, and, in French, an Oriental tale that seems to have been lost, and a book of sentimental poetry, none of which make for a riveting monographic literary essay on their own.

Perhaps Cuevas's most successful project was the making of his own chameleonic identity. His public persona has been captured in a fragmented way by the international media. In his letters, spread among the literary and artistic archives of the world—chances are, if he met someone, he corresponded with them—, Cuevas reveals a touchingly fragile private persona. In many ways, however, an account of Cuevas's life and works exceeds these objective facts, and treads into the swampy terrain of fiction.

Cuevas's outlandish adventures often made him the perfect literary character. Several contemporary writers included references to Cuevas in their publications: Edmundo Balmaceda writes about him in the nostalgic historical account of Chilean society, *Un mundo que se fué…* (A World that Is Gone); Daniel de la Vega, who won the Chilean National Prize for literature and journalism, consecrated one of his articles to Cuevas and his Biarritz ball; while prominent Chilean intellectual best known under the

pseudonym of Alone also discusses him in his *Pretérito imperfecto: memorias de un crítico literario* (Past Imperfect: Memoires of a Literary Critic, 1976). Author Joaquín Edwards Bello wrote about his childhood friend in a chronicle that heads the posthumous collection *El Marqués de Cuevas y su tiempo* (The Marquis de Cuevas and his Time, 1974); Cuevas also appears in his novel *Criollos en París* as the character that bears the similar-sounding name of Dueñas. In turn, author Jorge Edwards writes of his uncle Joaquín in his novelized biographical account *El inútil de la familia* (The Useless One of the Family, 2004), which also includes Cuevas as a major character. Cuevas also makes cameo appearances in biographies of such varied artists as Paul Bowles, Salvador Dalí, Serge Lifar, and Maria Callas, where his name is dropped as mentor, friend, rival or conspicuous audience member, respectively.

Cuevas himself was a magnificent storyteller, and had ways of making literature infuse his life with new meaning. At his flat in Paris, visitors would be greeted by Orphée, the butler/secretary; apparently, Orphée had a more prosaic name, which Cuevas had disregarded in favor of this mythological designation that turned his home into a space of legend (Daguerre 10). The name suggests a possible Cocteau reference, one that significantly turns the butler into the artist, and begs the question of what role Cuevas is embodying. In this light, it is interesting that Cuevas's early ambitions included such wildly conflicting professions as policeman, monk and actor (Braggiotti 43). These aspirations seem significant for a man who played several roles, and who rejoiced in creating drama in his life. The fact that Cuevas chose to pour his artistic sensibilities into his ballet company seems at times almost like an accident; he could very well have been

an actor, he certainly had a flair for the dramatic, and gave some very convincing performances in life; on the other hand, as he declared on several occasions, he did live a rather ascetic life, and made his bedroom into a monastic cell of sorts, to which he retired to work, and meditate on death. The consideration that Cuevas might have engaged in a policeman's work is perhaps more far-fetched, although the Marquis certainly displayed a desire for wielding power, if of a rather more royal sort, and posed as the King of Nature for his costume ball.

In a letter to Marthe Bibesco, Cuevas referred to his dancers as his children, but also as his artistic creations: "I am happy for my artists, who I formed and who I consider as children who belong to me, or as ideas that I would have voiced and which people to whom I would have communicated them would have found brilliant" (19 Feb. 1950).[1] His son John de Cuevas remembers that in the last month of life, his father told stories of his life that were partly fictionalized (*Le Bal du siècle*). Somewhere along the line, Cuevas became a fictional character to others, as well as to himself. In fact, Cuevas's life often reads as a fragmented novel, full of contradictory information and evocative gaps.

Rosella Hightower, the most representative star of the ballet company, argued that Cuevas was ultimately "an artist in life." Her statement is illuminating to the way that I chose to conceive this project. Thus, this dissertation offers a literary approach to a culturally relevant figure, but it is also a study of the ways that literature and art inform life, or perhaps, as Wilde puts it, in the way that life imitates art.

Chapter 1

Chileans in Paris: A De(con)structive Ideal

Jorge Cuevas Bartholin grew up in a modest middle-class family in Santiago, Chile, at the turn of the nineteenth century. By the mid-twentieth century, he had become the extraordinary Marquis de Cuevas, a famous Parisian socialite who owned a ballet company and was married to a Rockefeller heiress. He had achieved celebrity status in the *real* world, the world of cosmopolitan cities like Paris and New York, where fashions are born, not imitated.[2] In this first chapter, I will show how Cuevas's aspirations to triumph abroad were certainly not exclusive or original, but very much part of the Chilean—and South American—desire to participate in a world—or city—that was seen as exciting and alive. This ideal required an urban setting, and constituted an imaginary created by a cosmopolitan, urban, upper class society within a modern city. The prodigious transformation of the plain Cuevas into the titled Marquis can be located in the South American *mal de Paris*, the obsessive compulsion to live in the French capital, even if it meant paying a high price, or sacrificing your life in the process. Pedro Salinas calls this "the Parisian complex," which exercises its charm "from Russia to Argentina." It is "the Light of Paris, that burns and finishes the weak, by millions; [but] which illuminates and directs the strong, towards their oeuvre";[3] it is that which offers hope of greatness, of sensuality, of easy life, and intellectual rigor, of drunken delight, of freedom, of pleasure (Salinas 28). In this chapter, I will explore how this concept is specifically developed in Chile, where the fixation is taken to its logical extreme by the

specifically Chilean archetype of the *siútico*, the *arriviste* who ploughs ahead in search of higher social footing. In his study on the *siútico*, Óscar Contardo argues that the Chilean type emerges in an urban context, and refers originally to the person who aspires to gain access to upper class salons, disregarding the social boundaries that separate them. The *siúticos* thus develop camouflage as an art, and will make themselves as useful as they can to the elite in order to mollify their fear and rejection (24). In light of Cuevas's European aspirations, Contardo considers the *siútico* as a local version of the universal social upstart (27).

In this context, Cuevas appears as one of many who fight to gain access to this world of pleasure and luxury that is the European Belle Époque. The aspiration is metaphorically posited in Baudelaire's "Invitation to the Voyage" in which he invites readers to travel to an ideal "there" where "all is order and beauty, / Luxury, peace, and pleasure."[4] In the first stanza of the poem Baudelaire entices his interlocutor by describing the freedom allowed in a space that is driven by Eros/Thanatos: "to love and die / In a country that resembles you"[5]—a place to escape from the modern materialist ugliness and vulgarity, where your being is in harmony, where you are not a foreigner, where you fit in; in other words, a land for your spiritual and aesthetic aspirations. The poet constructs this ideal place as an Orientalized fantasy; for South Americans, the land of pleasure and aesthetic ideal went no further East than Paris. Interestingly, in his poem Baudelaire asks his reader to literally "dream of the sweetness / Of going there"[6] implying an imaginary journey, perhaps through reading, certainly through fantasy. This element seems crucial in maintaining the illusion of perfection; once the journey is

actualized, the idealization is necessarily spoiled, thus bringing about *parisitis*, a disease whereby the sick person is aware of the illusion, but has already become addicted to the pleasures offered by the city.

This struggle to reach the ideal can literally be to the death, as recorded poignantly in the novel *Los trasplantados* (The Transplants, 1904) by Alberto Blest Gana. Somewhat later, Joaquín Edwards Bello records a similar struggle in *Criollos en París* (Creoles in Paris, 1933). Edwards Bello, a childhood friend of Jorge Cuevas, portrays the latter's social triumph in this novel, in which the character of Jorge Dueñas (code name for Jorge Cuevas) appears as a foil to the protagonist, who attempts to cross the border into French society. Cuevas's only literary incursion, the novella *El amigo Jacques* (Jacques, the Friend; 1912), in turn, makes a character out of his friend Edwards Bello, and offers insight into the psychological state of mind of the Chilean bourgeoisie and its idealized views of Europe.

It is worth noting that the first two titles, *The Transplants* and *Creoles in Paris*, invoke a hybridized identity that makes the traveler not merely foreign, since it understands France, or perhaps Paris, as part of Chileans' inherent identity. This might be due, as will be discussed below, to the way in which the city and its culture has been incorporated into the identity of upper class Chileans, who spoke French, and considered the customs of Parisians to be their own. There is also the suggestion that by actually visiting Paris, their identity becomes hybrid, and so they are no longer foreigners to Paris, but cross into an in-between territory. The consequence for these transplants is that they become uprooted, and feel partly alien to both countries.

The three novels discussed in this chapter have in common a penchant for sentimentality, with plots that deal with the romantic misadventures of their protagonists, whose aspirations are trumped by social pressure. All three texts offer more or less trenchant criticisms of the economic forces that guide marriage, and find in friendship a more just and disinterested type of relationship. The frustration present in one or more of the characters is inscribed as a constant lack, as a search that never quite attains its desire, where expectations are never entirely met by reality: even if he gets the girl, the (anti)hero never takes the social standing he wants. I would like to posit this unattainability in the deferred pleasure conceived along the axis of the ideal versus the spleen, as imagined by Baudelaire.

Although the cultural hybridity presented by these characters contrasts with Baudelaire's invocation of himself as the paradigmatic local *flâneur*, the division between ideal and spleen is curiously appropriate in the contrast between France and Chile. France or, more specifically, Paris, becomes an idealized place of culture, but also pleasure, the ultimate fantasy for Latin Americans, much like Baudelaire's Orientalized state of perfect ease. Even if the two images of the ideal do not exactly line up, they are sustained by the same impulse of escapist pleasure, and are contrasted to the same feelings of spleen, associated with tedium, despair, disgust, disease, and death. For South Americans, the native country will bring up a sense of spleen, an image that they seek to escape, but with which they are constantly struggling, as they face poverty and rejection in Paris. Spleen will also emerge, given their hybrid identities, in the realization that the real Paris does not live up to their expectations, a confrontation that actually troubled both locals and

foreigners in the post-Haussmannian city. In "The Old Paris" (El Viejo París), Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío describes a series of lithographs of caricaturist Albert Robida, who reconstructs his vision of the city before the mid-nineteenth century renovations began. Darío describes the glorious past of Paris with nostalgia, and confesses that modern fashions confound him and strain his Romantic imagination (168).

For Baudelaire, the spleen/ideal split ran as a crack enacted by the experience of modernity and, although Cuevas appears on the scene half a century later, the dichotomy is still relevant at the coming of technological age in South America, which at the turn of the century was only just finding ways to express its identity. Crucially, *modernismo,* the Hispanic American artistic movement of the time, is more closely allied to Aestheticist and Symbolist strains than to Anglo-American Modernism (which in Spanish translates more accurately as *vanguardia*). *Modernismo* can be inscribed in the context of the changes that the recently constituted (South) American nations are experiencing as they grapple to define their cultural identities and launch their young societies into modernization. Baudelaire had shown that the fascination with modernity came with a paradoxical melancholia that is allied to the realization of how the cityscape has violently changed, "the melancholic historical experience that is indistinguishable from modernity" (Chambers 108). In this sense, Spanish *modernismo* also offers a critical view of the mechanized, soulless consequences of some of the brutal changes of modern life, even as it experiences its fascinating allure. Critic Ramón Acevedo defines *modernismo* as "a profound change in the spiritual climate . . . a reaction against the atmosphere created by philosophical positivism, scientific and vital materialism, and the realist bourgeois spirit"

(7-8), which cultivates instead an idealistic attitude "dedicated to the cultivation of the highest values of the spirit" (9).[7] In Latin America and in Chile, in particular, French culture and literature were appreciated as the greatest achievement of this cultivation of the spirit, a fascination that drove the upper class to embark on educational tours to Paris.

Parisian Culture in Chilean Identity Construction

At the turn of the nineteenth century, at the far end of South America, closed off from its neighbors behind the natural barrier of the Andean mountains, Chile remained isolated and seemingly aloof from the excitement of the Belle Époque. The renowned Chilean literary critic Hernán Díaz Arrieta (1891-1984), best known by his pseudonym Alone, offers the leading view regarding the country's (self)perceived image within South America at the turn of the century: "we were a military people, poor, sober, organized, virile, with scarce sensibility, with no refinement, of uniform and plain tone visible to the least penetrating eyes. This was discussed so often that we could not ignore it: 'a people of historians and jurists . . . the stupidest part of America'" (*Pretérito Imperfecto* 175).[8] Despite this negative perception, Chile's economic growth during this time was steady. Historian Soledad Reyes del Villar maintains that the country, at the turn of the century, was relatively prosperous. The wealth provided by sodium nitrate (Chilean saltpeter), which had been mined since the Pacific War against Peru and Bolivia (1879-1883) had turned Chile into "the first power in the South Pacific" (12).[9] It is important to consider also that Valparaiso was a port of vital strategic importance in South America, at a time when the Panama Canal had not yet opened. This economic

growth meant a development of industry and a strong urbanization, which changed the traditional agrarian structure that had been prevalent in the country (12). Because of its political and economic stability towards the end of the nineteenth century, Chile was an example in the continent, and was compared to Germany as well as England, its citizens often called "the Prussians of South America" (12)[10] and "the British South Americans" (13).[11]

In 1891, a violent civil war rocked the country's political stability, but allowed for the emergence of a parliamentarian regime, with party representation and reduced presidential power. Reyes emphasizes the profound overhaul of values that this meant for the oligarchy: from considering its "powerful spiritual superiority, its calm and austere life, the pride of its lineage, and the importance placed on the surname," upper class society progressively changed its focus to "the ostentation of wealth as a criteria of individual and social assessment" (14).[12] Against a setting of drab austerity, the desire for glamour burned increasingly brighter in the local *aristocracia criolla*[13] of Basque surnames who aspired to legitimize their European origins of nobility. Ranked below the Iberian *peninsulares*—settlers who came directly from Spain—the *criollos* were of Spanish descent but born in the colonies. After the Independence, Chilean *criollos* became the leading class, and those that bore Basque surnames were usually held in the highest regard, and were frequently members of the local aristocracy.[14] Fortune seekers in general also wished to better their social and economic positions, as did fledgling writers who witnessed the cultural charms of the Belle Époque from afar with eager eyes. Interestingly, this heterogeneous cultural map of Chile is not taken into account by

Parisians, as shall be discussed presently; in turn, France is imagined by these Chileans as a pure, stable identity to which they might have access. The Chilean elite looked to Europe for its architecture, and sought out French and Italian furniture, statues, paintings, and fashion, which eclipsed earlier austerity in dress and attitude: "The European, and especially the French, started to strongly dominate the everyday life of aristocratic Santiago, which aspired to break with the 'small town' mentality [and advocated] new ideals such as luxury, ostentation, trips, and leisure time, an intense social life and the desire to obtain whatever material effects came from abroad" (14).[15] French and British fashion ruled, the Opera was the center of social display, and French was spoken in the halls of certain upper class mansions as a second language for the cultural elite, illustrating how eager it was "to bring a piece of Paris to the atmosphere of Santiago" (62).

In his comprehensive overview of Chilean history, Gonzalo Vial offers a discussion on "foreignization" and Chilean "transplants," in which he argues that "Frenchification is contemporary to the emancipation. However, the fin de siècle accentuates [this phenomenon], together with turning it more frivolous and fragile" (651).[16][17] Indeed, Vial briefly mentions Jorge Cuevas among these Chilean Frenchified transplants (654). Frenchification had a rich history in Hispanic culture. When Napoleon placed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne, the small number of Spanish politicians who supported this French king was pejoratively called "Afrancesados" (Frenchified). A distinction is often made between this more active political Frenchification, and the more general cultural process experienced by society at large (Vaca de Osma 129). During the

Peninsular War, the word had connotations of treason, and was used as an insult in Spain (Castro Oury 43). In turn, this conflict with France weakened the Spanish empire and aided in the independence of its colonies; as such, the admiration towards the French was exalted, particularly considering its political creed of freedom. However, the use of the adjective *Frenchified* to denote effeminacy continued to be widely used in South America, especially to denote those who affected these customs in excess.

As this context illustrates, Chile was not alone in this yearning for the Old Continent. The draw towards Europe, and Paris, in particular, as a cultural mecca, was widespread throughout Latin America. In a discussion of Chileans and exile, writer Jorge Edwards[18] maintains that "Every Chilean writer, artist, and intellectual felt it was essential to travel to the centers of world culture. This was a Chilean obsession" (qtd. in Gass 6). The obsession was replicable in most South American countries, but the recent Chilean prosperity made the European dream newly accessible to its wealthier citizens. In his *Traité de la vie elegante* (1830), Balzac offers an unequivocal maxim in this respect: "He who does not frequently visit Paris, will never be truly elegant" (ch. 17).[19] Decades later, for South Americans, Paris still held sway as the place that the elite and its children considered as finishing school and playground.

Alone noted his own childhood love of France and its literature at this time, observing how the affinity was discouraged in his home and at school, for its anti-religious stance, since "the French inspired horror as a symbol of incredulity" (126).[20] For Alone, the broadening of literary and cultural horizons in the period coincides with the dawn of a modern national literary era. Several Chilean writers did in fact travel

abroad to Europe in search of adventure and cultural blessing. Under the pseudonym of Iris—the Greek messenger of the gods—Inés Echeverría de Larraín (1868-1949),[21] who was part of the highest aristocratic circles in Chile, left for Europe accompanying her husband on a diplomatic mission. Echeverría's journal and chronicles were written in French; indeed, as a child, she had only read in this language, since "she ignored that in Spanish one could say profound things" (11).[22] Novelist María Luisa Bombal (1910-1980) was sent to a boarding school in Paris at an early age, and later attended the Sorbonne; influenced by the cultural vanguard movements she encountered, Bombal's initial writings were in French, a language she loved and that at first seemed closest to her, since she had received most of her formal education in French (Guerra-Cunningham 12-3). Poet Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948) lived in Paris for many years, where he founded the Creationist movement and got in touch with many Dadaist artists. Alone in fact attributes the violent reaction against family upbringing and religious background present in Huidobro's Creationist poetry to this first trip to Paris (158). Enrique Lihn suggests that Huidobro might have written his poetry in French when he first settled in Paris, "so as not to corner himself in a peripheral language" (qtd. in W. Rojas 16).[23] French might also have been used to affect a sense of superiority towards a country that he wanted to leave behind. Jorge Edwards recalls how Huidobro "on one of his travels back to Chile . . . was asked by a journalist how it felt to be home [and] he replied (in French) that he felt *très bien*, because Chile was his second homeland. His first was France" (qtd. in Gass 6).[24]

All these writers had to negotiate the way that Paris lived up to its mythical revolutionary potential, and constituted a threat to the peaceful status quo of social order in Latin America, with its ingrained notions of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. In the three novels explored in this chapter, the effect of Paris is often represented in terms of the trope of Old World vice versus New World innocence. As characters try to get a taste of the delights of the aristocratic Belle Époque, they are forced to lose their innocence.

In its quest to secure an affiliation with a global (first world) community, which would raise its status and make Chile part of the real world, Chilean aristocracy would turn to France, with its highly-regarded ideals of democracy, refined civilization and cultural edginess. The search for this distinction, however, must be examined vis-à-vis the anxiety regarding foreign influences absorbed in the process of modernity. This anxiety is especially present in Alberto Blest Gana's *Los trasplantados*, a turn of the century novel that deals with the evil consequences of embracing foreign customs without retaining critical distance. Blest Gana, the most famous exponent of Chilean Realism (also called *costumbrismo*), offers a detailed depiction of a family of wealthy Chileans who travel to Paris and who, neglecting the values of their native country, adopt the artificial manners of aristocratic Parisians. Blest Gana himself had lived in Paris for five years as a child and, later in life was appointed Head of the Chilean Legation to the city in 1869, a post he occupied for twenty years. He never returned to Chile (Poblete 171); he died in Paris in 1920 and is buried in the Père Lachaise Cemetery (250).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Joaquín Edwards Bello also engages with this search for identity in *Criollos en París*, a struggle that crystalizes abroad, where

characters are forced to question their core national values in the face of aggressive discrimination. Edwards Bello was the grandson of Andrés Bello, one of the founding fathers of the nation, and was considered as heir to the intellectual aristocracy of the country: "He belonged to a circle of rich, elegant, handsome young men, who came from a good family, who had frequently lived abroad in Paris and turned the heads of the girls in the street" (Alone 101)[25]—in other words, he seemed to be comfortably placed at the very heart of the Chilean elite. In light of this, the publication of his novel *El inútil* (The Useless One) in 1910 caused great controversy, not only given the "crude sexual references," but, more importantly, due to "the allusions to close family members," and the pessimistic stance "against his class, against people, against everything" (102).[26] This cynical outlook, a pose in many ways internationalist and even anti-nationalist, was considered ungrateful especially given his privileged social position. Edwards Bello was more or less forced into exile after the publication of this novel. Although he would eventually return home, Edwards Bello "was always confessing the tragedy of being an expatriate from his land, that of the solitary man who is guarded among the crowd" (237).[27] The lament of the (self) exiled becomes central to his novel *Criollos en París*, which describes the fortunes of Pedro Plaza, a young man who is addicted to gambling and interacts with French and Chilean families in Paris. The novel pits the values of traditional Chilean goodness against the pitfalls of the fake artificial grandeur of Paris. A minor, yet crucial character within the novel is the Chilean socialite Jorge Dueñas, who is a school friend of Pedro Plaza, the main hero, and appears as the only foreigner who finds the key to success within Parisian society. For writer Jorge Edwards—Joaquín Edwards

Bello's nephew—the character of Jorge Dueñas should be read as a code name for Jorge Cuevas, a figure of success that seemed to haunt the writer. As Jorge Edwards explains in the semi-fictionalized account of his uncle's life, *El inútil de la familia* (The Useless One of the Family, 2004), "all the first narrative texts of Joaquín Edwards Bello are partial self-portraits, apparent biographies: if you dig a little, if you put aside the details, they are, in fact, autobiographies, more or less altered. We could add: disguised confessions" (187).[28]

The question of the enigmatic boundary between fiction and reality is key to considering Jorge Cuevas. Despite writing only one semi-autobiographical novella, Cuevas arguably spent his whole life creating himself as a character—actualizing Oscar Wilde's witty notion of putting his talent in his work and his genius in his life. Much like the characters that appear in the novels in this chapter, which portray how Chileans struggled to find a way to fit into upper-class society in Paris, Cuevas persistently sought to construct his identity by defining himself against the European paradigm of civilization.

The real Jorge Cuevas Bartholin (1885-1961) was the youngest son of eight siblings, born to the third marriage of politician and diplomat Eduardo Cuevas Avaria. The father's first two marriages had been to two sisters, daughters of Chilean President José Tomás Ovalle, and had brought him one daughter and eight children, respectively; his third wife, Carmela Bartholin y Guarda Bazán, was of Danish descent; her father had been a count who emigrated to the South of Chile, presumably as a small businessman—this was the only aristocratic link of which Jorge was initially aware. Eduardo Cuevas

had been Minister of Chile in France for two years during the government of Napoleon III, before Jorge was born. Although respectable, the family's income remained modest; in any case, Jorge did not get to know his father very well, since Eduardo died when he was 12 years old. There is one anecdote that sheds light on Eduardo's personality, and perhaps signals that his son's resourcefulness was a family trait. Cuevas was a renowned politician who was acting as Business Attaché in Paris in 1860. Apparently, Eduardo Cuevas, who bore a surprising resemblance to Napoleon III (see fig. 1), caught the attention of the Emperor himself, who asked the Chilean whether his mother had not visited France some years ago. The irony implicit in the question was apparent to Eduardo Cuevas who responded, "No, Majesty, it was my father!" an ingenuity which the Emperor had greatly celebrated (Balmaceda 125). Indeed, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's uncertain paternity has been the source of great gossip; his mother Hortense despised her husband, and the child she bore, Louis Napoleon, might actually have been the son of one of her lovers (Bierman 3).

Fig. 1. Photograph of Eduardo Cuevas Avaria (left, "Reseña bibliográfica"), Jorge Cuevas's father. The resemblance with Napoleon III (right) is noticeable (Lejeune).

Although Cuevas's mother would play an important role in her son's imagination, there is no available information on her. She seems to have died in 1921, when Cuevas was already living in Paris (Avendaño). All we know is that young Jorge Cuevas lived on the second floor of a humble apartment with his two elder sisters, both spinsters; one of them sold hats and the other worked as a shopkeeper.[29] An incident where Jorge was not allowed to eat a dessert intended for guests at a family dinner presumably marked his young life and prompted him to find the means to live comfortably, even luxuriously (Edwards Bello 20).

Cuevitas's grandiose aspirations were considered to be improbable, and the affected mannerisms of the *siútico* cast him in a ridiculous light. For Contardo, the diminutive name functioned as a softened insult that allowed for no response, turning Cuevas into "an anecdote more than a human being" (165).[30] Unable to commit to the prosaic idea of earning a living in a traditional manner, Cuevas took on several odd jobs, although the only activity that he enjoyed and in which he seemed to excel was that of amusing the elite circle with his stories and generally being of service to them (167). Fernando Balmaceda del Río remembers him as "a modest young man, rather poor, but with a refined and cultivated manner, who delighted [his] grandmother because of his good French [and] salon gossip, and [who had] such goodwill that he volunteered to clean the panes of those windows that were too high up for the plump arms of Rosalía [the maid]" (318).[31]

Jorge Cuevas made it his business to befriend those who could help him climb the social ladder, and Joaquín Edwards Bello was one of the young people he encountered in

his promenades downtown. Edwards Bello was a fashionable young dandy that had just returned to Santiago after finishing his education in Paris (Contardo 166) and, although they held almost opposite views of the elite—Cuevas wished to please a society he admired, and wanted to integrate, while Edwards Bello offered a critical and acid view of the world to which he belonged (166-7)—, they became good friends.

In any case, Cuevas's general agreeableness and serviceable spirit precluded the upper classes from deeming him a threatening *siútico*; they saw in him an easy target of ridicule, especially because he did not seem to be able to ever enact his social revenge (167).

In 1912, when he was 27 years old, Cuevas published his only fictional text, *El amigo Jacques*, a slim volume seemingly written offhandedly, in a few days, as part of a bet (Alone 304), which was, notwithstanding, published "in a rare, luxury edition" (Edwards 67).[32] The desire for these limited editions can actually be traced to the "dandy's interest in the *livre unique*" (Silverman). Indeed, the small-scale customized edition is characteristic of Decadent texts. Pierre Louÿs printed a special edition of twenty copies of his *La Femme et le pantin* (The Woman and the Puppet) for the bibliographic society Les XX (Silverman), while Wilde specifically requested that *Salomé*, published in French in 1893, be bound in the symbolically charged color that he liked to call "Tyrian purple" (qtd. in Navarre 83). Cuevas's book might perhaps seem paltry in comparison, but the wide margins and poetic emphasis of the limited edition book were certainly luxurious in the Chilean context. The color purple would make an appearance in a later publication by Cuevas, that of his confidently titled *Pensées et*

poèmes (Thoughts and Poems, 1954), a limited edition book which attributes the relevance of the meditations to the importance of the author. The thin, folio-sized volume, sheathed in a white hardcover case, is printed on laid paper, as noted in the last page, a type of thick, unevenly cut material that was handmade before the mechanized manufacturing of paper. The poems are in large print, and have ample margins; each page shows its large number in purple ink.

Interestingly, writing was considered to be one of the most damning proofs of *siutiquería* (snobbishness) (Contardo 167), and Cuevas's melodramatic plot and perfumed style did nothing to change Chilean society's views on him.

Jorge Edwards describes Cuevas's early novel as "a brief, poetic text, a vibrant and secret homage; pages of a confessional, intimate tone, in the style of Pierre Loti" (67).[33] Contemporary critic Omer Emeth rebuked Cuevas for his "visible Gallicisms" (qtd. in Alone 303).[34] The novella was dedicated to "[his] distinguished friend, the intelligent writer, Mr. Joaquín Edwards Bello,"[35] and at the time it was perceived as a rather obvious *roman-à-clef*, since in real life Cuevas called his friend Joaquín, "Jacques," "with a kind of revealing complicity, in a private and Frenchified key" (Edwards 67).[36] The term Frenchified here seems to hint at both the effeminacy of Cuevas, and the erotic weight added to the name when spoken in French, following the common notion of French as the language of love. In point of fact, Edwards Bello himself would use this nom de plume in his youthful writings. Jacques Edwards was Joaquín Edwards Bello's penname in Paris, where he participated in the Dadaist movement and its radical rejection of reason, war, and the bourgeois world. As Jacques

Edwards, he published a brief poetic anthology entitled *Metamorfosis* in 1921, dedicated to Tristán Tzara "the inventor of the French language" (19).[37]

Cuevas's novel was presumably written as an apologia for the controversial *El inútil*, which had forced his friend Joaquín to take refuge in Rio de Janeiro, and later Paris. Jorge Edwards envisions it instead as a declaration of love, an insinuation that Cuevas rejected (67). It was seemingly in outrage at the close-mindedness of the country that Cuevas left soon after for Europe. Jorge Edwards imagines Cuevas's alter ego, Dueñas, shouting from the deck of the boat that left Valparaíso: "Goodbye, Chile that I hate; I won't even leave you my bones!" (68).[38] From this novel, we gather that Cuevas probably arrived in Paris in 1914, a few months before the war began (76).[39] He brought to Europe what most Chileans had grown to expect from the continent: an idealized vision of beauty, civilization, culture, love and friendship.

***Parisitis*: Spleen and Ideal**

As discussed above, *parisitis* can be connected to Baudelaire's notion of spleen, for it is a disease that has no cure, and that is fed by its own source. In José Asunción Silva's *De sobremesa*, the narrator feels an indescribable ailment when he gets to Paris: "From the moment I set foot in this city, I have been invaded by an indescribable discomfort. . . . it is not a disease because there is no external symptom to translate it, nor is it accompanied by any pain, and my body is full of life. I have a plethora of strength that I do not know how to expend" (172).[40]

Los trasplantados, the turn-of-the-century novel by Blest Gana, is one of the first to self-consciously mark the split between spleen and ideal within Latin America's conception of Europe, even before the war brought this crack open to the surface. The spleen, which had initially referred to the boredom connected with their country of origin, Chile, becomes reenacted as the melancholy about an idealized city that they do not find when they get to Paris. Paris is a city that has been built in their imagination, and is experienced as lost when they arrive at the actual place. The plot of *Los trasplantados* revolves around an immigrant family, the Canalejas, who the reader can locate as Chilean, even though this is never explicitly stated. The family has moved to Paris because the wealthy father wants to enjoy life (as we later find out, this means drinking, gambling and women). For Mr. Canalejas, "Europe was . . . Paris" (Blest Gana 40),[41] and he conceives his journey as an almost religious peregrination. The Canalejas are dazzled by the pleasures offered in the city, and become avid with the desire to rise socially, spending above and beyond their means to connect with important people, especially members of the aristocracy, who are often impoverished and prey on these foreign newcomers, offering their company in exchange for money. The family's greatest fear is to be labeled as *rastaquoères*—*rastá* for short—a concept that identifies the aspirational rich foreigners, who show their *parvenu* origins by poor taste. From the Spanish voice *rastracueros* (one who drags hides), the term was used mainly to describe South Americans that lived in Paris at the turn of the century: pretending to be elegant, these social climbers really owed their wealth to the commerce of leather and fur or, metaphorically, to un-aristocratic sources, showing their vulgarity by an ostentatious

display of wealth.[42] The concept, in fact, was well ingrained in Parisian culture and appeared by the mid-nineteenth century; one of the most picturesque versions of the *rastá* appears in the comic opera *La vie parisienne* (1866) by Jacques Offenbach, with a libretto by the same team that wrote Bizet's *Carmen,* Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy. The opera includes a Brazilian character that is drawn repeatedly to the pleasures of Paris, where he cannot help but spend all his money:

> I am Brazilian, I have gold,
>
> And I come from Rio de Janeiro
>
> Richer today than yesterday
>
> Paris, I come to you once more!
>
> Twice I have been here
>
> I had gold in my luggage,
>
> Diamonds on my shirt,
>
> How long did they last? (5)[43]

Although the opera never explicitly mentions the word, the character is the quintessential *rastá*, spoiled by Parisian life. The French satire makes fun of the Latin American who travels to Paris and attempts to pass as a moneyed Frenchman. This *nouveau riche* character is perhaps slightly different from the Canalejas family, in that the latter held a respectable position in Santiago de Chile, and become ridiculous to peers only when abroad.

Whereas the opera offers a light treatment of the character, Blest Gana's novel is a tragic look at the corruption of a family. The Canalejas parents quickly become vain,

thinking of nothing save their social worth, while their elder daughters, Milagros and Dolores, put all their effort into attaining the innermost core of *chic*. Only the youngest daughter, Mercedes, educated by her grandmother, remains pure and uncontaminated by this greed. In love with a poor fellow countryman, Patricio, the novel mainly revolves around how the family forces her to marry the aristocratic, but impoverished Prince Stephan instead. Appropriating the familiar trope present at the fin de siècle, the immigrant grandmother notes that the frivolity and decadence of Paris has brought about the "degeneration of her race" (Blest Gana 44).[44] This widespread fear of the imminent corruption of the human species had been captured most luridly by Max Nordau's contemporary treatise on the subject, entitled *Degeneration* (1892). In the novel, the grandmother, echoing the views of the physician, seems to locate degeneration in Europe as a whole, and in Paris, in particular, as well as single out aristocracy as its main representative, which shows the influence of Huysmans and his Decadent aristocratic hero, Des Esseintes, in *À Rebours* (Against Nature, 1884). Degeneration, as the Chilean novel shows, is dangerously contagious and can affect even the best of people. Thus, surrounded by objects from her native country, the old woman laments having been torn away from her quiet life, and attempts to keep Mercedes safe from this decadence, in a house that she deems an "inn" (44).[45]

Almost thirty years later, Joaquín Edwards Bello offers a similarly critical view of his fellow countrymen in *Criollos en París.* Warning readers in his preface that what they are about to read might be disagreeable to their idea of Chilean society, he justifies the truth of his analysis of "the psychology of the rootless" by stating that he lived in Paris

for eight years. Edwards Bello argues that "Paris produced [in South Americans] a disease called *parisitis* and it is useful to remember its crisis" (8),[46] thus offering his novel as a Chilean example of the more widespread South American phenomenon. Edwards Bello locates this crisis in the post-war scenario, but it is clear from the speedy corruption of characters, even before World War I erupts, that the disease is long-standing. In fact, Pedro Plaza, the main character of the novel, argues early on: "We are European children, which is why we carry the *virus* of expatriation. Only the Indian [sic] clings to his America" (68, emphasis added).[47] The germ of this illness can be located in European colonization, which produces a 'castoff' child that longs to return to its original cradle—a desire for ethnic and cultural validation strategically, and also ironically, displaced from Spain to France—from the empire that controlled them as a colony, to the center of the cosmopolitan world. Although virtue is located in the American continent, *criollos* are unable to embrace their state of innocence and goodness, but seek to bite from the tree of knowledge. In other words, they are bored, and are looking for pleasure and excitement. The character's remark is also crucial in how it posits the connection to Paris as that which rescues these dandies from being indigenous; it becomes a marker of prestige for Chileans who have travelled there. In this sense, the connection to the Parisian Belle Époque for these characters is somewhat different to what other Europeans travelling to Paris would have experienced. Paris potentially corrupts these Chileans, but it also elevates them in terms of their social prestige back home. This of course only occurs if the Chilean returns home, the only way to authenticate the experience by local

peers. If Chileans remain in Paris, the city will quickly disown them, and turn them into displaced *rastás*.

The disease of *parisitis* had already been diagnosed in Blest Gana's novel in incontrovertible terms: "Everybody who comes [to Paris] will return, if they can. It's . . . the 'mal de Paris'. . . . a universal evil: he who has lived here yearns to come back; he who hasn't, yearns to come" (142).[48] However much Edwards Bello attempts to portray his native country as ultimately offering salvation, the return home is seen with grimness and even despair. For Julie Jones, the novel's "didactic purpose" is purportedly the "rediscovery of [the protagonist's] roots," but instead repeatedly evokes in Paris a city that is exciting and enticing (146). In this sense, the system is perversely homeopathic, since it twists the axiom of "like cures like": thus, the only way to cure *parisitis* is by going to Paris, which further poisons you. *Parisitis* is made more acute by going to Paris; even as it destroys identity and health, the body yearns for more. In this sense, it might more accurately be described as an addiction.

At the beginning of the novel, the eyes of the neophyte visitor can only see the mythical aura that surrounds a city that has been encountered through fiction: "Paris had been his obsession since his childhood, a treasure of adventures decorated with the names of Decadent literature and zarzuela: 'brain of the world' . . . 'luminous city where the little blind butterflies go to die'" (Edwards Bello 15).[49] The weathered foreigner, however, remains unable to recover from this encounter, even after he crosses the threshold of this idealized vision. The sinister Bascuñán, for instance, a penniless gambler who follows with relish the misfortune of his fellow-countrymen, argues

defiantly: "Poor, but in Paris! I'm in Paris! In Paris! You are still too young to realize this. I'm on top of the world!" (82).[50] Edwards Bello himself offered a similarly contradictory position regarding Paris in a brief article on Frenchified Chileans, where he notes: "It would have been better for my equanimity if I had never known Paris" ("14 de julio" 88).[51]

The fascination that Paris exercised on Chileans was not reciprocated. French emigration to South America as a whole was rather limited, and even if it underwent a relative explosion during World War I, it decreased immediately after. In Chile, specifically, French presence was comparatively even more circumscribed, despite governmental campaigns to attract foreigners at the turn of the nineteenth century.[52] The French, consequently, knew very little about Chile, and in Paris these foreign families—even if wealthy in their country of origin—became alien, visitors from a great beyond that did not even inspire curiosity. In Edwards Bello's novel, when Antonio Salcedo, a widower, and his two children, Tonio and Lucía, arrive to Paris, the hotel owner puts them down as coming from "Santiago du Chili, Brésil" (10). This is the first indication that the family's origins will be lost in the Parisian maze, which does not respect or know anything about South America. Pedro, Tonio's friend in Paris, tells him: "I live among people who do not know my past or my race, nor demand anything other from me than a pleasant, happy face. If I told them where I'm from, they would think it's a joke. Here no one knows if Chile is in Asia or Paraguay. No one possesses that absurd thing called memory. I lead the eternal beach life. I am a fiction and not a horrible reality" (23).[53]

Interestingly, Cuevas will exploit this very lack of memory and the creative possibilities of fiction to eschew reality, and fashion himself anew.

Later in Edwards Bello's novel, Pedro tells the hotel owner that he is Chilean, to which she answers, "I haven't heard of it. Is it serious?" (373).[54] The suspect condition of their nationality, or more accurately, their rootlessness and lack of patriotism, is seen as a disease that can contaminate, a misgiving that is actualized when the war breaks out. Considered with disdainful pride before the war, as a necessary evil, the "idle foreigner[s]" (345)[55] become a menace during the war. In this respect, it is useful to recall that the Dreyfus Affair, which had been laid to rest only recently with the definitive exoneration of the captain in 1906, had not only revealed anti-Semitic feelings in France, but had also bared its broad-ranging xenophobia. Zola's ardent defense of Dreyfus, for instance, was met with violent resistance by the general public, attacks against him often "denounc[ing] him as a 'foreigner,' in reference to his Italian father" (Tuchman 197). In the novel, Dueñas realizes that "War underlines foreigners horribly," (376),[56] and goes to London, a city that ironically has strong ties to Paris, as the other cultural capital of a cosmopolitan world.[57] When Pedro tries to leave Paris, the police deny him his passport, and he is literally trapped by a city to which he has become addicted. The outbreak of war in a continent that is seen as the paradigm of civilization and wisdom is registered by Edwards Bello: "For a South American . . . who grew used to looking at Europe as a model of wisdom and cleverness, this war was something monstrous. Where was the culture, the *sagesse,* the order?" (315).[58] Blest Gana would already hint at the darker, more savage nature of the aristocracy in his depiction of a party where guests behave like

wild animals, "invad[ing] the dinning room . . . and throw[ing] themselves with hungry solicitation on the meats" (256).[59] Ironically, Paris turns out to be more savage than their home countries.

Despite these obvious drawbacks, Paris exercises an intoxicating, irresistible allure. Moreover, back in Chile, these characters feel equally out of place, trapped by the narrow spectrum of possibilities offered by the country. In a chronicle written in 1924, Edwards Bello himself comments on how shocked he is by the materialism and lack of intellectual curiosity of his fellow countrymen. Upon returning to the port of Valparaíso after having been abroad for a long time, he recounts how people received him indifferently: "I did not come back with any new inventions, or money to speculate. I carried only my inner imagination, an intense new life. [I received a] cold 'How do you do?'—a steely clamp that grabs you from your hair to the ground, to the colorless monotony of vulgar life" (qtd. in Alone, *Pretérito Imperfecto* 237).[60] This seems to contradict the idea that peers can validate the experience of visiting France as a sign of distinction, or at least, it circumscribes said validation to the very elite cultural salons of upper class society. It also illustrates the degree to which Chilean society in the first half of the twentieth century had changed, and become more centered on wealth.

Similarly, Cuevas's alter ego, Dueñitas, summons memories of his country and remembers his childhood as being enveloped "in a haze of boredom and rain" (Edwards Bello 232);[61] specifically, he describes his feelings of profound *ennui* while in the coastal city of Viña del Mar: "I spent a winter there and I howled with tedium like Sappho on the rock" (374).[62] The figure of Baudelaire emerges once more here as guiding the rejection

of a lackluster Chile; it is the spleen of facing a boring, unexciting city. Edwards Bello's image of Dueñas/Cuevas interestingly makes use of cross gendering, an element that will be further explored in the final chapter of this dissertation. The image places Cuevas as Sappho at the moment when she is about to leap from the rock, as a "kill-or-cure-remedy for the hopeless passion" she feels for the handsome Phaon, who has rejected her (Reynolds 71). Thus, Cuevas is pictured as a female poet, not at the height of her lyric strength but at the moment of her mythologized death, a comparison that is fitting in how it privileges the fictional figure over the historical one. The image of Cuevas lamenting his tedium on a rock is parodic on several grounds. First, it imagines a static Sappho howling from boredom, not from passionate love; it is not the image of Sappho jumping from the rock, but of her pondering this decision or simply bemoaning her fate. The moment presumes a heterosexual passion that conflicts with the poetry written by Sappho, which notably presents her sexual desire for other women. Paradoxically, by making Cuevas into Sappho, the image becomes queer again. The comparison also prefigures the legendary leap since Cuevas will indeed metaphorically jump off onto a ship that saves him, by carrying him abroad to a Paris that will presumably cure him of his boredom.

Edwards Bello also recalls how thankful Cuevas was to doña Blanca V. and don Luis Izquierdo, a wealthy Chilean aristocratic couple from Viña del Mar, whose portraits he apparently held in a golden frame created by Dalí. Cuevas had requested the hand of their daughter in marriage, and had been rejected by the parents, who argued that he should travel and become a man. Supposedly, "[Cuevas] thought of throwing himself into

the Pacific" ("El marqués de Cuevas" 39).[63] Later, he views this incident as his salvation, and considers that he owes everything to this rejection, so that the memory brings him infinite gratitude, hence the framed portrait of those who almost became his parents-in-law.

In Edwards Bello's novel, tedium is associated to the generalized uniformity of expression and aesthetics that is almost aggressively cultivated as a national trait, a fact that seems apparent to Pedro when, prosperous and happy, he receives an anonymous note that he instinctively attributes to a fellow countryman's envy: "woe to him that breaks from the frame of poverty, vulgarity or anonymity! A Chilean will relentlessly harass another Chilean who attempts to go astray, which is to say, who tries to forsake the mold of monotonous vulgarity" (268).[64] The spleen associated with life back home finds its counterpart of the ideal in Paris. Spleen, in light of these novels, can also be defined as mediocrity, a key term to understand Cuevas as a character who struggled purposefully to stand out from the crowd.

***Les Fleurs du mal*: Parisian Corruption of Chilean Innocence**

Fashion and fashionable behavior is the main way in which characters in these novels try to set themselves apart from the rest of the colony—even if standing out is ironically only allowed within the constraints of the paradigm of what is deemed chic. "Slaves to *chic*" (Blest Gana 27),[65] the Canalejas women of *Los trasplantados* attempt to follow a law that is as subtle as it is exacting. The elder sisters struggle to walk the thin line between *chic* and crass, while their mother also seems consumed by the desire to be

considered elegant, although she only manages to look "like a luxury doll . . . [of] artificial youth" (66).[66] Similarly, her fashionably dressed son, Juan Gregorio, can only engage in superficial conversation, upholding "the currency for the life of all young *chic* men: 'Brief and good!'" (66).[67]

Opposed to these self-indulgent values of artifice and decadence, Pedro, in *Criollos en París*, sees the young Lucía, freshly arrived from America, as a picture of innocence and goodness, a nostalgic reminder of his childhood: "the strongest and healthiest expression of feminine beauty, virginity, modesty, and homely upbringing" (Edwards Bello 66),[68] she becomes for him, "the safeguard of home" (117).[69] Her name literally means light, and she does indeed serve as a source of true guidance in the darkness of Paris, even if the city is ironically considered as "the city of light." Although the novel seems to endorse these New World principles, when Pedro finally gets out of Paris, the reader senses that it is more of an exile than an escape. Pedro leaves behind the corruption of the city, but only because wartime has turned him into a suspect. His new life, by comparison, embraces insularity, and offers none of the excitement to which he is used. Pedro arrives in Spain—back to Chile's original European roots, as it were—and Lucía tells him: "From here on, I want you to be Chilean, very Chilean: I will also become more Chilean" (437).[70] The demand can only be seen as a desperate antidote to European corruption of the soul, but it will also mean a return to spleen. Moreover, one is led to wonder what being "very Chilean" actually means in terms of an identity that is already hybrid to begin with.

In Jorge Cuevas' *El amigo Jacques*, which takes place almost entirely in Chile, we glimpse at what this national character would entail, at least in idealized terms. The novella recounts the fortunes of two siblings, Juan and María, who attempt to survive in upper-class society after the death of their father leaves them penniless. Early on, Cuevas describes how María and her best friend, Berta, are both perfect specimens of feminine innocence, whose "delicate soles had not [yet] tread upon the fatal mandrake" (11).[71] These traits are part of the national charm, and Juan's close friend, Jacques—bearer of a hybrid name that links him to France—, observes as much when he muses with self-satisfaction on how his countrywomen's qualities are unrivalled: "what intuition they have to adapt to every environment and make a discreet mark without drawing attention to themselves like other [South] American women, with their showy toilettes and exaggerated gestures" (187).[72] As will be discussed in the following chapter, it is in this elegant restraint where the power of the dandy resides. It is also noteworthy that Cuevas praises the Chilean women's capacity to adapt to the environment, a chameleonic skill that he will certainly use to survive and then thrive in Europe. The narrative ultimately takes the characters to Paris, where Jacques has a chance to watch a parade of tastefully dressed Chilean women interacting with foreign dignitaries. At this point, a Frenchman tells Jacques: "How beautiful are your countrywomen; you must be proud of your race" (193),[73] and the latter reflects on how Chilean women are in fact the best way to promote his nation. Of course, Cuevas had yet to travel to Paris and experience the fatal attraction exercised by the city's most dangerous and perverting pleasures. Jacques fantasizes about returning to Santiago and writing a novel about his experiences. The real Joaquín

Edwards Bello did this in *Criollos en París*; Jorge Cuevas was to return only once to his native country after he left for Europe—with his company of dancers, and as a resounding social success story.

As we see in these novels, Paris is directly responsible for the corruption of innocent visitors: perceived to be the epitome of European decadence at the turn of the century, and a symbol of the downfall of civilization, the city is described as a femme fatale, "open[ing] its arms like an indolent courtesan" (Blest Gana 31).[74] The accusation of Paris as corruptive was commonplace. Slavophiles like Tolstoy were very critical of the infiltration of French mannerisms in Russian society in the nineteenth century. In *Anna Karenina*, Levin, a character who is often deemed an alter ego for the author, is disgusted by the "painted" French waitress who serves them at a restaurant (33), and finds that the habit of teaching French to children results in "unteaching sincerity" (271). A Decadent text such as José Asunción Silva's *De Sobremesa* posits a similar image, when he talks of Paris as "a courtesan," whom he "loves, despising [her] as one adores certain women that seduce us with the sortilege of their sensual beauty . . . perfidious and voluptuous Babylon!" (299).[75] The trope of the city as prostitute was familiar, but for Chilean writers this corruption is described as more essential to the national character. Paris takes away the financial resources of these Latin American visitors who wish to have access to the pleasures offered by Paris, but it also shows that these pleasures are never fully reachable, since they remain an unfulfilled aspiration. The foreigner will never have full access to the innermost social circles, and will never be fully accepted by its members; similarly, the sexual satisfaction remains perverse and unsatisfactory, it

feeds only to create greater hunger. Ultimately, for Chileans the city perpetuates the disease of *Parisitis*, perhaps showing that the ideal can only ever be satisfactory as an imaginary voyage, as Baudelaire suggests.

Even wealthy foreigners for the most part cannot keep up with the hectic pace of the city and its constant financial requirements. In *Los trasplantados*, Antonio Canalejas blinds himself to the bills and letters sent from Chile, which bring news about his impending bankruptcy and threaten to sink him back into the oblivion of the local colony of foreigners in Paris. More tragically, the young Ignacio Sagraves, a Chilean immigrant, ruins himself and his family—his gambling addiction and desperate attempts to recover his financial standing in Paris finally lead him to commit suicide, together with his wife and surviving child, by drowning in the Seine. Although a steady young man in Chile, upon setting foot in Paris, Ignacio's integrity falls to shambles: "his being, numbed by the soporific atmosphere of his homeland, and catalyzed by the indigestive aridness of the writings he copied mechanically, felt the penetrating bite of temptation like a shock of galvanism" (38).[76] It is important to note here that Paris corrupts by offering an extreme contrast to Chile, since the very spleen of the native country leaves the foreigner more vulnerable to temptation. Paris injects a dose of vitality into Ignacio's being, but the amount proves fatal. Humiliated by his many deprivations, the "modest virtues of a simple and honest lad, carried away by the muddy current of life in the great city, [lose] themselves . . . in the dark sludge of the failings of conscience" (40).[77]

The hellish atmosphere of Paris is recreated most notably in Edwards Bello's depiction of gambling. In *Criollos en París*, the casino is portrayed as "a diabolical

attraction to international vice" (Edwards Bello 205),[78] and the author turns a lingering eye to the details of the game, following the ups ands downs of luck and the haggard aspect of the players: "The faces were dry, avid, hysterical; the eyes feverish, the jaws painful like that of soldiers after combat" (87).[79] Joaquín Edwards Bello's own addiction to gambling often cost him large sums of money, and ultimately contributed to his decision to commit suicide, as recounted by his nephew in *El inútil de la familia.* The establishment Pedro frequents has a cosmopolitan clientele where the tables of addicted, often desperate characters are strictly hierarchized by nationality, the list of names read out loud with a "faulty pronunciation . . . [making] the human jumble visible" (79).[80] Much like the dining room with sick patients in the haven of *The Magic Mountain*, Edwards Bello's novel portrays a space in which different nationalities set the scene for an upcoming European conflict. At another bar, the maître explains pragmatically that the sign stating "All languages spoken" refers to the clients, not the waiters (52)[81]—a signal that indicates the degree to which these diseased men are for the most part foreigners. Likewise, in *Los trasplantados*, Juan Gregorio, in moments of lucidity, is aware of "the transformation of the Hispanic American soul when heated in . . . the Parisian oven" (Blest Gana 83);[82] men become "drunk by this hell that is Paris, with more microbes of vicious infection than all the other towns of France put together" (222).[83] They become, as Blest Gana puts it, borrowing Baudelaire's words, "flowers of evil" (222).[84]

Part of this corruption also comes about by the loss of national roots. Both Dolores and Milagros despise anything that is not French, and go as far as to denounce: "Down with Spanish, language of 'rastás'!—Here we only speak in French" (43).[85] In

fact, all the members of the Canalejas family pronounce their Spanish with an affected accent, while the smaller children do not speak their native language at all. Similarly, in *Criollos en París*, we encounter the Larrea family, whose girls, "spoke Spanish in a grotesque manner, rolling their 'r's as 'gh's; mixing up ridiculous expressions" (Edwards Bello 61).[86] In this regard, Pedro's friend warns him: "Paris has no use for the South American: after a while—simple spectators of French life—we cease to be American, without ever becoming European" (385).[87]

This visible corruption reaches its most poignant example at the end of *Los trasplantados*, when Mercedes, forced to marry the aristocratic Prince Stephan, a man she does not love, kills herself. Her sister Milagros is furious at this news, and wants to hide the event from society till after her party, where she expects to be introduced to the grand duchess. Mercedes's brother, Juan Gregorio, in a drunken stupor, barely registers the information, and cannot muster a heartfelt response, promptly falling asleep on the couch. At the funeral, her father is concerned only by the fact that his seat is inferior to that of Prince Stephan. While the latter is still negotiating to keep his dowry intact, Mercedes' brother-in-law attempts to see the upside to this sad turn of social affairs by commenting on the turnout: "Very splendid burial . . . This proves that we are considered *chic*" (Blest Gana 292).[88] Milagros, however, has a chance to justify her callous attitude in an outburst which sheds light on the humiliation that she has undergone to reach her precarious social footing: "I want to have an indisputable position in society. I am tired of disdainful greetings, of the looks of great dames and ladies who look over my head without seeing me, of protective smiles dispensed as a favor when I ask to be introduced. I do not want

to be treated as an intruder" (282).[89] At the great ball of the Duchess of Vielle-Roche, the perfumed, powdered people pullulate around the room, making the "incessant noise of a beehive in activity" (96)[90]—a metaphor that emphasizes the effort and labor required to be part of this network.

Mimicry and the Threat to Class Borders

Chilean foreigners in Paris consecrate their lives to crossing the border of their relative marginality into real upper-class French society as if their honor depended on it; in part, as a way to prove their worth back home. Antonio Canalejas imagines rather conceitedly, for instance, "that his disappearance from the Parisian scene would damage the good name of his country" (48).[91] In fact, as Gonzalo Vial ascertains, "transplants . . . constituted . . . the closest thing to that [social] 'ideal' that Chilean aristocracy had at hand" (655).[92] When they first arrive to Paris, the Canalejas initially make friends with the wealthy Hispanic American society of the city, but soon they notice the subtle layers that lie beyond, just out of their reach, "the existence of another refined and exclusive society, whose parties, weddings, burials, joys and sorrows are discussed by the daily chronicle" (20).[93] Access to this innermost circle is granted by gaining introductions and being invited to exclusive parties. By contributing money to the charities and concerts organized by the aristocracy, Antonio Canalejas has managed to "crack open some of the doors of *chic* salons" (70).[94] In the novels discussed in this chapter, the social nerve center resides in the salons of the main houses in Paris. The aristocracy, in fact, often seems to be portrayed in terms of salon imagery, a picture that is captured in Jorge

Cuevas's novella, where exterior spaces acquire the patina of interior ones, so that "the [Train] Station looked like a great salon, in which all the aristocratic ladies had given rendezvous" (127).[95]

The avowed aim of the Canalejas family, intent on penetrating the "salons of the old aristocracy" (Blest Gana 41),[96] means avoiding old friends like the Terrázabal, who reveal their *rastá* status at first glance, because they are "[too] dark-skinned" (194).[97] In the next chapter, I will discuss how Cuevas, who was also described as dark-skinned, deflects attention from race to attire, by exploiting the role of the dandy. The strategy is already perceived in the Chilean families portrayed in these novels, who invest in their clothes and in losing their accent to pass as locals Parisians. The effect, however, is only partially achieved.

The made up last name of the Terrázabal is a play on the many Basque surnames with rolled *rs* that were so highly regarded in Chile—Irarrázaval, Larraín, Errázuriz—but that lose their value abroad, given the telling sign of the person's skin color. In this new foreign scenario, the Canalejas gain ascendancy over their countrymen by their ability to pass more successfully as local. The Canalejas firmly believe that they deserve to be a part of the highest members of society, and the novel portrays the length to which foreigners went to give an aristocratic veneer to their appearance, in the hopes of gaining quicker acceptance into the most privileged gatherings. Thus, these superficial changes will be able to overcome the weakness of having mixed blood, by creating a bloodline based on an aristocratic surface.

A common practice for these families was "to add to their plebeian name the particle of nobility that made them into *Monsieur et Madame* de Canalejas" (23).[98] As Vial points out, regarding aristocratic ties, "authenticity . . . was of little or no importance: the important thing for the *rastá* was that his daughter could be called princess or countess or duchess" (659).[99] In any case, the younger generation would blur the inaccuracy of the aristocratic claim, and, through good marriage alliances, authenticate the title. Juan Gregorio recognizes the absurdity of this desire and, to make fun of his father, he makes up an aristocratic peerage for the family that traces back its origins to the Conquistadors, and then feeds it to the newspapers. Juan Gregorio knows that it is frequent practice for South Americans to "rehabilitate Spanish titles when [they] can or buy or invent them if [their] grandparents were lazy" (84),[100][101] and is quite aware of the social farce in which he is a willing participant. For his father, however, who is unaware of the deception—or pretends to be—, the report is "a sort of naturalization letter in the great *chic* world of supreme ton" (187).[102] Overjoyed at the erudition of French newspapers, the father deludes himself into believing in his own created roots, especially since it places his name in print, "next to the great French titles of nobility!" (89)[103]—making them equals in this space.

Similarly, the Salcedo family members of Edwards Bello's novel are careful when they arrive to Paris to "s[eek] shelter in a small, decent hotel where there would be no 'rastacueros'" (11).[104] Proud of his social standing in Chile, Antonio Salcedo is eager to seek out his equals in Paris, and not demean himself by communing abroad with the wrong sort. When his son meets a fellow countryman, they immediately "talk about

families and surnames the way only Chileans know how, with a kind of gratefulness and pride in their ancestors" (80).[105] However, the aristocratic class to which Salcedo claims to belong is not recognized in Paris, where he is classified as a *rastá*. As one of the characters points out, "In Chile they talk about aristocracy all the time, and there is only a tremendous bourgeoisie" (178).[106]

Similarly, for the Canalejas family, getting rid of any trace of their exotic foreign customs is the essential strategy to fit in with the finest society in Paris. This upstart colony is anchored precariously within reputable circles and, in order to navigate the dangerous waters of this liminal space, characters take up imitation as a survival strategy. Pedro and his friends are quite aware of this tactic, and mock South Americans and their ridiculous pretensions in Paris. In the novel, Americans, "come as tourists" (103),[107] while South Americans come "looking for models to copy" or "to take heraldic coats of arms" (103).[108] Although the claim is not entirely true, and Americans were perhaps as prone to collecting titles and coats of arms in their search for their origins, it is interesting to note that this assertion makes out Americans to be more refined and superior in their disregard for petty aristocratic concerns. In this sense, Americans appear as original, masculine, and self-sufficient in the South American imaginary. By contrast, South Americans, or perhaps Chileans in particular, as Pedro remarks, "are guided by imitation" (178).[109] This imitation might be fueled by their general lack of patriotism, as Edwards Bello notes in a brief chronicle written in 1928 entitled "Los ex chilenos" (Former Chileans, 82). Steered by their "spirit of imitation and emulation" (Blest Gana 24),[110] Milagros and Dolores Canalejas not only religiously observe the fashion of their

superiors, but also follow their behavior closely. The sisters, who are married to wealthy Chilean men, engage in the prevalent trend of dismissing their husbands on public occasions, and adopting French suitors to guide them around. They both openly flirt with two lesser noblemen who introduce them at parties, and who presumably derive pleasure in being seen with beautiful women (aside from grabbing one of the sisters provocatively by the waist, sexual favors are not overtly mentioned in the novel). Much like in the Frenchified society of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, these flirtations are encouraged, since they are used to set off a woman's appeal. Chopin's heroine, Edna Pontellier, is wooed by Robert Lebrun openly and her husband is not jealous, because he knows this is part of the social game, which serves not only to show off his wife's attractiveness, but also, paradoxically, to highlight her devotion for him, since she is presumed never to capitulate. Similarly, in Henry James's *Daisy Miller*, the young American girl who visits Europe is misunderstood because in America her flirtatious behavior is a custom that is used to set off her social skills and breeding; as Daisy delightedly concedes when rebuked, "I'm a fearful, frightful flirt! Did you ever hear of a nice girl that was not?" (31). In *Los trasplantados*, the husband is supposed to delight in these attentions to his wife, since they compliment him indirectly and also free him to participate in his own escapades; as Milagros explains to her husband, it is *rastá* to be following the wife around. The sisters live for what is *à la mode*: ecstatic to be able to meet the Duchess de Vielle-Roche, who condescends to give them the smallest of smiles in acknowledgment of their deep curtsies, Dolores exclaims: "Very *chic,* very *chic*,"[111] while her French suitor mockingly reassures her: "*Extra-chic, supra-chic*" (15).

French colonial presence in Chile was limited to the brief proclamation of adventurer Orélie-Antoine de Tounens as King of Araucanía in 1860, with the intermittent support of groups of indigenous Mapuche people, who were seeking their independence in the South of Chile. However, the theory of post-colonial dynamic operates in similar ways for a country that feels attached to Europe as an imposing cultural force. Homi Bhabha's concept of *mimicry,* understood as "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (85), seems particularly relevant to these novels. Bhabha emphasizes the idea that colonial discourse encourages the colonized to aspire to its 'superior' cultural form, which, because of their condition as 'other', they will never be able to fully achieve. For Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (475, emphasis in original).[112] Crucially, this discourse "is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (86), and it is this strategic failure that makes it threatening. For Bhabha "The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (88). As Low and Wolfreys put it, mimicry "has the potential to unsettle and threaten the self precisely because it resembles the image of the self" (207). These partial representations or "*metonymies* of presence" (90), as Bhabha terms them, appear, for example, in the meticulous care the characters in these novels place on clothes, so as to closely resemble the upper class.

Mimicry is threatening because of its farcical element, since the imitation often fails to hit the mark, either by underperforming or by overstating its point; by remaining always "not quite / not white" (Bhabha 92) and so revealing the inside stitching of the aristocratic stance as composed of easily identifiable elements. Imitating the toilette of grand ladies, for instance, constructs identity as performative, according to Judith Butler's concept; that is to say, as "a *stylized repetition of acts*" (191, emphasis in the original). Butler further points out that the "surface signification" (192) of identity is tenuous and discontinuous, because meaning does not rely on internal coherence, but rather on external rejection of what one is not. In the novels discussed in this chapter, French aristocrats are shaken by the seeping presence of intruders, appalled by the fact that the wealth of these upstart families is changing the social landscape of their class.

It is the same vague *rastá* status, of having wealth and an obscure—albeit not noble—background that condones a marriage alliance between a rich foreigner and a French aristocrat. As Juan Gregorio of *Los trasplantados* notes with keen insight, however, the same grace is not granted to locals, and the nobility would never allow itself "to mingle or marry families of French shopkeepers or workers" (Blest Gana 81-2).[113] In fact, French aristocracy also views Prince Stephan of the "microscopic state" of Roespingsbrück (31)[114] as "a 'rastá' of another species" (102)[115]—a fact that the Canalejas family fail to perceive. These matches are borne with barely suppressed resignation by a class that watches with unease the fissures that emerge in their privileged social circle. A French aristocratic woman reveals as much when she comments on the

mixed company at a party: "Decidedly . . . we are debasing ourselves" (102),[116] while another observes, elsewhere, "We can no longer speak of our world, dear" (241).[117]

Despite the resentment and repulsion that the aristocracy feels for these wealthy aliens, there is a co-dependence between them; a bargain that is struck more or less willingly by both parties. The fact that the Prince is only marrying Mercedes for money is no secret; as the family well knows, this is an open transaction for money in exchange for social privilege. The bourgeois foreigner pays the aristocracy's debts and obtains a title in exchange, which is considered to be social capital: "in this way, there is compensation," Antonio Canalejas argues cynically, disregarding any thought of love in a marriage alliance (70).[118] In his novel, Edwards Bello offers a similar sentiment: "It is known that Paris lives off of foreigners" (113).[119]

Despite the monetary compensation, the aristocracy remains ill at ease, with the sense that the limits that create class identity are disintegrating. Butler, discussing the danger posed by the boundaries of the body, maintains, citing anthropologist Mary Douglas, that "all social systems are vulnerable at their margins, and that all margins are accordingly considered dangerous" (180). It is interesting to note at this juncture, that the only socially successful character of Edwards Bello's novel, as we have seen, is Jorge Dueñas—the fictional depiction of real-life socialite Jorge Cuevas—, a figure who plays at the limits of what is acceptable. His exaggerated and self-conscious mimicry is a homage to the aristocracy, which blurs the boundaries between classes, breaking down the distinction enacted between gentry and *parvenu*. Despite mimicking the aristocracy in

dress and manner with a punctilious reverence that often grazes farce, his threatening potential is deliberately set aside because he is considered useful.

The Chilean Archetypal Image of the *Siútico*

Perhaps one of the reasons that Jorge Dueñas/Cuevas thrives in the world of European aristocracy lies in the fact that his mimicry goes beyond mere imitation and exploits the exotic quality that society expects him to possess. Instead of blending in, he juts out. In *Criollos en París*, Pedro has the following verse of poet Rubén Darío framed on his wall: "Paris, center of madness / focus of *surmenage* / where I gladly play / my role of *sauvage*" (Edwards Bello 18).[120][121] In the novel, Dueñas lives by this motto. Well aware that he is not one of them, he makes use of his resourcefulness and offers to act as intermediary between the remnant members of an aristocracy that is past its peak and the modern world, which it now needs help navigating. Significantly, Dueñas seems to capitalize on an authentically Chilean characteristic, as defined somewhat facetiously by Edwards Bello: "Just as the Polish are counts, and the Italians, princes, Chileans are diplomats" (25).[122] In another article, the author further argues that the real Cuevas was successful in Europe because he had already learnt his trade back home:

> Jorge Cuevas could not have been produced outside Santiago de Chile between the years 1900 and 1910, in a small social group that was ruled by the most original snobbishness. Santiago, in its mountain-nest, was a city isolated from the curses of a super-civilized world. The social group I refer to was small, elegant, and more difficult in its internal management

> than the great world of Europe or New York. ("Las condecoraciones" 1097)[123]

In other words, Cuevas is used to working as a mediator, at the margins of society, as a professional charmer who subsumes his desires to please others. This subservient role is essentially feminine, and can be seen in Jamesian novels that discuss the transatlantic marriage market, with young American girls who travel to Europe to find a good match. The issue is also broached in Edith Wharton's fiction, notably in *The House of Mirth*, where Lily must accommodate her interests repeatedly in the hopes of finding a husband. Edwards Bello described Cuevas as "a systematic flatterer of the powerful. Of superficial erudition, he recited compliments taken from French books" (qtd. in Calderón 9).[124] Dueñas, the character, is similarly shown as devoting himself "to elderly aristocratic women" (Edwards Bello 237).[125] The author in fact meditated frequently on Cuevas and his success, which filled him with admiration, and perhaps slight frustration—after all, Edwards Bello never achieved the level of fame as a writer that his childhood friend developed as a socialite. In drafts for a portrait of Cuevas, the author describes his friend's tactics to seduce older women:

> He flattered them like a wizard, softly influencing them, dancing on one foot before them . . . paying them compliments . . . which were as terrifyingly false as campaign speeches. All ladies successively had the skin of camellias, resembled Madame de Pompadour, and had cheeks that blended milk and rose petals. . . . He had no command of French and recited Rostand with an abominable accent. Once, he crossed the street to

> ask me how to pronounce *nuages*, clouds in French. ("Las condecoraciones . . ." 1097)[126]

In a variant of the Judgment of Paris, Edwards Bello considers that Cuevas too was offered three apples that would give him power, money, and the gift to seduce old women (*Antología de familia* 66). Cuevas wisely chose the one that would offer him the previous two. In a letter from philosopher George Santayana to Cuevas's father-in-law, Charles Strong, the first discusses Cuevas's troubles with the Rockefeller family, and describes Cuevas's own view on this: "as [Cuevas] says, he is used to feigning and making his way among people who can be useful to him (he calls it diplomacy) and he will be very careful in this supreme instance" (14 Feb. 1932). Apparently, Cuevas's seductive powers were legendary. Edwards Bello recounts an anecdote related by the painter Boutet de Monvel who, when in Biarritz, had introduced Cuevas to the Duke of Luynes, one of the most important Parisian socialites. The following day, Cuevas was on his way to the Luynes family castle in the duke's own car, which prompted the painter's lament: "In twenty years he never invited me to the castle" (qtd. in Edwards Bello 200).[127]

In Edwards Bello's novel, Dueñas explains his seduction of older women as both practical and indirectly satisfying, in a narcissistic sort of way: "I make them vibrate like violins, reminding them of their thirties. In the end, I truly adore them; I feel the reflection of their pleasure on my person. They like that, they love me, and I end up by loving them in me" (Edwards Bello 237).[128] Cuevas is portrayed as manipulative, and the epistolary format of his seduction, as seen in the last chapter, interestingly recalls Laclos's epistolary novel, *Dangerous Liasons*, in which the bored aristocratic

protagonists seduce and manipulate those around them to amuse themselves. Both are very careful in their negotiations with older women; the Marquise de Merteuil argues that "it is [old women] who create the reputation of the young" (76).[129] As an expert actor in public life, Cuevas was well aware, as he laid out explicitly in his novella, of "the eternal social comedy, in which triumph is given, generally, to the one who knows how to pretend best" (128).[130] In Edwards Bello's novel, Dueñas enters a salon trailed by four or five aristocratic celebrities, which "destroyed all [the] social theories" held by the upper class Chilean society in Paris (231).[131] Like the real-life Cuevas, Dueñas starts out by selling clothes at fashionable establishments and running errands of various sorts for the aristocracy. To the shock of the Chilean colony, he soon becomes "not only a friend of these people, [but] something more: he was indispensable, and his friendship was disputed as a favor" (234).[132] In his novella, written before he had ever travelled to Europe, Cuevas presents his hero and alter ego, Juan, triumphing in Paris, and being hailed by "so many people from his country that had never before taken him into account" (185).[133]

In one of several chronicles in which he mentions Cuevas, Edwards Bello describes him as "a mythological character" ("El marqués de Cuevas" 24).[134] Part of Cuevas's extravagant persona was linked to his noticeable foreign accent and mannerisms, an exoticism that he partly created and on which he certainly capitalized. As Edith Wharton reveals in *The House of Mirth*, which brilliantly portrays a complex social tissue of interlocking circles, to succeed in the "London market [which is] so glutted with new Americans . . . [newcomers] must either be very clever or awfully queer" (196).

Cuevas seems to have internalized this lesson, and understood that the key to accessing the heart of fashionable society lay in his capacity to entertain them.

Jorge Cuevas worked himself into the center of the conversation or perhaps, more accurately, refocuses the attention onto himself. Similarly, his fictional counterpart, Dueñas, starts off as a marginal figure, and becomes central to *Criollos en París*, momentarily disrupting the romantic misadventures of the characters. The plot of the novel is indeed erratic from the very beginning: despite initially following the son of the newly immigrant family, Tonio Salcedo, the narrative soon veers off to trail his friend, Pedro Plaza; the reader's attention is also led to linger frequently on Dueñas, by whom Pedro is fascinated. For Julie Jones, this casual, meandering narrative, which she partly attributes to the author's impressionist or slack style of writing, is tied to the transient point of view of the *flâneur*: Pedro represents just such a figure, walking through the streets of Paris and delighting in its ever-changing urban scenes (146). This idea is particularly appropriate to my argument, given how Baudelaire's perception of the ideal and the spleen are embodied in the *flâneur* as a figure that struggles with modernity. Indeed, this decentered or decentering structure seems to be symptomatic of the restlessness present in the novel, of the sense that the focus of entertainment or fascination lies just off-sight; just beyond the character's reach and, ultimately, underlying the feeling that the characters are looking for an ideal that is always deferred.

In Cuevas's own novella, despite being the title-character, Jacques initially appears as an ancillary figure. Like his real-life counterpart, Joaquín Edwards Bello, Jacques is a writer whose literary talent is not appreciated at home. Jacques becomes

central to the novella only when one of his friends reads out loud a colorful reverie that he has imagined. Entitled "Dreams of the Artist," (69) [135] this fantasy conjures up a world of enchanted forests, filled with magical creatures; a fairy-tale that devolves into a philosophical discussion that dwells briefly on the subject of desire and beauty. Directly invoking Huysmans' misanthropic hero Des Esseintes, Jacques dreams of withdrawing from the world, to a house that has servants who are conveniently mute and will not disturb him (74). In the same breath, Jacques considers his ideal woman, a "blonde woman, of Olympian beauty, diaphanous like a moonlight, and of whose life I knew nothing, except that I loved her, and of whom no prosaic detail of existence would come to dispel my illusions" (Cuevas 74).[136] As he explains to his friends: "I am insatiable in love, but the love that is not belittled by the constant rubbing of prosaic vulgarities of common life" (73).[137] This idealized "Olympian beauty" echoes the doll of E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale, Olympia. In fact, in a letter to his friend Marthe Bibesco, towards the end of his life, Cuevas would remember this tale of "a doll that looks like a woman, and who could sing and dance, had seduced the poet who suffers her coldness as if she had been of flesh." The doll functions as a muse, and seems life-like because she acts in the same way as a real woman would, i.e. rejecting men. In any case, Cuevas is considering Olympia as a cautionary tale of aesthetic value. As he adds immediately after in his letter, "Everything is in the imagination, and there where we see mud, others find flowers" (18 May 1959).[138] Thus the perception of beauty is in the eye of the poet, and others with a meaner spirit will see only rot and ugliness. This interestingly posits the ideal as actively created by a poetic imagination, and the spleen (ugliness, vulgarity, "mud") as a

conflicting vision imposed by everyday reality. Notably, in the novella the woman is imagined as blonde, i.e. presumably not South American, possibly European, in any case, not local, and thus posits the ideal elsewhere, not marred by real women that surround him in Chile. The notion recalls Baudelaire's literary travel to the ideal, as something that is experienced in all its purity only as an aesthetic vision.

The lyrical interlude that interrupts the main plot of Cuevas's romantic melodrama, gives us an inside glimpse into an obsession that would characterize the Marquis for the rest of his life, namely, the search for beauty as an ideal form. This search for the ideal, located usually abroad, is key to understanding the characters in all of the novels discussed in this chapter; to appreciate that their longing for social improvement is inextricably linked to the desire to escape from the native spleen, understood also as a lack of imagination, as the prosaic, and, ultimately, as the real Paris encountered by visitors, which conflicts with the unmarred imagined Paris of literature.

In this context, despite the originality of Cuevas's character, this chapter has set out to understand him, instead, as an archetypal image present in the collective unconscious of Latin Americans and Chileans in particular, which expresses the desire to triumph abroad, specifically in Paris—the highest possible standard for social success. Cuevas can then be classified as the greatest manifestation of a type of Chilean normally identified as the *arribista* or *siútico*, the arriviste or snob.[139] In *Los siete pescados capitales* (The Seven Deadly Fish—a title that puns on the Spanish word for sin, *pecado*), journalist Fernando Villegas offers a light-hearted view on the virtues and defects of Chileans, as represented by important local figures of politics and culture. The section on

the Marquis de Cuevas is subtitled "The Exiled Man of Success" (45),[140] in which Cuevas is portrayed as the gay *siútico*. Óscar Contardo similarly dedicates a whole section in his analysis of the *siútico* to Cuevas, as a particularly successful type of the local *parvenu* who breaches national frontiers to continue in his social quest abroad.

This archetype is usually very active in adapting to different social situations, so as to more effectively blend in; the downside is that in over-emphasizing the mask or *persona*—to use another key Jungian concept—, the *siútico* ends up getting disconnected from its true being. As we have seen in the novels discussed in this chapter, the mask of artifice adopted by Chileans in Paris is shown as detrimental to the notion of authentic self, a loss that ultimately uproots the characters and turns them into wandering phantoms who are consumed by their desire to belong to a country—and class—they can never entirely inhabit, likewise remaining unable to return to their native country. In *Los trasplantados,* Juan Gregorio responds to his grandmother, who rebukes him for not doing something useful, with a tirade that is surprisingly heartfelt for such a cynical character:

> We, the Hispanic American transplants, have no other function in this organism of Parisian life than spending money…, and have fun, if we can. We are beings with no homeland. We left our country too young to love it, and we were raised in this one as foreigners, without penetrating it. We are the foam of this great current that is illuminated with the brightness of a Parisian party, and vanish like the bubbles of that foam, leaving no trace. Transplants succeed transplants, without becoming a part of French life in

> its work of progress, without joining it except in its dissipation and parties. Useless here and useless to their country, which they regard with contempt, where can a transplant find an occupation in this world that does not take him seriously and that only looks at him as a contributor to its wealth? Our parents, when they left their country to come and educate us in the European manner with the wish to stay, more often than not, in this world, condemn us to perpetual idleness; they make us useless for Hispanic American life. (Blest Gana 118)[141]

Similarly, Mercedes's friend, who is the daughter of another wealthy South American family in Paris, observes that if they move back to their country of origin, they are received "with mistrust . . . almost as foreigners" (257).[142] Pedro also realizes that "he would never again be able to live in Santiago and be content" (Edwards Bello 194),[143] while a friend of his explains that his disillusionment upon returning briefly to Chile resided in the fact that "social life in Chile is devoid of fiction; we know each other too well" (197).[144]

Aware of the impossibility of retracing his steps, Cuevas reaches further into the fictional account of himself, by adopting the façade of an aristocrat, and renouncing his roots in Chile. Far from being unexplainable, Cuevas is the epitome of the arriviste as portrayed by Blest Gana and Edwards Bello, a figure which was quite common in Chile, and which flourished particularly well in Paris. In this chapter I have depicted Jorge Cuevas, the Chilean Marquis, in relation to fictional characters not only because Cuevas constituted himself as a myth, but also because the dynamics of his biographical tale

function as a *myth*, understood by Jung as "culturally elaborated representations of the contents of the deepest recess of the human psyche" (Walker 4). Within this narrative expression of the human psyche, Cuevas functions as an archetype that gives an account of the aspirational quest for ideals. This ideal of beauty, as opposed to the spleen represented by Chile, and by the vulgarity and mediocrity of everyday life, is systematically overcome in the way that Cuevas forges a new identity for himself, guided by an aesthetic code of life. Cuevas posed as a dandy, exhibiting effete mannerisms, while consistently flirting with aristocratic older women, and maintaining their relationship with them on a platonic level, a sexual indeterminacy that will be further explored in upcoming chapters.

Cuevas's uniqueness lies in the successful way in which he gained access to the most exclusive salons, and in the manner in which he passed from being on the sidelines, to taking center stage. Most impressively, rather than forcing his way into society, he managed to turn the attention of society to focus on him. For a character who "lived under the tyranny of etiquette,"[145] as Edwards Bello put it (qtd. in Calderón 9), it is all too fitting that Cuevas would become patron to a ballet company, since dance is the ultimate spectacle that looks to form as absolute. Moreover, in view of this decentering strategy, the dance company that bore his name also functioned, to a certain degree, as an extension of himself and his desire to please, a topic I will discuss further in Chapter 2. The European jet set watched his ballet company, but could never quite forget that it was attached to him, the Marquis, posing as one of them, not quite the aristocrat, but enough of one to be allowed to entertain them.

Chapter 2

Strangers within the City Gates: Dandies, *Flâneurs*, Foreigners

Jorge Cuevas represented the role of the foreign *siútico*, an *arriviste* or upstart who aspired to be accepted within the local Parisian aristocracy by imitating its fashion and customs. In this chapter I will explore how the *siútico* engaged with two roles with which it shared some defining traits, namely, that of the dandy and the *flâneur*, especially as these responded to and resisted the urban transformations brought on by industrialization and modernity in the nineteenth century. I will focus particularly on how these roles emerged and were developed in Paris, where Cuevas primarily lived, and which represented the main urban center that attracted Latin American tourists and immigrants. In the first half of the twentieth century the roles of dandy and *flâneur* remained vitally relevant for Latin American foreigners who adopted them as a way of experiencing and processing the European city and their position within it.

I will understand the stances of the dandy and the *flâneur* as embodying opposite impulses in terms of strategic viewership within the city: broadly speaking, the first observes, and the latter invites observation. However, as will be seen, the dandy also engages in observation, and the *flâneur* also showcases himself. As a keen outside spectator, the foreign *siútico* watched society on display by strolling through boulevards, around the races, or at the theatre, to imitate "proper" behavior and cast out ungainly mannerisms so as to blend in with the "right" crowd. The *siútico* is a tourist of the crowds and of the city in which he is trying to fit in; in other words, he performs the peripatetic

viewing of the *flâneur*. This imitation is often rendered through the stance of the dandy, who seeks admiration for his fashionable style and wants to stand out for his outward appearance. In this sense, the foreign *siútico*, as exemplified by Cuevas, fuses these two stances in ways that intersect, heighten, and bring out the palpable tension between the dandy and the *flâneur*, a tension that I offer as essential to the contradictory nature of the modern urban man who remains always slightly alien to his surroundings. Indeed, this imitation also suggests the lack of authenticity in the *siútico*, as seen in the characters of Blest Gana's *Los trasplantados* and Edwards Bello's *Criollos en París*. The imitation partakes of colonial mimicry, except that the ones that imitate are already partly European themselves, and thus feel entitled to being acknowledged as peers. In a sense, as seen in Chapter 1, these Latin Americans feel that they are reaching after their authentic or original identities, for they identify as displaced Europeans.

The conflicting visual perspective between dandies and *flâneurs* emerged in Baudelaire's poetry and can be understood as structuring the conception of the modern world. Ulrich Baer claims that "Baudelaire does not simply 'become' the first modern poet, or the poet of modernity itself, . . . [r]ather, . . . he makes it possible for poetry to be defined as modern." In fact, Baer adds rather controversially, "without Baudelaire's work we might be unable to define ourselves fully as modern" (158). According to Michael W. Jennings, this conception of the poet as "the representative writer of urban capitalist modernity" was invented or appropriated by Walter Benjamin (1). Indeed, the terms "modern" and "modernity" remain a conflicting part of Baudelaire's poetry. For Andrea Gogröf-Voorhees, "Modernity and in turn 'modern' designate the original and eternal

beauty of the present times, but at the same time they indicate the precarious condition of the present, its alignment with invading vulgarity" (36). In his essay "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" (The Painter of Modern Life), Baudelaire considers beauty as being composed of two elements, the transitory, that corresponds to the fashion of the times, and the eternal, the core aspect that will be appreciated by upcoming generations. To call modernity vulgar or ugly is for Baudelaire a lazy response; the real artist will find the eternal in the temporary and fleeting aspects of the "modern." In this search Baudelaire identifies the *flâneur* as a passionate observer who plunges into the crowd looking for the anonymity to experience urbanity and express his judgment on the state of the world. By setting his aesthetic perception above the common observer, the artist-*flâneur* seeks to establish an aristocracy of taste that destroys the values of the bourgeoisie—paradoxically an essential component of the crowd—to extract beauty from the ugliness of modern life. This "aristocracy" is markedly classless, and actually based on artistic sensibility. Baudelaire also dedicates a section of the essay to the dandy, who, with his aristocratic delicacy, makes his own life into a work of art to be observed by others. These two artistic roles offer attitudes that often seem contradictory. In this sense, David Harvey states that Baudelaire, "would be torn . . . between the stances of *flâneur* and dandy, a disengaged and cynical voyeur on the one hand, and man of the people who enters into the life of his subjects with passion on the other" (14). Harvey does not develop this opposition, and in this chapter I will engage with the intersections and correlations between these two terms and their crucial impact on the conception of art and viewership in modernity.

In "The Painter of Modern Life" Baudelaire was concerned with the effects of the mass reproducibility of art and its consequences for the exclusivity of critical appreciation in an age when an increasing number of people could have access to it—an issue that Walter Benjamin would later develop. In the intrinsic transience of certain arts, such as dance or fashion, there is an element of fleeting beauty that mirrors the excitement and rapid pace of modern life and becomes an important locus to discuss the issue of visuality and spectacle, as embodied by the *flâneur* and the dandy. Indeed, temporality is crucial for Baudelaire in his understanding of modernity, as seen in his section on the fast-paced horse carriages in "The Painter." The poet remains uneasy about how the temporal interacts with art, and denounced photography as an art that might "impinge on the sphere of the intangible and the imaginary" ("The Salon of 1859" 297), something that was counteracted by his close friendship with the famous Nadar, a pioneer in the medium of photography. In this chapter I will examine dance as an example of time and the transitory in a work of art, in particular through the complex tensions that emerge in the figure of Cuevas, as a foreigner who adopts the title of Marquis and exhibits himself in society ultimately through the dance company that bears his name.

British Dandies with French Connections

The terms dandy and *flâneur* are often used interchangeably and taken to mean the same. Oscar Wilde, the quintessential dandy, recollects in his confessional *De Profundis*, "I amused myself with being a *flâneur*, a dandy, a man of fashion" (10). Likewise, Baudelaire, considered to be the paradigmatic local *flâneur*, is frequently

described as a dandy, as well: "In Baudelaire," writes Robert Fulford, "we meet the *flanêur* as a supercilious dandy, alienated from the crowd through which he walks, an aristocrat in his own eyes, if not in anyone else's" (495). Although the meanings in the above quotations are juxtaposed and not equivalent, it is significant that they are grouped as semantically kindred words, despite the fact that, as Dana Brand notes in passing, they possess "radically different [sensibilities]": "The *flâneur* aspires to invisibility, rejoicing in his incognito. The dandy, on the other hand, wishes to attract the curious gazes of others. The *flâneur* is endlessly curious and responsive to what he sees, the dandy is blasé, affecting an attitude of insensibility." Given these vital contradictions, the dandy and the *flâneur* can ultimately be considered "inverted mirror images of each other" (199n4). I invoke Wilde and Baudelaire as exemplary representatives of two roles that are traditionally attached to distinct national cultures, as well as Beau Brummell, who can be seen as a model for both authors, since he lived different lives in both countries, in the cities of London and Calais. The semantic confusion between dandy and *flâneur* might stem in part from the fact that, although seeking to designate national types in the midst of cosmopolitan cities, they are actually hybrid in origin and development.

The word dandy, traceable to a Scottish ballad of the 1780s, became a popular adjective during the first decades of the nineteenth century in Britain (Harper), eliciting the focus of several treatises. One of the most celebrated is *Sartor Resartus*, a satirical reflection on the history of clothing (serialized 1833-4), in which Thomas Carlyle dedicates a chapter to "The Dandyacal Body" that is for the most part derisive. Carlyle records the unfailing opinion of his apocryphal Professor Teufelsdrockh, a German

transcendentalist philosopher who explains that Dandyism is one of the new cults that emerged when religious feeling was "driven out of most Churches," something "Chiefly . . . observable in England, which, as the wealthiest and worst-instructed of European nations, offers precisely the elements . . . in which such moon-calves and monstrosities are best generated."

Although the spirit of the dandy has been upheld as exclusively British, French influence on its formation is fundamental. The founding essay on dandyism, *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell* (1845), penned by the French writer Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, considers the life of the paradigmatic British dandy, Georges "Beau" Brummell (1778-1840), hailed as the Father of Dandyism. Significantly, Brummell spent his last years in France, where his legendary status was cemented when Captain William Jesse wrote the biography that immortalized his reputation through a first-hand account of his life in Calais. The nickname of "Beau" is part of a tradition of calling Regency dandies by the French word for *beautiful*—other names include "Blood," "Incroyable" (incredible) (Carlyle); "raffinés" (refined), "lions" (Baudelaire 20); "muscadins" (wearers of musk perfume), "gant-jaunes" (yellow-gloves) (Huart 2); "Buck," and "Macaronie" (D'Aurevilly 30-1).

Curiously, the Macaroni of the mid-eighteenth century is also associated to an intercultural origin. Used to define young elite men who had been on their Grand Tour to Italy, and thereby acquired a taste for the food not available in England, Macaronis affected continental customs, wore outlandish wigs and extravagant clothes, and made reference to French and Italian customs and language (R. Norton). They described

themselves as belonging to the Macaroni Club, which, as Horace Walpole wrote in 1764 was "composed of all the travelled young men who wear long curls and spying-glasses" (qtd. in R. Norton). This description significantly highlights how the fashionable quality of the Macaroni went hand in hand with an instrument to observe people critically from a distance at social events. Dandies placed themselves as the center of the viewing perspective, the spying glass symbolizing their social and political power. The connotation was also one of voyeurism and general sexual lewdness, especially since they were associated to effeminacy and sodomy—a crime understood as imported from Italy. At the time of Captain Robert Jones's conviction for sodomy in July 1772, his supporters were deemed "Catamites . . . or . . . MACCARONIES" (*Public Ledger*, qtd. in R. Norton). The term later went on to describe any person who "exceeded the ordinary bounds of fashion," as *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine* explained in its first issue in 1772 (qtd. in Rauser 58), so that a man from a lower rank could adopt the attitude of a macaroni, and thus obscure his background. For Rauser, the self-construction of the macaroni "blurred boundaries of class, gender, and nationality" in a way that served as a cautionary tale about the sort of outcome possible for the social aspirations of the bourgeoisie, "a secret exemplar for the rising middle classes as they debated how to become urbane cosmopolites while remaining authentically English" (58). Similar concerns can be seen in the figure of the dandy, which mirrored the aspirations and anxieties of the bourgeoisie, as will be discussed further on.

The concern for the nationality of the dandy is curiously persistent in all texts that discuss the term. Like Carlyle, Barbey d'Aurevilly also defines dandyism as an inherently

British phenomenon: "it is the force of English originality, which is imprinted upon human vanity . . . that produces what we call Dandyism" (5).[146] The comment is ironic given the fact that Barbey d'Aurevilly himself was considered a most exquisite dandy. Further along, however, he seems to suggest that the origin of the dandy can be obliquely situated in France, since the climate that allowed for the appearance of the dandy rose under the Restoration of Charles II and its extravagant (French-derived) manners, which upset the Puritan values of Cromwellian England (24). Similarly, Chateaubriand discusses the figure of the dandy as a British phenomenon, but concedes that the "original of the dandy [can be found] in the [courtiers during the] reign of Henri III" (751).[147] The ties between both cultures are also ostensible in the dandy's "particular speech," which Carlyle describes as "apparently some broken *Lingua-franca*, or English-French"—noting the snobbishness inherent in the attitude. Thus, the French roots of the dandy signal one of its main characteristics, namely, the artificiality of his pose. In this regard, the dandy comes closer to the derided fop, a stock character of British tradition that was more generally associated to the fool, and whose attempts at fashion erred on the side of excess. Inspired by French fashion and customs, the fop was usually effeminate and socially arriviste. This prejudice against French affectation and artificiality can be linked to the historical enmity between the nations, and was not exclusively English, as seen in the previous chapter.

The conscious, carefully constructed pose of the dandy was as important as his clothes, since it constitutes the very principle of his persona, which is all surface. As Schmid argues,

> The true dandy has to resort to airs because deeds would impair the polished surface. His self-representation does not lay open any essence. The dandy is a mask, a being of vague and fragile identity. His essence is constituted by this very lack of definable essence. His communication is aimed at establishing 'superficial' values, not at conveying moral or didactic messages, although, of course, the superficiality eventually functions as an auto-referential mirror for society. (84)

Heather Marcovitch argues that the pose associated with the nineteenth century dandy was an artistic behavior that was self-consciously performed in everyday life, which functioned as the frame of a theatrical environment. Thus, "Wilde's pose was . . . an act of the performance of everyday life . . . [of] reinscribing one's behaviour as a performance," a performance that Marcovitch understands as "a process, not a finished product" (26). The characterization of the pose as a repeated behavior echoes Judith Butler's concept of the performativity of identity as constantly being constructed by everyday acts. Crucially, the dandy's pose is created self-consciously, and used to represent his identity as a series of harmonious, but continuously surprising, signifiers. For James Eli Adams, "the dandy always comes into focus as a textual mark, . . . of masculine identity under stress or revision" (55). In this light, the dandy, by his artistic posing, questions the very notion of masculinity. This conscious use of artificiality is what makes the dandy both safe and troubling. Safe, because his theatricality and external signification seem to preclude him from becoming identified with any active endeavors, such as (homo)sexual acts or political insurrection. Troubling, because the dandy

heightens the permanent (self) construction of his identity. Moe Meyer analyzes the trials of Oscar Wilde and the initial accusation that sparked the libel suit, that of "posing as a somdomite" (sic), and argues that the Marquess of Queensbury's use of the word *posing* was deliberate (92). In an attempt to dissuade him from pursuing his relationship with Oscar Wilde, the Marquess had indeed written to his son "Bosie" that he did not care about the actual nature of his relationship to Wilde, since "to [his] mind to pose as a thing is as bad as to be it" (qtd. in Ellman 395). As Wilde's trials illustrated, the very pose of the dandy could become suspect, precisely because of what it pretended to show.

The surface signification of the dandy seemed to hold an essence that was not merely restricted to clothes. Carlyle circumscribes the Dandy to "a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes," dubbing him, rather more generously, "a Poet of Cloth," but d'Aurevilly clarifies that the dandy is distinguished not so much by his clothes, but by the manner of wearing them (12); and tersely warns the reader: "Dandyism is not the brutal art of putting on a tie" (61).[148] Baudelaire also highlights the imperturbable attitude of the dandy, which consists in "the pleasure of surprising and the proud satisfaction of never being surprised" (20),[149] something that does not preclude him from feeling deeply, but rather from revealing those sentiments. Thus, the dandy's exterior polish is but "a symbol of his superior aristocracy of spirit" (20).[150] Baudelaire stresses the profound sensitivity and exceptional mind of the dandy, and further asks us to consider that the very word "implies a quintessence of character and the subtle intelligence of all moral mechanism in this world" (8).[151] This statement not only elevates the dandy to a philosopher of profound

human insight, but also contradicts the idea that he is mere surface or, perhaps more accurately, in the context of an essay that offers a "Praise of Makeup" (the section entitled "Eloge du Maquillage"), it suggests that there is meaning in surface, that fashion and artifice possess a spiritual dimension that links them to the Ideal, the beautiful, the good. In this light, if "The dandy *is* the surface he presents" (Schmid 83, emphasis in the original), then dandyism defies interpretation, and resists the idea of finding depth of meaning. As Wilde paradoxically states in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, "truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style."

At the turn of the century, aesthetes would elevate dandyism into an art form. In his essay "Dandies and Dandies" (1896), Max Beerbohm argued that Brummell "was indeed, in the utmost sense of the word, an artist." Following this logic, Brummell's dressing room becomes "a studio in which he daily composed that elaborate portrait of himself which was to be exhibited for a few hours in the clubrooms of the town" (Grace and Philip Warton qtd. in Beerbohm). Ironically, in this respect, dandyism turns out to be the most democratic, "the least selfish of all the arts," since, as opposed to musicians, poets or painters, he asks for no fee: "the dandy presents himself to the nation whenever he sallies from his front door. Princes and peasants alike may gaze upon his masterpieces."

A masterpiece, of course, can only be hailed in retrospect, which means that contemporary dandies are always inscribed in lack. Beerbohm suggests that no one has been able to live up to the dandy paradigm in the wake of Brummell. Whoever wishes to *wear* the role of dandy is held up against Brummell and found wanting, their "title /

hang[ing] loose about him, like a giant's robe / Upon a dwarfish thief," to quote *Macbeth* (5.2.18-20). Like Macbeth, who clings to his armor in the hopes that it will clothe him in courage and give him back his soldierly station once more, the dandy dresses in an attempt to fight against fate, against the passing of time, against age and, ultimately, against the inevitability of the advance of industrialism. They dress to become visible, present and acknowledged.

Indeed, the visualization of life as spectacle, "as a stage in progress" (Sutherland 17),[152] can be seen as the defining common denominator of dandies from Brummel to Wilde. Despite their "emotional indifference, a sign of their alleged superiority," the dandy is "nonetheless portrayed as being dependent upon recognition from an adoring or simply astonished audience" (Gill 71). The dandy thus seems to make an implicit pact with society, wherein he asks to be recognized as outrageous, but within a decently acceptable limit, that is to say, he strays only ever so innocuously into provocative territory. The boundary between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, however, remains tenuous at best, and often has to do with retaining ambiguity or contradiction regarding moral opinion. Interestingly, since the dandy claims to be the arbiter of taste, he both sets and transgresses these boundaries. As Schmid argues, "Because of his very lack of essence and the emphasis on the cultivation of the self, the dandy can only exist as a phenomenon that is spoken about" (84). This explains why the audiences of dandies "not only celebrated their heroes but also eventually led to their downfall . . . [in their] desire to uncover the dandy's subjectivity" (Schmid 84). In fact, Wilde's audience also became his executioner, "when it turned out that the staged subjectivity was a mask

hiding intimacies that could no longer be staged in a way that was satisfactory to [them]" (84).

Although the dandy held unorthodox views that were often politically charged, he enacted his defiance not only by his eloquent wit and fashion sense, but also by his theatrical flair, by literally *posing* a threat. For Giuseppe Scaraffia, the very artifice of his character is a way of resisting power: "He must be unnatural to recover the naturalness of a society that has become unnatural" (29).[153] But, as Barbey d'Aurevilly points out, "Every dandy is a brave man, but a brave man who has tact; who stops in time" (44).[154] Indeed, the risk of going too far was illustrated by the way in which Brummell fell out with the Prince of Wales, something that occurred slowly, as their familiar relationship of youth became more strained, and culminated when Brummell, upon being socially cut by the Prince, who had become rather stout, inquired to their mutual acquaintance, "who's your fat friend?" (Kelly). The incident put Brummell "decidedly and categorically *outside* the royal circle" (Kelly), and left him unprotected in the face of mounting debts that finally led him into exile. Even more famously, perhaps, was the manner in which Oscar Wilde's witty responses at the trial ultimately trapped him and prompted his downfall. Indeed, the dandy's speech acts were supposed to be shallow but beautifully worded, or at least be perceived as such; they functioned as "verbal witticisms aimed at retaining the smooth surface" (Schmid 83-4). Thus, audiences could ignore the depth of the critical bite, and focus safely on the cleverly paradoxical wording. This worked as long as the paradox was not revealed to possess depth or reveal beneath it an ungainly truth.

Regarding the codes of the dandy, Baudelaire contended that the "ardent necessity of becoming an original [was] contained within the outer limits of propriety" (19),[155] since, although operating "outside the law," the institution of dandyism "has rigorous laws to which its subjects must strictly submit."[156] Beerbohm reflects on the evolution of fashion and explains that the dandy must be very careful in how he pushes boundaries:

> in the sphere of costume no swift rebellion can succeed . . . It is only by the trifling addition or elimination, modification or extension, made by this or that dandy and copied by the rest, that the mode proceeds. The young dandy will find certain laws to which he must conform. If he outrage them he will be hooted by the urchins of the street, not unjustly, for he will have outraged the slowly constructed laws of artists who have preceded him.

In other words, in order to obtain and retain his elegance, the dandy must walk the fine line between distinction and crassness, "between originality and eccentricity" as Barbey d'Aurevilly puts it (44).[157] In fact, "in order to be well-dressed, [the dandy] cannot stand out" (45).[158] As Ian Kelly argues in his study on Beau Brummell, fashion in men during this era found its model in "Greek and Roman statuary on display in London"; thus, fabrics attempted to show the contours of a man's physique, which meant a change towards tailoring that sculpted the body, as well as a restriction to the color white, and to skin tones, in order to aspire to the classical ideal (Kelly).

Elegance was achieved by exercising restraint, since "the perfect toilette consists on absolute simplicity" (Baudelaire 20).[159] In his *Treatise on Elegant Living* (1830),

which anticipated Barbey d'Aurevilly's text, Honoré de Balzac similarly argued that the elegance of the dandy came with a self-aware sobriety, so that refinement could be recognized by expensive details, which followed "less the simplicity of luxury than the luxury of simplicity" (522).[160] This immaculate look, in fact, was the culmination of a sartorial development: as Chateaubriand points out in his memoires, the figure of the British dandy evolved from the melancholy "heart wearied, Byronic" of the early 1820s, who "had to possess something negligent about the person, long nails, a partial beard . . . locks of straggling hair," to the mid-nineteenth century dandy of carefully groomed appearance, and excellent health (751).[161] To stand out, Wilde needed to defy the simple attire that had become typical for men, and instead, "protest[ed] against bourgeois utilitarian thinking . . . [by] turn[ing] to velvet, silk and flowers" (Schmid 83). Whatever the fashion of the dandy, his stance admitted no contradictions: above all, he was "[the despot] of elegance" (Barbey d'Aurevilly 33)[162] and "the autocrat of opinion" (39).[163] Adding a British voice to the discussion, Beerbohm contends that, "English society is always ruled by a dandy, and the more absolutely ruled the greater that dandy be."

The power of the dandy resided not only in his status as fashion guru, but also, more ambivalently, in his potential threat to social class boundaries, given his equivocal background and position. Although he hinted at a mysterious past of aristocratic origins, the dandy usually came from a bourgeois, often uneventful origin. Beau Brummell's family was not noble, and his social success, based neither on wealth, talent, nor ancestry, was in itself astonishing. Brummell received recognition from an "audience whose

criteria for applause he did not seem to meet and whose values he subverted in a skillful and elaborate game" (Moers qtd. in Schmid 83).

Indeed, the perfect dandy should have no other qualities to make him stand out, such as genius, birth, or fortune (Barbey d'Aurevilly 11); completely idle, he could manifest no interest or devotion to any activity. Having "no other occupation but that of pursuing happiness . . . no other profession but that of elegance,"[164] dandies could only be interested in "satisfying their passions, feeling and thinking" (Baudelaire 19).[165] Only in this respect was money indispensable—not for its own sake, but as a means to leisure. Thus, Count Alfred d'Orsay (1801-1852) remained an imperfect dandy because he dabbled in sculpting[166] and painting, a habit that Beerbohm decried as "inexcusable" since "[t]he aesthetic vision of a dandy should be bounded by his own mirror."

In this sense, the dandy is a creature defined by borders, even as he tries to redraw them. The dandy wants to be noticed; he yearns for "the glance of your eyes" as Carlyle mockingly recounts. Inasmuch as he depends on an audience, he puts himself at the mercy of observers. Barbey d'Aurevilly offers psychological insight into the weakness that most affects the dandy, but which is, in fact, universal: "We are vain, we want the approval of others—charming drive of the human heart which we have slandered too much. This is perhaps the whole explanation to the affectations of Dandyism" (90).[167] If people were kinder to each other, Barbey d'Aurevilly suggests, perhaps dandies would disappear. The desire to gain other people's approval is even more vital to our understanding of the foreign dandy.

As a British phenomenon with French origins, the concept of dandyism crossed

over to the continent in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, "introduced to Parisian culture during a second wave of Anglomania in the late 1820s" (Gill 76). The term that comes into Paris is already hybrid and, although it serves to identify the British other, it already contains traces of the Parisian native.

In fact, the use of the word *dandy* and the role it designated quickly became incorporated into different national cultures in local variants. The series of *physiologies* that offered written and illustrated portraits of national types, popular during the mid-nineteenth century (especially in France), offer good examples of how the term circulated in Europe. The Spanish book of *physiologies* included a portrait of "El Elegante" (The Elegant Man, 1842) or dandy, which is commonly known in Spanish with the more old-fashioned term "*pirraca*" and the modern, "*lechuguino*" (397). The word *lechuguino* was still used in the 1940s and appears in several Latin American dictionaries. For Argentinian speakers, it could define "a very young man who tries to flirt with women, pretending to be a grown up."[168] A second meaning more directly describes the dandy type: "A young man who is very particular about his appearance, and follows fashion rigorously" (Caballero 722).[169] Interestingly, the term highlights elegance, but also refers to someone who pretends to go beyond his age; i.e. as someone who poses.

Author Ramón de Navarrete contends that the *Elegante* descends from the mythological character of Narcissus. Appropriately, the first thing the *Elegante* does upon getting up from bed at noon is to request a mirror, an object that is ubiquitous in his home (398). The Spanish version of the dandy requires that he have "at least seven lovers . . . one for each day of the week"[170]—the more scandalous the affairs, the louder and

more dramatic their exits from his life, the better (402). In Barbey d'Aurevilly's wake, the author claims that a true specimen should have no other occupation and "should be recorded [as a dandy] in the mayor's neighborhood register."[171] Navarrete also notes the Gallophile tendency of the dandy, whose language is peppered with French words that he often misuses (399).[172] In this sense, the Spanish dandy variant is inspired less in the English model than in its French version, for reasons discussed in the previous chapter. The *Elegante* "never allows himself . . . to stroll anywhere other than around what is called *Paris* [in Madrid]." In his admiration of everything Parisian, the *Elegante*, in fact, turns out to be very close to the *siútico*. One can well imagine that in Paris the Spanish *Elegante* became the tourist *flâneur*, observing and internalizing details to be able to use later on as evidence of true Parisian connoisseurship.

The Hybrid Roots of the Parisian *Flâneur*

The *flâneur*, on the contrary, was considered to be exclusively French, a word derived from the verb *flâner*, which initially only meant to stroll idly, often uselessly. This negative connotation shifted in the early nineteenth century in literary descriptions that praised its endless curiosity as an indicator of humanity. Thus, in *Physiologie du mariage* (1829), Balzac exclaims unapologetically, "flâner, c'est vivre" (to stroll is to live). The embodiment in the figure of the *flâneur* as the "observer in motion" (de Lacroix)[173] became prevalent in the following decades. From early incarnations during the July Monarchy as "a man of insufferable idleness" (82), that is to say, a man who has the means to have leisure time, of the sort only allowed by the modern industrial city, the

term became increasingly identified with a bourgeois figure that had the time and money to engage in this ambulatory—and often written—configuration of the city. In his book consecrated to *The Physiology of the Flaneur* (sic, 1841) Louis Huart, editor of the weekly satirical publication *La Caricature*, offers a philosophical definition of the *flâneur*: "Man rises above other animals only because he knows how to be a *flaneur*" (7);[174] he is a *strolling* animal. Reflecting "positive evidence of both social status and superior thought" (Ferguson 83), the *flâneur* became associated with the writer. As Auguste de Lacroix argued, the *flâneur*'s occupation was the main source of creativity for the writer—indeed, *flâneurs* are "literary people because they engage in *flânerie*."[175] Baudelaire further elevated him into an elite artist-*flâneur*, a philosopher who digests the rawness and translates the wonders of modern life.

Baudelaire had applauded the artist's ability to remain in the moment, to thrive in "the fleeting and the infinite," to feel everywhere at home, a unique chance given by the modern city to "be at the center of the world and remain hidden from the world" (9).[176] Unimpeded observation depended on the ability to immerse oneself in the anonymity of the crowd, but the sense of intellectual superiority and keener sensibility of the poet was often countered with a misanthropic isolation from the crushing standardization of the crowd. In his collection of prose poems *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869) Baudelaire illustrates this tension. "Les Foules" (The Crowds) describes the experience of bathing in the crowd and entering into communion with a mass of people, described in ambiguous terms as a "sacred prostitution of the soul."[177] This joyful, orgasmic union is marked, however, by the inevitable awareness of post-coital separation. The equivocal line "Multitude,

solitude, termes égaux" (multitude, solitude, equal terms) (94) can be interpreted in similar ways. With his imagination, the artist can people solitude, projecting his interior world onto the exterior one; by the same token, the multitude can seem very solitary for the thoughtful artist. In fact, isolation is a required state for the poet and, in his praise of "La Solitude," Baudelaire expresses contempt for those who cannot remain silent and alone. This new kind of solitude can also be connected to the aloofness cultivated by the dandy, thus finding another point that joins these two seemingly opposite roles.

Walter Benjamin argues that, despite being drawn to big-city crowds, Baudelaire was "unable to rid himself of a sense of their essentially inhuman make-up" (29). In the short story "The Man of the Crowd" by E. A. Poe—whose work Baudelaire translated—a manic character that ambles restlessly around London with no fixed aim, only able to relax in the throng of crowds, demonstrates the dangers of consecrating oneself to this activity. As Benjamin suggests, however, this man cannot truly be labeled a *flâneur*, but rather "what had to become of the *flâneur* once he was deprived of the milieu to which he belonged." The critical distance to the crowd emerges then as a crucial component, since the "man of leisure can indulge in the perambulations of the *flâneur* only if as such he is already out of place" (29). The phrase is significant for Benjamin himself, who was an exile in Paris, seeking haven from the Nazi regime. Benjamin was fascinated by Paris, and the city quickly came to feel familiar, a place to explore "life's exciting possibilities" (Leslie).

The practice of *flânerie* can be understood not merely as amusement, but also as ontologically and epistemologically significant in the context of emerging modernity,

since, by walking through the city, the *flâneur* is responding to the need of making sense of his new urban environment, with its increasing and varied inhabitants, and its complex new dynamics. Cuvardic argues that the *flâneur* is an active interpreter of the city; even if he often walks with no particular destination in mind, guided by the happy accidents in his way, this is not to say that he has no objective (28). The *flâneur* could be defined more broadly, in Benjamin's famous words, as he who "goes botanizing on the asphalt" ("The Paris of the Second Empire" 68): he observes, classifies, and ultimately configures a living map of the city. As Cuvardic contends, following Barthes's metaphor of the city as writing, "The *flâneur* is the reader of the *city book*" (31).[178] For Ferguson, "flânerie posed the fundamental problem of the ways of knowing and being that are possible, even necessary, in the modern city." As a practice that feeds the artistic imagination, *flânerie* becomes for the writer a "uniquely modern" way of establishing a relationship to the city by turning it "into a spectacle" (81). Cuvardic discusses in more depth the emerging figure of the journalist *flâneur* who is characterized by "interpreting the city from the metaphorical frame of the *novelty bazar*, by becoming aware of the historical change, . . . (perceiving the 'acceleration' of events and social processes); by conceiving the city as a theatre, as spectacle; and by displaying a feeling of empathy towards the 'other' citizen, who is occasionally 'marginal'" (27).[179]

In fact, the figure of the *flâneur* changed in ways that paralleled the modifications undergone by the city. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the arcades served as the paradigmatic locus destined for "the consumption of the public space as spectacle" (Cuvardic 29). However, with the renovations of the city that often cut into the arcades,

the *flâneur*'s habits forcefully shifted. He came to embody, as Ferguson contextualizes, a "figure of loss within a larger 'discourse of displacement.'" In a broader sense, "The displacement of the *flâneur* within the city translated the writer's own sense of dislocation within bourgeois society. Flânerie ceased to signify freedom and autonomy; it implied instead estrangement and alienation" (Ferguson 81).

Paris had undergone major arterial modifications under Napoleon III with the renovations spearheaded by the Préfet de la Seine, Georges-Eugène Haussmann, which included the creation of a system of sewage and water supply, as well as wide boulevards, new sidewalks, bridges and public parks, all of which allowed for an enlarged public space that could be occupied by department stores, and which radically changed the use and consumption of space and movement. Baron Haussmann's alterations undeniably improved sanitation and circulation conditions in the city, but they also aimed at controlling urban spaces to allow a swifter military response and avoid another popular outbreak like the 1848 Revolution (Lewis 369, 477). This created a new urban landscape and meant new ways of experiencing street life. In the context of an urban environment that is in permanent fluctuation and perceived as fragmented, "[t]he narratives of a ubiquitous *flâneur* joined otherwise separate parts" (Ferguson 94). Through his "stroll rhetoric" (Ramos 232)[180] the *flâneur* structured the city by tracing its lines and spaces in movement and thought, articulating bridges and streets into an organized and organic whole (232).

Ramos posits an inherent anxiety in this struggle of the *flâneur*-chronicler to contain the city in writing, and to negotiate the public and private space, that by

becoming commercial and commercialized had alienated the private bourgeois subject (236). In this attempt, in early incarnations of the *flâneur*, "[n]arrative control is a function of urban possession," in which Paris is conceived "in terms of domination" (Ferguson 92-3) that is often of a sexual nature. For foreigners who strolled the streets of Paris, as seen in the previous chapter, this city was less benign, and became a *femme fatale* who devoured them mercilessly.

Although technically only Frenchmen could be true *flâneurs*, foreigners similarly used the stroll to engage with issues of identity and modernity. The brief portrait of "The *Flâneur*" (1841) by Auguste de Lacroix, opens with a nationalist invocation to the term itself: "Do you know of . . . a word so exclusively French to express a more thoroughly French personification?"[181] The word *flâneur*, however, is actually of uncertain origin (Pavot 136), although one dictionary suggests that the root comes from the Norwegian *flana,* to wander (Harper) and another, from the Irish *flanni,* a libertine (Larousse 436). Significantly, de Lacroix's text is contained within the anthology *Les Français peint par eux-mêmes* (The French painted by themselves) (1840-3), to which major writers contributed with miniature portraits of everyday characters of Parisian streets. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that the real *flâneur* can only be found in Paris. Huart devoted a whole chapter of his book to differentiating the *flâneur* from false imitators like the "foreign gawker"[182]—anyone not native to Paris who hurries around the city visiting every site with a map under his arm (39). Despite this emphatic bias against non-Parisian *flâneurs*, de Lacroix himself acknowledges in passing that the tourist is essentially "a *flâneur* who is on a trip."[183] Indeed, by taking up the activity of the stroll, Cuevas and

other Latin Americans embodied the fantasy of becoming authentically French within the city.

Amused and interested by everything, the *flâneur* observes more carefully than others, gaining insight into the city and its inhabitants. *Flânerie* is conceived as an occupation that has to be approached through the perpetually surprised "eyes of the child" (Cuvardic 24), which can be compared to the equally enthusiastic vantage point of the tourist. In fact, the concept of *flânerie* was imported, and became quite popular in Latin America, where France held sway in fashion and customs, as discussed previously. Spanish coined the verb *flanear* to mean lazing around, roaming the streets ("vagar, callejear") (Díez 300), even as it became fashionable for Latin American writers to conceive of themselves as *flâneurs*, especially those who visited or emigrated to Paris and recorded their thoughts and impressions of the mythic city of lights.

For Argentinian writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888), *flanear* "is an art that only Parisians possess fully, although the foreigner begins his rough education in the charmed life of Paris by placing his clumsy fingers on that instrument on which only those finest artists extract boundless harmonies" (qtd. in Cuvardic 23). The metaphor does not clarify the type of instrument enacted by the *flânerie*, although, given the suggestion of harmonies as opposed to melodies, something like a piano can be imagined, even if it makes for a rather difficult instrument to metaphorically carry around while walking. The multiplicity of sound might also suggest several visions of the city that yields different levels to the expert *flâneur*. Cuvardic gives an account of *flâneurs* and *flâneries* in Modernist Latin American writers and argues that they use the stroll as a way

of constructing a conception of their identities, often experiencing a (sometimes foreign) city as an articulation and organization of their own selves. Looking particularly at their representation of European, North American and Latin American cities and the "privileged place [flânerie occupies] in the project of modern identity" (21), he highlights the figure of the journalist-*flâneur* who reflects and chronicles the city through which he walks.

Writers, however, were not the only foreigners who travelled to Europe. In Latin America, specifically, tourism to Europe became widespread after the wars of independence in the mid-nineteenth century, when travelling, especially to France and England, became "one of the basic rituals of education for the ruling groups . . . one of the privileged forms of discourse on modernity in Latin America" (Ramos 265). These visits often turned into extended sojourns that sometimes became permanent. Not only journalistic chronicles, and essays written by intellectuals, but also private letters that invoked the figure of the *flâneur* were used to create a Latin American identity that engaged with urban modernity (Cuvardic 23). Through the stroll, the foreigner attempted to domesticate his environment, "transform[ing] the city into a *salon*, into an intimate space, precisely through this consumerist gaze that turns urban and mercantile activity . . . into an object of aesthetic and even erotic pleasure" (Ramos 235-6).

As seen in the previous chapter, the Chilean novels that discuss Paris often conceived of the city and its society as a large salon with concentric circles that opened up to reveal the intimate nucleus of aristocracy; in this sense, the stroll not only offered novel sights up for aesthetic consumption, as Ramos suggests, but was also used as a way

to possess the authentic city, and locate the most distinguished type of upper-class behavior. The Latin American *flâneur* promenaded through the avenues of society both to imitate the models on display and, ultimately, to be acknowledged and welcomed as a civilized peer. Guatemalan writer Enrique Gómez Carrillo (1873-1927) illustrates this process in an account of his strolling experience: "almost without feeling it, I come to believe, after a while, that I am not a foreigner, not even a stranger, and that I form part of the population in which I find myself" (qtd. in Cuvardic 32).[184] As Cuvardic observes, *flânerie* allows the travelling writer to feel more at home in his surroundings, because it "supposes an immersion in the more 'authentic' urban everyday life that allows the foreigner to become another native, in contrast to the falsified look of the tourist" (32).

The *flâneur* and the tourist/immigrant were linked semantically a century earlier in ways that made it relevant to the experience of urban modernity, illustrating perhaps how every dweller in a post-industrialist city remains to some extent a foreigner. The portrait of "The Tourist" (1841) included in *Les Français* describes the perennial traveller as a sort of "wandering Jew [but] with a decent attire and more money" (de Beauvoir 17).[185] The Wandering Jew legend included the idea of a crime that imposed this drifting as punishment. Although this tourist has the redeeming grace of being French, the narrative still casts him in a suspicious light that hints at loosened national ties, and echoes the discourse on the *flâneur*, whose aimless drifting often drew mistrustful comments. This became especially true in the wake of the 1848 Revolution, where the *flâneur* became "The Foreigner" of the opening poem of Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*, a man with no family, friends, country or religion (Ferguson 93-4). Baudelaire's

understanding of the poet as an elite artist-*flâneur* made him always slightly foreign, a part of and yet always estranged from the crowd he seeks to "espouse" (9).[186]

In the context of urban cosmopolitanism, strangers such as Cuevas must be considered as a defining element of the city. In his discussion of the *flâneur*, Rob Shields notes that "the popular European fascination . . . with distant cultures experienced through rubbing shoulders with foreigners," is a factor that Walter Benjamin curiously neglected in his examination of modern city dynamics (68). Shields explicitly conceives the *flâneur* as a counterpart to the Stranger, a figure described in George Simmel's sociological essay of 1950 as "the person who comes today and stays to morrow," that is to say, not the tourist, but the immigrant. The Stranger is the person who becomes an element of the group, inasmuch as s/he is bound to it by common frontiers, and his "position as a full-fledged member involves both being outside [the group] and confronting it" (402). In this sense, the Stranger and the *flâneur* traverse opposite journeys: "*The Stranger is thus a foreigner who becomes like a native, whereas the flâneur is the inverse, a native who becomes like a foreigner*" (Shields 68, emphasis in the original). This spatial relation of the stranger to the community is also important when considering the position of the local citizen within a modern urban center. Shields draws a parallel between both, arguing that

> Not only does modernity change the conditions of the Europeans' encounter with foreign others; it also—reflexively—changes the conditions of intimacy and 'native-ness' for the European city dweller. The metropolis is a space in which both outsiders *and* insiders are 'dis-

> placed.' Neither are properly at home in the commodified spaces of the imperial metropolis. (68)

Thus, the foreigner who encounters the idealized Paris of literature and myth is faced with the overwhelming reality of the disorienting and altered city; this sense of alienation is tempered by the domesticating practice of tourism. As Ferguson points out, however, even for the citizen, "Paris cannot be conquered because it is a utopia, an elsewhere forever beyond reach" (97); as discussed in the previous chapter, it is embargoed by the myth of the *ideal*.

In Kipling's poem "The Stranger," the local citizen feels fear upon observing the subaltern threatening the limits of his territory and notion of the familiar:

> The Stranger within my gate,
> He may be true or kind,
> But he does not talk my talk—
> I cannot feel his mind.
> I see the face and the eyes and the mouth,
> But not the soul behind.

The fear of the local citizen upon observing this "Stranger within my gate," whom he cannot decipher, is heightened by the destabilization of the boundaries that delimit "my gate," and define "Stranger" in a cosmopolitan city. It is no longer the stranger that lives far off in the colonies, but a stranger that has erupted into his home city.

From Jorge Cuevas to Georges de Cuevas: A Cinderfellow Story

The adoption of paradigmatic forms of urban appropriation, such as *flânerie*, and of modern posturing, such as dandyism, allows Latin American foreigners to reconstruct and re-evaluate their own identities. Jorge Cuevas takes this transformation to a more extreme level by changing his appearance, reimagining his background and altering his name. These elements initially suggest the idea of anonymity, which underlines the tension between not wishing to stand out and the desire to craft an identity that made him acceptable and allowed him to fit in.

Cuevas's dandified imitation was captured in a sketch that accompanied an article on his ballet company, which shows the Marquis in profile, wearing an impeccably white shirt, with the embroidered initials G.C. with a crown on top (see fig. 2). Figure 3 shows him posing for a studio photograph in a tailored suit, with a white pocket-handkerchief, holding a cigarette in his best Oscar Wilde impersonation, his hand placed in a studiedly casual manner inside his pocket. The blasé attitude is decidedly affected, since Cuevas, as shown on numerous occasions, was far from restrained in his attitude.

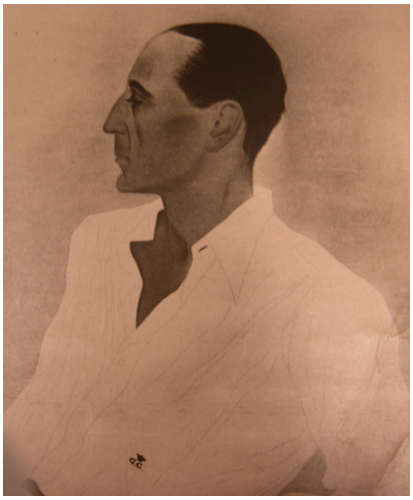

Fig. 2. Illustration showing the Marquis in profile wearing an impeccably white shirt, and sporting the polished look of an aloof dandy. The aquatint portrait is by Joan Junyer (Sayler).

Fig. 3. Studio photograph showing the marquis in the dandy attire.

The French dandy look certainly worked towards making Cuevas blend in. At the very least it marked him as (mostly) not Chilean: a magazine article in the Chilean press

on Cuevas, who, towards the end of his life still bore his rescinded title of nobility, paradoxically identified "the Marquis de Cuevas, Chilean, [as] above all, Parisian" (8).[187] When asked to write a travel column, Cuevas appropriately offered his own personal view of Paris, through the viewpoint of a *flâneur* that sees the city as a spectacle:

> I perform in two Parises. The Paris where I do not feel like a tourist and am not a tourist. In which I have the sense of having lived all my life. The one in which I eat, sleep, walk, drink coffee, observe, etc. The one in which I don't wear a tie, the one I know intimately, where prices are cheaper, characters more ridiculous, more interesting. The Paris from the Seine to here, that is to say, Rue Bonaparte, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Saint-Michel, Raspail, etc. The other Paris is from the Seine to the other side, that is to say, to the Opéra, the Madelaine. Here I am a complete tourist. I have to wear a tie, walk carefully, because a restaurant can mean the budget of a month; a tie, that of fifteen days; and a *boite*, jail, because I would not have the money to pay for it. (51)[188]

Thus the Paris on the left is a world of meritocracy, where people can work their way up, whereas the Paris on the right bank is a world controlled by privilege. In the first Paris, Cuevas strategically positions himself as an insider, a sober figure that walks freely, looks for bargains and appreciates the curiosities of the city as spectacle; in other words, he plays the role of *flâneur*. When he crosses the line of the Seine, he becomes self-conscious, posing in a role that potentially puts him at risk. On this side, he is reminded of being a foreigner, an alien to the grand life of Paris glamour in which he paradoxically

participated so actively. As I will discuss in the next chapter, part of this proclamation of poverty is intended to counteract accusations of squandering leveled at him after his infamous Biarritz costume party in 1953. Indeed, despite his proclamations, both sides of the Seine form part of different, but equally conscious performances. Indeed, Cuevas is positioning himself as spectacle on both sides, either by taking the more inconspicuous role of *flâneur* or by more reluctantly taking on the role of urban dandy. Cuevas's use of the verb *perform* here is key to understanding both the *flâneur* and the dandy as roles enacted by the foreigner in the city.

Although Cuevas arrived in Europe after the Belle Époque, his embodiment of the roles of dandy and *flâneur* make them relevant to our understanding of the formation of the Latin American identity abroad. Although extraordinary and in a sense incomparable, Cuevas does symbolize the aspirations of Chileans and Latin Americans in general, as seen in the previous chapter. In this respect, Cuevas is an ideal example for study because he transcends reality and can be studied as a fictional figure that undergoes the recognizable character arc of going from rags to riches. Indeed, faced with the problem of classifying his friend, Edwards Bello claims that, "Cuevas has no explanation or measure in daily life or in our reality;"[189] in the same text, he nonetheless solves this issue by casting Cuevas in a fairy tale, as the "Ceniciento" (Cinderfellow) ("El marqués de Cuevas" 19). In this queer positioning, Cuevas assumes the guise of a female heroine beset by misfortunes until she is rescued by her fairy godmother. Although Cuevas liked to present himself as destitute and at the mercy of the elements, he actively and rather successfully sought out fame and fortune.

After his humble beginnings in Europe, Cuevas found work at the fashion couture house Irfé, created by Prince Felix Yusupov and his wife Irina after the first two letters of their names. The Russian émigré, infamous for his participation in the murder of Rasputin, had arrived in Paris in 1920, at which time Cuevas gained an introduction and probably served as his guide through the streets and social milieu of the city (Edwards 314-5). In 1925, Cuevas was already a partner in Yusupov's business and also designed fashion costumes (Edwards Bello, "El marqués de Cuevas" 26). When Margaret Strong, granddaughter of oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, came into the store as a customer, fascinated by rumors of the extravagantly campy figure of Yusupov—a dandy in his own right—she apparently mistook Cuevas for the Prince, and was promptly seduced by his charm (Dunne). The couple got engaged soon after.

Her family opposed the match from the beginning, especially since Margaret had a history of reckless decision-making and financial disorganization. At the death of her mother when she was nine years old, her father, Dr. Charles Augustus Strong, a professor and philosopher, had sent her to boarding school in Europe. She later attended the all-women's college of Newnham, Cambridge. Margaret grew up relatively alone, occasionally visiting her father at his villa in Fiesole, Florence. Her opaque style and rather plain demeanor offered a stark contrast to Cuevas's fashion sense and entertaining personality. Older than him and prone to depression, she had an erratic temperament and was seen as difficult to manage, given her "changing moods." George Santayana, the Spanish philosopher and her father's close friend, reported upon meeting Cuevas that he would prove a good husband for Margaret, precisely because he was not a "brilliant man"

(24 July 1927). Despite a telegram from Margaret's grandfather "protesting against haste and asking Margaret to take the first boat and go and consult with him," the civil marriage went on as planned, on 3 August 1927 at the *mairie* of Place Saint Sulpice.[190] Their first child, Alexander, was born some time after that. Cuevas seemed to be on top of the world, and the Chilean press feasted having found a prodigal son. Privately, however, the fairy tale was crumbling.

On 19 April 1928, Santayana wrote to his friend to break the terrible news that Alexander had died from pneumonia in Naples. Although a daughter, Maria Elizabeth Alexandra was born in France a year later and another son, John Alexander, came close after, the couple's grief was overwhelming, and permanent financial trouble tormented them. Margaret's estate had been tied up and placed under a trust precisely "to guard her against adventurous people seeking to get her money away" (Rockefeller). Since the Cuevases received only the income of the trust, this effectively meant that, although Rockefellers, they had to manage their expenses efficiently. Notwithstanding their good intentions, and an ample budget, they persistently lived beyond their means, buying properties in France and New York, which they furnished luxuriously and kept permanently staffed. Cuevas argued that it was Margaret who indulged in most of the luxurious spending and that he had received her doctor's orders not to contradict her, to avoid emotional outbursts (18 May 1931). The Depression only made matters worse. In 1930, their gross estimated income was US$ 140,000 and the outgo was $160,600, plus loans for a similar amount (Rockefeller, Jr.). The Rockefeller family attempted to put a brake to their expenditure, to little avail.

The creation of a ballet company in 1944 must be seen as the culmination of Cuevas's entrepreneurial efforts to become financially independent. Following the example of Rockefeller Sr., in 1931 Cuevas had looked into the idea of investing in an oil venture in Walton County, Florida, but this had worried the family so much that he dropped the affair (20 January 1931). A couple of months later in March 1931, the Rockefeller family lawyer wrote to inform that Cuevas was thinking of going into the antique business (Staley). In early January of the following year, Cuevas held a public auction for "English, French, Italian and Spanish Furniture of the XVI to the XVIII Centuries" as well as thirty oriental rugs, and an assortment of jewelry at the Plaza Hotel—all "From the collection of The Marquis George de Cuevas of Paris and New York" ("Sale Number Twenty Six")—a few years earlier, Cuevas had retrieved a Spanish title of nobility that granted him the right to be called Marquis. In 1934, George and Margaret established a gambling house of sorts in San Remo, on the Italian Rivera. Presumably, Cuevas was seeking to create a distinguished locale, which would have served as an international center of leisure, in the spirit of Monte Carlo, where he had spent holidays and would later briefly establish his ballet company. Considered vulgar and highly inconvenient to the Rockefellers, given the couple's poor sense of economic affairs, and the negative attention it brought upon the family, the venture was short-lived.[191] In 1935 George and Margaret were involved in an accident, in which, as *The Miami Herald* later reported, "Mrs. de Cuevas' car killed an eight-year-old boy in Florence"—the couple was fined US$ 2,000 (Roberts). The Cuevases' financial instability intensified with their constant travelling and changes of residence.

The couple went back and forth from Europe to America, seeking to lower their expenses and please the family. Cuevas wrote ingratiating, oftentimes servile letters to Rockefeller Senior: "dearest Grandfather . . . I am so ashamed to be poor and not to be able to help Margaret with anything else than my devotion. Do not think, please, we are asking for something. You have such a great heart that I am sure you will not misunderstand me! All you do is sacred for us. We venerate you and our tender affection and devotion for you are immense" (19 March 1931). Santayana wrote to Margaret's father later that same year with a cynical view of this attitude: "George de Cuevas writes me that their constant devotion to the old gentleman is without the least expectation of earthly profit: but after reading your two volumes of Balzac, I can't believe it" (19 August 1931). In 1935 the couple settled in the United States to retain Margaret's American citizenship, but continued to travel frequently to Europe. Privately, Cuevas complained to his friend Sophia (Zosia) Kochanski, wife of the violinist Paul Kochanski: "The family in America makes life difficult for us. The grandfather is too old. The uncle too hard, and I, too foreign for America" (6 Apr. 1937).[192] John D. Rockefeller died on 23 May 1937 and left Margaret the bulk of his inheritance in the amount of US$ 25,000,000—his sons had received their share in life.

At this point, the Cuevases sprung to life in the public eye. The "Marquis George de Cuevas," in particular, who by this time was 52 years old, became increasingly familiar to the media as a stylish socialite. Cuevas's general attitude presented many of the traits of the dandy, even if he did break many of its rules, such as being married and past his prime. True to the dandy spirit of retaining spontaneity and surprise, "In life as in

art, he was the enemy of routine and mediocrity," as dancer Rosella Hightower remembers (qtd. in Mannoni 24).[193] The feeling of ennui is a constant complaint in his letters to Zosia, to whom he writes: "I am not a being of habit . . . the greatest enemies of the soul are sadness and boredom" (7 Sep. 1941).[194] Together with his wife, Cuevas became known for frequenting "the haunts of the fashionables," even if his social ubiquity—"He was here, there and everywhere," wrote one publication—is described in disparaging terms as that of a man "bouncing about on the fringes of Mayfair with the activity of a rubber ball in motion" (Transcript, June 1942). This report positions Cuevas at the edges of fashionable society and ridicules his anxious delight to participate in social life, revealing that Cuevas was far from possessing the self-contained attitude required of the dandy.

However, Cuevas's artistic sensibility palpably brings him closer to the dandy's aestheticist spirit. One of his most expensive endeavors was a painting exhibition entitled "Masterpieces of Art" that took up a whole wing at the New York World's Fair of 1939, for which his wife donated US$ 300,000 for building and upkeep. "George spent months selecting the materials to cover the walls of the exhibition, eliminating ornaments and trying to make the rooms look very dignified," Margaret wrote to her uncle, revealing the humble aspirations of the Marquis (25 Oct. 1939). At one point, Cuevas supposedly sold perfumes, a feeble attempt at "invading the cosmetic industry," as reported by an article in *The American Weekly*. He also hazarded once more in the world of *belles-lettres*: invoking the style of the fin de siècle Decadents, he wrote "a flowery volume called 'An Oriental Tale,' which described the amorous woes of a princess of the East"—a volume

now presumed lost. The dedication of the book to the American fashion icon Mona Harrison Williams (famously known as Mona von Bismarck) resulted in the "chilling" of her friendship with the author ("The Faun" 3). Despite their commercial aspirations, these ventures were destined to be financial disasters, guided as they were namely by Cuevas's romantic and impractical nature, and his rather old-fashioned idea of art.

The last venture in cultural entrepreneurship was the creation of a Ballet Institute and Company in 1944, for which the Park Theatre at Columbus Circle was leased (now demolished). The Rockefeller family had little faith in the project and saw the imminent increase of expenses with great concern. A magazine article that showed the middle-aged Cuevas taking ballet lessons asked mocking questions: "Will the marquis, once he has acquired sufficient skill, woo Terpsichore in public? Will he leap like a faun, pose and strut, all in full view of an audience?" ("The Faun" 3). Despite being cast in a ridiculous light, Cuevas enjoyed the attention and seemed impervious to the more or less malicious press reports about his person.

George de Cuevas's third-act reinvention of himself as a ballet entrepreneur dominates his legacy in the world of the arts. His ballet company must be understood as emerging in the wake of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russe phenomenon of the early twentieth century (Reynolds and McCormick 76). After the deaths of Diaghilev and his most famous star, Anna Pavlova, Colonel Wassily de Basil had resurrected the company in Monte Carlo in 1932, but the troupe eventually split and two rival companies, under Leonid Massine and Colonel de Basil respectively, began touring the States, Latin America and Europe, under varying names that signaled their allegiance to the original

Ballet Russe and attempted to legitimize themselves as the authentic heirs to the company. One theory speculates that Cuevas saw de Basil's company perform in Mexico and was fascinated by the dance world at which he glimpsed (García-Márquez 129). On 11 January 1944, Cuevas wrote to dancer Felia Doubrovska that he was looking for an artistic director for his ballet that "understood his ideal": "[he] did not want someone like Balanchine" who wanted to create "An American Ballet," but rather sought to "preserve Russian tradition" and "create new ballets upon this foundation."[195] Cuevas seemed to connect to the Russian tradition as marketed by Diaghilev in Paris at the beginning of the century. Indeed, he felt closer to the expatriate Russian community in New York than he did to Americans. In a sense, the aristocratic White Russians that had managed to escape the Revolution now embodied the Wandering Jew image invoked earlier. Cuevas's desire to preserve a borrowed authenticity can be understood when considering that he felt sorry for the social and economic depths to which they had come, as a loss of dignity that he also shared. In this sense, he allied his own identity to theirs, since he was also an expatriate, albeit by choice.

It is also significant that Cuevas chose dance, the most ephemeral of arts, as his most lasting enthusiasm, since it is particularly appropriate to the idea of the dandy as an artist who can work only with the fleeting. As Saidah put it, "If [a dandy] were to create a work of art, it would be . . . in the service of an ephemeral and perishable beauty" (144).[196]

Cuevas's Ballet International, the company associated to his Ballet Institute, was to be a non-profit organization "for the advancement of the art of ballet and the education

and instruction of students of the ballet and the development and furtherance of public appreciation of the ballet" ("New York Ballet in Fall"). The educational purpose of the school granted Cuevas an exemption from Federal income taxes, but having a dance troupe at his disposal also meant that he could reach wider audiences with his aesthetic project. The initial season of the company featured an impressive eleven new works, including Bronislava Nijinska's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and William Dollar's *Constantia*, and *Sentimental Colloquy*, with designs by Salvador Dalí. After an unsuccessful second season, and financial disruptions that included touring problems during the war, however, Cuevas decided to return to Europe.

In Europe, after the occupation of France, choreographer Serge Lifar had arrived in 1945 to become the director of the Nouveau Ballet de Monte Carlo. When Lifar was recalled to the Paris Opéra in 1947, the company was purchased by the Marquis de Cuevas, who changed its name to the Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo. The name evoked grandiose aspirations, even as the city itself, most famous for its casino, drew the new rich crowd who sought to make easy money and enjoy all the pleasures that wealth could buy. Edwards Bello stated that Cuevas had spent "over a million dollars recruiting international stars" (19), supporting the company's extensive touring with his wife's fortune. After two years, he finally managed to secure a venue at the theatre of l'Alhambra in Paris. "It is in Paris, that high place of art, that one drinks from the fountains of refinement and elegance, enthusiasm and beauty," Cuevas declared to the press on November 1947 for the opening season (qtd. in Mannoni 42).[197] The season premiere ceremonies became memorable for their brilliant assortment of celebrities,

aristocrats, millionaires, and politicians (44). Evening dress code was a requirement, and Cuevas always wore an elaborate costume, cape included, effusively greeting all those who came, for which he was nicknamed "kissing marquis" ("marquis embrasseur") (47).

In 1951 the company changed its name to the impressive Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas; by removing the city of Monte Carlo from its name, Cuevas seemed to ambitiously anchor the company's identity to his own wandering travels. Indeed, the company toured a great deal. Members now included such exceptional American dancers as Rosella Hightower, Marjorie Tallchief—younger sister of the famous Balanchine dancer, Maria—, and George Skibine. The presence of Bronislava Nijinska as choreographer and artistic counselor added distinction and glamour to the enterprise, and attracted many enviable guest stars, including Harald Lander, former director of the Royal Danish Ballet, who staged Bournonville's *La Sylphide* in Paris in 1953, and Alicia Markova, invited to dance the Sylph.

The Marquis's company flourished, garnering critical praise for its varied program and audience popularity for its flashy displays of skill. Critic Clement Crisp described his appreciation of the company nostalgically:

> *Le Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas* was a delight to ballet-goers. It possessed that most precious of attributes, theatrical glamour. . . . It was rich in star dancers, artists who thrilled by their bravura . . . [It] was always exhilarating: you breathed a theatrical ozone more heady, more intoxicating, than the quieter airs inhaled during the usual run of dutiful

> performance on home ground, or even with such visiting luminaries as New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theatre. (1)

Even though he finds fault with the extravagant lengths to which the company went in its outlandish designs that "might at times seem more modish than helpful to a ballet's identity" (7), and despite criticizing the display of virtuosity that sometimes sacrificed choreographic ingenuity, Crisp cannot contain his enthusiasm for these feats of display. In this sense, the quote also bears a strong connotation to magic, and underlines the spectacular in this performance, above concerns for talent or authenticity in preserving the Russian balletic tradition, as Cuevas had previously advocated.

In 1958, presumably to identify its cast of mostly American dancers in France, the company became known as International Ballet of the Marquis de Cuevas, a name which it kept until Cuevas's death in 1961. The ballet radiated its aura of elegant cosmopolitanism to its leader. Nationality and authenticity had played an important role in the original Ballets Russes, to the point where non-Russian dancers were asked to Russify their names,[198] but the Marquis de Cuevas, who himself thrived on reinvention, made no such demands on his dancers. Despite loving his dancers dearly, he conceived of the Ballet as a whole as a vehicle of personal self-expression. In his many letters to his close friend Marthe Bibesco, a Rumanian princess and writer whom he befriended later in life and with whom he corresponded frequently, he never identified dancers by names, and spoke only generally of his Ballet company. His attitude towards it seems to be that of a loving father, who is permanently exasperated that its child refuses to live up to his expectations. George Zoritch, one of the main stars of the Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo,

accepted an invitation to join Cuevas's ballet company in 1951, and recounts with tenderness how the Marquis called Rosella Hightower "*mon enfant*, or 'my child'" (139). In a letter to Bibesco, Cuevas wrote about the triumphs of his company in Germany and added, "I am happy above all for my artists, whom I have formed and whom I consider as children who would belong to me, as ideas that I would announce and that people to whom I have communicated them would find them brilliant" (19 Feb. 1950). As Zoritch comically recounts, "The Marquis de Cuevas became so popular and noted through his efforts, maintaining his company in a glamorous manner, that occasionally people would be confused when purchasing tickets, asking at the box office if the Marquis was dancing that night" (148). The question of what was the exact nature of the role played by the Marquis in the company, who aspired to follow in the steps of Diaghilev, will be further discussed in the next chapter, but it is interesting to consider the extent to which this confusion was fuelled by Cuevas's own equivocal naming of the company, and the extent to which he actually identified with the company as his extended family, and even as an alternate identity, that of an athletic, attractive young person who could express an aesthetically perfect form through the universal medium of dance.

Nelson D. Rockefeller—Margaret's cousin (son of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.) and Chairman of the Rockefeller Center at the time—received frequent letters from George de Cuevas regarding his ballet activities, often asking for funding, and also reporting his successes in Europe. Count Lanfranco Rasponi, who worked at the Ballet,[199] sent a letter to Nelson on 21 April 1948 with an enclosed typewritten note from Cuevas asking him to receive his friend the Count, so that he could "read to you [Nelson] several articles

written by French critics, who, as you know, are the most difficult critics in the world, just to show you what I have accomplished"—a handwritten annotation adds: "Because if I don't advertise myself, who will."

Cuevas persistently sought the Rockefeller family's approval, which meant not only obtaining their money, but also the acceptance and patronage of this American aristocratic. The Ballet, which brought him fame and a certain critical respect, seemed to be the closest he ever came to getting it. Although he was genuinely passionate about dance, Cuevas seemed his happiest at the galas and publicity activities. In his role as Marquis, he often stated his interest in refining the taste of the general public. In a letter to his friend Zosia a few years earlier, he had lamented: "Not having any means of expression I feel mediocre and without beauty" (7 Sep. 1941).[200] Ballet offered a stylized form that drew young people to him and surrounded his life with beauty. The company bore his name and title, so that audiences were always reminded that they were watching an extension of him. Advertisements for the tour in the United States show that the largest print was reserved for the name of the Marquis (see fig. 4). During the performance—which began outside the theatre—Cuevas held a captive audience, clothed in the train of his ballet and parading himself amidst a throng of celebrities.

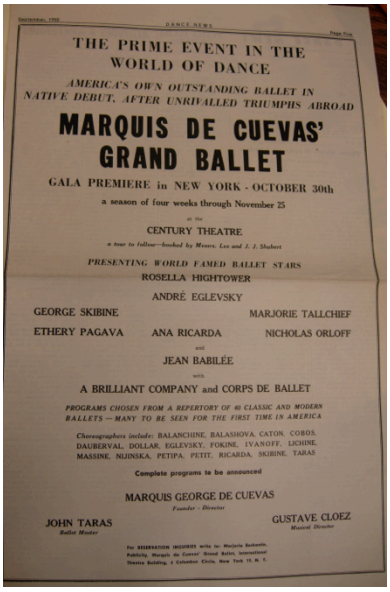

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Fig. 4. Advertisement for Ballet Gala Premiere. *Dance News*. September 1950.

In this light, and going back to the roles of dandy and *flâneur* as adopted by the urban foreigner, it is essential to examine them in relation to the act of viewing and spectacle within the city.

Spectacle and Viewership

The tension between spectacle and viewership is key to our understanding of the dandy and the *flâneur*. Although we might conceive the *flâneur* as the active watcher, and the dandy as the passive object who is watched, there are nuances to this paradigm. One must bear in mind above all that, as James Elkins argues, "There is no such thing as just looking" (qtd. in Bleeker 2); rather, as Maaike Bleeker proposes in her theoretical text,

Visuality in the Theatre: The Locus of Looking, "the object of visual analysis is the way things become visible as a result of the practices of looking invested in them" (2).

Bleeker suggests that the senses as perceptual systems function as part of a bodily response that is explored differently by kinesthetic movement: "The response of the seer is the product of a body as the place where these various perceptual systems intertwine; they probe the world around us" (175). In this sense, the *flâneur* can be conceived as exercising a different type of viewing than a seated or still observation, since, as Damisch argues, perspective acquires meaning through context and in relation to adjacent elements, much as linguistic markers of deixis, such as *here, now, I, you,* only signify in a definite time, place and body (176). In this way, "the subject moves about within the field of vision, positioning itself in response to the address presented" and "[i]n this process, the 'I' as deictic marker of this 'place' marks the point of view emerging from our perceptual response to the address we find ourselves confronted with" (176). The subject within the city must be understood then as a fluid construction, making and unmaking itself according to context. Bleeker develops this argument further by considering "subjectivity as discontinuous and entirely relational, moving towards an understanding of bodies capable of complex experiences that result from interferences, resonances and even contradictions between the various positions emerging from the interaction between seer and seen" (177). This interaction can be cast in terms of the paradigmatic roles of *flâneur* and dandy if only to note how unstable these embodiments become.

Dandies, for instance, are frequently described as observers; in fact, their superior air depends on their critical regard of society. The dandies spent hours gazing at

themselves in mirrors to produce the desired effect and later obscured that effort in a pose of ease. Beau Brummell was notorious for judging "the sartorial success of the young men and women who paraded outside the window of White's club in London" (Milne-Smith 24). The overt act of observation also served to underline the constructedness of self-image. In his unfinished satirical novel *The Parisians* (1873), Victorian bestselling author Edward Bulwer-Lytton describes how his handsome hero Frederic Lemercier "looked round the salon with that air of inimitable, scrutinizing, superb impertinence which distinguishes the Parisian dandy," observing the ladies sitting around him at the café with a rather obvious "glass which he had screwed into his socket" (7). In this case, it is the dandy who does the watching, although he is careful to do so with an instrument that is designed to draw attention to himself in the process.

Another instance of ambiguity between the roles appears in Huart's portrait of the French dandy, the *Lion.* Huart, who first popularized the genre of the physiology with his *Muséum parisien* (Parisian Museum, 1841), introduces the reader to these "heroes of fashion," noting that they can be found "in a concealed box [loge grillée] at the Opera or at the Théâtre des Italiens (2).[201] Honoré Daumier's lithography for a portrait of a figure that looks from behind this "Loge Grillé" (concealed or grated box, see fig. 5) shows a man hidden by the lattice of a private box observing a ballerina who is identified only by her legs, the most common synecdochic conception of the dancer.[202] The portrait is certainly not that of a young dandy, and presents instead a stout, middle-aged gentleman as he watches from his dark corner. Dressed fashionably, with eyebrows raised in delight and an avid smile, he is cast as a passive, and rather sinister voyeur, his eye in turn a

synecdoche for his rapacious nature.[203] The object of observation is included in Huart's *Muséum* as a "Rat," the slang denomination for these dancers—young girls that practically lived in the theatre. The Rat well knew "the influence that a lorgnette c[ould] exercise on her future, [and would] seek to make herself as evident as possible [on stage]" (92).[204] In her infrequent outings, the rat was equally exposed and Huart describes her "scampering along the sidewalks, and not allowing herself to be scared by the glances of *flâneurs*" (94).[205] In this depiction, both the dandy and the *flâneur* observe and visually predate the dancer. As Huart's title suggests, the entire volume is a museum of species that become objects of visual fetishes.

Fig. 5. *La loge grillée* (The Grated Box). Lithography by Honoré Daumier. 1837.

In his unfinished notes on the city and modernity, an ambitious overview of nineteenth-century Paris published posthumously as *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin describes the Paris arcades, covered passages that offered a respite from the crowds and became the natural habitat of the *flâneur*. Although *flâneurs* came to observe this stage, they sometimes took the spotlight. Benjamin famously recounts an anecdote from "around 1840" when it became "briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades." For the philosopher, "*flâneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them" (33), to indicate the leisurely tempo of flânerie. In defiance of the frantic rhythm imposed by the industrial revolution, the provocative stance also reveals a desire to take the spotlight, an impulse that is closer in spirit to the dandy than the *flâneur*. As Huart's contemporary description confirms, the *flâneur* was often as careful as the dandy with his appearance: emerging immaculately dressed for his stroll, he could be tremendously upset if a carriage happened to spray mud all over him ("Physiologie" 85).

In this light, the *flâneur*'s attitude to the crowd must be reexamined. Thus, as Leach claims, the *flâneur* can be conceived "not so much a creature of the crowd as someone who remains aloof from the crowd, and observes it from afar." Cuvardic argues further that the turn of the century incarnation of the *flâneur*, like the dandy, "is also to some extent blasé" much like any "modern metropolitan individual [that is] constantly being bombarded with stimuli" (Cuvardic 24). Perhaps, this search of new and exceptional stimuli leads him to the glamour and spectacle of a ballet performance. As we can see, by the turn of the century, dandies and *flâneurs* were difficult to tell apart, and it is easy to see how they became semantically confused.

In the observational scheme of the city, the *flâneur*'s viewing position is also revealing of the need to police identity boundaries. The ubiquitous *flâneur* is offered as a remedy for violence and crime (Huart 24-5), given his naturally virtuous nature (only criminals hide from daylight) (27). The *flâneur* thus becomes a city guard, his omnipresence turning him into a sort of surveillance camera that registers the movement of the crowd and peers into the secret soul of men. Given his propensity to becoming a victim of pickpockets who take advantage of his absorption, the *flâneur* is sometimes "capable of pursuing [a thief] like a vulgar policeman" (31).[206]

This idea can be linked to Benjamin, who, in "Paris of the Second Empire" argues that "in times of terror, when everyone is something of a conspirator" the *flâneur* is "turned into an unwilling detective . . . behind [whose apparent] indolence there is the watchfulness of an observer who does not take his eyes off a miscreant" (72). In this sense, the *flâneur* seems to participate in all three types of urban focalizations, as identified by Cuvardic: street level, subterranean and panoramic (*El flâneur* 18).[207] Baudelaire's poetic persona posits an observer who reports and reflects from his personal perspective at street level, but other critics have understood the *flâneur* as a figure who witnesses the darkest and most depraved aspects of city life, viewing it from "the gutters," as Pericles Lewis puts it. The last type of focalization appears in Huart's *Physiologie du Flâneur* and De Lacroix's "Le Flâneur," a genre that Benjamin called "panoramic literature" (66).

The *flâneur* in physiological portraits is described as replicating the function of these very narratives, i.e. observing the city and cataloguing its suspicious inhabitants

into identifiable types. The physiologies can thus be conceived as being written from the point of view of the *flâneur*. With observational powers spread across the city, the viewing strategy of the *flâneur* resonates with Bentham's Panopticon model, as discussed famously by Foucault, where the permanent visibility of people and the consciousness of being seen creates a mechanism that "automatizes and disindividualizes power," which now resides "not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up" (Foucault 341). This *gaze*, as defined by Lacan, becomes impossible to locate, "[it] is everywhere and nowhere at the same time, and manifests itself more through its effects than through its source" (Bleeker 131). As such, it draws boundaries about what behavior is acceptable in society. In the same way, Haussmann's reforms turned the city into a panopticon that attempted to maintain order.

This gaze is usually male, especially when considered in light of the roles of the *flâneur* and the dandy. The *flâneur* who loses himself in the crowd (in French, the feminine noun *la foule*) is of necessity male. Female spectatorship was rarely anonymous, especially in the nineteenth century, where a woman was still a relatively new figure on the street, and an object of certain mistrust. Women, in this context, could not become *flâneurs* because they could never be anonymous observers, since they always remained the object of the gaze. Additionally, women were regarded as consumers, and therefore incapable of taking a disinterested look at the city (Huart 115)—in this sense, Gill's verdict is final: "There are, and can be, no *flâneuses*" (85). In Paris, the *femme à la mode* (fashionable woman), usually made the most of this gaze, while the subcategory of the

lionne or female dandy, went to more eccentric extremes by adopting more masculine attitudes (Gill 87). Interestingly, in this sense, by asking to be the object of the gaze, the male dandy occupied an essentially feminine position. Authors who allow for the existence of *flaneuses* restrict their stroll to large shops or fashionable public boulevards where they can "exhibit their sumptuary consumption" (Cuvardic 26); this *flaneuse* resembles the dandy, since she asks to be singled out and admired. In the context of the arcades, however, women came increasingly to be viewed as a consumer market, and goods began to be targeted at them. By the mid-twentieth century the scenario had altered considerably. Indeed, Cuevas counted on his female spectators as central to the ballet audience. As seen in chapter one, he most certainly would have relied on his friendships with older aristocratic women to lead the fashionable crowd at his ballet premieres.

The visual positions of the dandy and the flâneur are thus interdependent inasmuch as they experience moments of self-consciousness and moments of oblivious absorption in the modern city. In this process, the boundaries of the roles become blurred and bring to the fore the issue of how perspective creates a fluctuating self, a self that both consumes and is consumed as spectacle within the cosmopolis. Cuevas's capacity to play both roles is especially interesting since he models his persona through self-conscious staging.

Defining the Stranger within My Gate

Defined as artists—the *flâneur* draws the map of the city as he walks through it, crystalizing his vision in poetry or in travel journals, while the dandy works on himself as

a canvas—both figures attempt to take a stand against the hectic pace set by impinging modernity through the organizing power of vision. Considering Bleeker's argument that "the coherence of this world as perceived and of the self as experienced in relation to this world, is not something preceding perception but the product of it" (177), the dandy and the *flâneur* can be understood as creating the subject within the modern city. Cuevas's account of his two Parises thus summarizes the experience of estrangement in a modern city: putting on a tie on one side of the Seine, and removing it when crossing its border, he creates and recreates himself as Jorge Cuevas, Georges, George, el Marqués de Piedrablanca (de Guana), le Marquis de Cuevas, embodying the role of dandy or *flâneur* as a way of surviving in Paris.

The danger in this fluctuation of self in a cosmopolitan city is evident. If the boundaries of the seer and the seen are relational, this means the power dynamics between viewing subject and viewed object are constantly shifting, so that the native citizen is not always at the center. It will be useful to consider how the intervention of strangers results in the displacement of paradigms of centrality. In this scenario, strangers are not a threat as long as they adopt the submissive subject position of observer. This ironically reverses the predicted power dynamic of observer and observed. By obtaining the status of object worthy of observation, the stranger gains notoriety and power.

The stranger is one who is outside of, extraneous, peripheral (Harper), literally, then, an eccentric. However, Julie A. Buckler argues that, "[w]hile eccentricity's defining gesture is movement away form the cultural center, strangeness invades from the outside" (302). This would mean that tourists/immigrants would only ever be able to remain

strange, and not eccentric. However, I will argue that foreigners often adopt the mask of eccentricity, so as to mimic the oddness of a national and social insider, to be accepted as aristocratic peers in European cities.

Much like the *flâneur* adjoins the dandy, the category of the English eccentric is also often considered alongside the dandy: for Barbey d'Aurevilly, both stand out from the crowd, producing a similarly disconcerting effect in audiences—the eccentric differs only in that his manner is not conscious, but rather "reckless, savage, blind" (16).[208] Indeed, "A certain amount of eccentricity is allowed" in the dandy (Schmid 84). Both types seem to have stemmed from the "originals" of Regency England, and were associated with the rise of bourgeois identity (Gill 20-1). Furthermore, within English society, "the dandy and the wealthy eccentric were often considered to belong to the gentry or nobility, in the context of the defensive reassertion of aristocratic identity in the wake of the French Revolution" (76). Like the dandy, the eccentric was also defined via French influence and later imported to Paris, becoming conflated with the term dandy under the bourgeois King Louis Philippe (71).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect for this discussion is that the concept of eccentric, like that of the dandy, was notably fluid, since "the imaginary 'center' (or 'centricity') from which it departs is far from stable," thereby "function[ing] as a barometer sensitive to slightest traces of cultural change, as the boundaries separating the normal from the deviant [are] drawn and redrawn in the course of the century" (1-2). Although this peripheral eccentricity may temporarily challenge the central semiotic system, it can eventually be incorporated as part of the ruling establishment. Similarly,

the type of deviance represented by the dandy could thus be normalized and made mainstream within the context of "the Parisian fashion industry with its constant quest for novel and eccentric forms" (Gill 5-6). Like the changing fashion that defined the dandy, the concept of eccentric, which initially denoted insanity, changed throughout history.

In general terms, the inherent abnormality of eccentricity was potentially threatening, since it meant breaking with convention. The possible threat in the nonconformism of these roles could be defused through the notion of inoffensiveness, thereby "constitut[ing] a type of 'safety valve' for expressions of deviance" (27-8). In any case, the term and its associated behavior often raised questions that threatened the concept of self in the context of modernity. Gill comments on the paradoxical impulse associated with eccentricity: "The scandal of 'standing out' evoked both the aspiration of the bourgeoisie (its dreams of freedom, creativity, and individuality) and its deepest anxieties (the threat of madness, monstrosity, and sin). It was simultaneously desired and feared, incorporated into and rejected from bourgeois identity" (1). In the first half of the nineteenth century, the issue of eccentricity conflicted with the fear of making oneself stand out ("se faire remarquer"):

> [this] raised central questions about the relationship of the individual to public opinion and the public gaze, which functioned as a form of social control. . . . Drawing attention to oneself in the context of polite sociability was seen by the Parisian bourgeoisie as a disgraceful impropriety, and often as evidence of underlying vulgarity, vanity, and even pathology. . . . Yet a new current of thought suggested that a degree of eccentricity could

> be supremely stylish. Eccentricity symbolized the constant mutation of new fashions, and by extension the logic of modernity itself. (43)

Much as the dandy, the eccentric taxed society by demanding its attention. As Gill argues, "In polite society, eccentricity was perceived as a theatrical phenomenon, since it involved becoming a spectacle for others." To have an audience one must seek distinction from the crowd, which in itself constituted a social *faux pas*.

One of the ways in which society policed its class boundaries was by the "'ritualization of daily life' which played a central role in the construction of bourgeois identity [and which] was facilitated by etiquette and conduct manuals." Devoutly ascribed as guides that "provided a script for each social occasion and promised to 'shield' the bourgeoisie from social blunders" (45), these handbooks offered guidelines to blend in most effectively, and generally advised against any form of standing out. This concern naturally reached Latin America, where the most famous example of such a publication came in the form of the *Manual de urbanidad y buenas costumbres* (The Manual for Urban Manners and Good Customs), better known as the *Carreño Manual*. Manuel Carreño, a Venezuelan musician, teacher and diplomat, had enjoyed an elite European education, and published his guide in 1853; significantly, when political unrest rocked his country, Carreño would choose Paris as his new home.[209] The section of the manual dedicated to public conduct states that "respect to society and opinion" is to be held in the highest regard, and condemns any "act that might profane its rights . . . or draw general attention in a scandalous manner" (211). Respect was observed by

following several indications aimed at better merging in with the general tone of correct society:

> when we respect opinion, we adapt to the uses and social practices of the country in which we live, harmonizing with all its reigning fashions, adjusting our moral conduct to the spirit of truth and justice that exists always in the public criteria, which serves as a lighthouse in the midst of the rocks which are sown in the sea of passions; we profit, in brief, from all the advantages offered in the habit of contemporizing with social convention, of which opinion is the supreme arbiter.[210]

The quote is delightfully romantic in spirit and interestingly links morality to etiquette, as do most of these guidebooks in the nineteenth century, whose optimistic premise is that outer behavior and inner character are connected, so that polishing manners will improve a person's nature as well. Carreño's manual had widespread popularity throughout Latin America and illustrates the spirit of imitation that guided those foreigners who wished to blend into the social framework of Paris, as discussed in the previous chapter. In Paris, in particular, the line between elegance and vulgarity was very fine, as Gill notes: "To ward off imitation by social inferiors, sartorial refinement was defined in terms of ascetic, almost invisible luxury, and manners had to be effortless to distinguish them from those painstakingly acquired by the *parvenu* and *arriviste*" (46). Interestingly, the bourgeois *parvenu* harbored similar anxieties to that of the foreign upstart. The foreigner—always by essence a social *parvenu*—had to walk carefully to merge seamlessly and be tolerated. The greatest mistake he could make was to be branded vulgar.

The fear of vulgarity is echoed most distinctly in dandy rhetoric. Wilde's aphoristic wit contains many examples that illustrate the obsession with retaining distinction and elegance, and which is, more often than not, linked to expressions of an aestheticist morality. In *Phrases And Philosophies For The Use Of The Young*, Wilde warns young men that "No crime is vulgar, but all vulgarity is crime" (572), a variation on a similar piece of wit presented in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by the archetypical dandy, Lord Henry, who repeatedly expresses his rejection of vulgarity as the gravest of sins, and offers the definitive sentence on his time and culture: "Death and vulgarity are the only two facts in the nineteenth century that one cannot explain away" (233)—a verdict which links a breach in taste to (social) demise. Paradoxically, of course, for bourgeois society, any form of standing out was considered vulgar. Vulgarity for the dandy, on the other hand, meant not only revealing poor taste, but also remaining ordinary, i.e. *not* standing out. For the stranger, the tension is explicitly revealed in his desire not to appear vulgar, i.e. base, uncouth, but at the same time try to blend in, and therefore retain vulgarity, to appear typical.

Foreigners in Paris who adopted the role of dandy as a way of presenting a more attractive veneer, and masking the more or less obvious "flaws" in nationality, sexual orientation, and social background, often ended up by occupying instead a role closer to the eccentric, since the artificiality required of the dandy was always made more extreme by being a foreigner; his quaintness of manner, more unusual for being foreign. The Latin American abroad used the role of the dandy, the *poseur* by excellence, exploiting its inherent sense of displacement that allows and even encourages excess. The false self

here actually heightens what he actually is, a stranger, but also provides entertainment for the local *flâneur*.

Cuevas, for example, presented himself as a victim and bemoaned his existence to family, friends, and reporters alike, but the attitude was adopted deliberately. To Zosia he disclosed that his intense imagination made him "invent feelings, and give others the impression of being very sentimental, when in reality [he was] but a disillusioned skeptic who believe[d] in nothing and no one and who pose[d] as a victim of life" (9 Feb. 1937).[211] In this lucid insight, Cuevas reveals that he created drama in order to relieve existence of its monotony, and attributes his cynicism to his many sorrows: "I have suffered so much that I became duplicitous, changeable, and 'comedian.' And I am now a hypocritical old fox, who can give the impression of being a defenseless lamb" (15 Feb. 1937). Despite his vital ennui, Cuevas's passionate nature did not allow him to adopt the phlegmatic attitude of the dandy, and instead the Marquis embraced the role of the foreign eccentric. The dandy requires hitting the mark; the eccentric thrives on going beyond it. By adopting a pre-assigned and understandable role, Cuevas became accepted in Parisian society, precisely because he stood on the edges of the acceptable as an anomaly. Cuevas spoke French with a thick accent that made his lineage untraceable. He had stopped speaking Spanish almost entirely and his daughter remembers that he seldom referred to his life in Chile (Strong-Cuevas).[212]

The title of nobility, which nurtured his eccentric persona must be understood partly as an attempt to improve his social standing with the Rockefeller family, who never quite approved of him, partly as a snobbish desire to show Chilean and European

society what he was worth. After much scavenging among parchments for aristocratic links in his family tree, Cuevas had applied in 1930 to revalidate the Spanish title of Marqués de Piedrablanca de Guana. There was some controversy regarding the actual process of validation: his application was apparently approved but never signed by the late King Alfonso, who was forced to abdicate soon afterwards, but Cuevas had the English College of Arms register his title later on (Column clipping, *NYJA*). The effect was not altogether as illustrious as he had anticipated. In a letter to Strong, Santayana comments that "[the title] has an air of opéra-bouffe. But if they [George and Margaret] are pleased, so what do a few smiles matter? . . . I assume that they will use only the de Piedrablanca and not the de Guana—the latter is unfortunate, especially for a Chilean: it is almost de Guano" (29 Jan. 1930, emphasis in original). As Santayana points out, the marquisate's humble pedigree was ironically obvious in the literal meaning of the title to stone that is white from manure. Perhaps because of this, in Paris Cuevas took to simply calling himself Marquis de Cuevas, which triggered some grumbling from the very much alive and actively titled Marqués de Cuevas who lived in Madrid (Column clipping, *NYJA*).

As Sutherland notes, among Latin American dandies the use of pseudonyms was widespread and responded to the desire to create distance, and envisage the self as entirely constructed: "the politics of the name in dandies is crucial for their constant reinvention, and is expressed as a pose or structure that transforms its bearers in intensely contradictory beings in terms of how they appear or represent themselves" (30).[213] Several Chilean dandy authors wrote under pseudonyms: art critic Juan Emar (Álvaro

Yáñez Bianchi) used a phonetic play on the French expression: "J'en ai marre" (I've had enough), and novelist Augusto D'Halmar (Augusto Goeminne Thomson) based his on the words *alma* (soul) and *mar* (sea), with the "d'" as a sign of dubious aristocracy.[214]

For Joaquín Edwards Bello, the "title of marquis is part of [Cuevas's] masterpiece of a transformation" (199). In an ambiguous commendation, Edwards Bello compares Cuevas to a vanguard artist: "Cuevas, like modern poetry, defies all explanations. He is the most modern poetry in the flesh." Conceding that, "Hundreds of Chileans have greater rights to that title," he then argues that only Cuevas is worthy of it: "We would spoil it. It is in good hands. It is in the best hands in the world" (199).[215] As columnist Igor Cassini argued with gentle irony in his profile on Cuevas: "everything George Cuevas did showed an exquisiteness that even the gentlest of the gentle folk seldom evince. And it became apparent—particularly to himself—he was clearly the stuff that Kings are made of" ("Self-Made Man").

Cuevas gave up the title of nobility in July 1940 in order to become a naturalized American and facilitate the nationalization of his children, one of who was born abroad. To the press he declared, "Mister is good enough for me" (qtd. in Brown). During the remainder of his life, however, Cuevas continued to use the title socially. In fact, in 1951, he won a lawsuit against the *Paris Presse*, which had printed that the Marquis de Cuevas was "neither marquis nor de Cuevas" (qtd. in "Court Finds Mate of Rockefeller Heiress is Genuine Marquis"). Retaining the aristocratic "de" while maintaining the Spanish last name also lent him an aura of exoticism. Other eccentricities involved his fondness for animals, reminiscent of one of the earliest dandy models, Lord Byron, who kept an exotic

menagerie of pets, and who particularly loved his dog Boatswain, to whom he dedicated a poem that he inscribed on the large tombstone built on his estate. When Cuevas first arrived to Monte Carlo he was mocked for having twelve identical Pekinese dogs that never left his side (Mannoni 26). As his daughter Elizabeth Strong-Cuevas remembers: "People thought that it was a mundane attitude, a sort of theatrical game destined to pass as eccentric and amuse the gallery and journalists. In fact, my parents both loved these animals and the Pekinese dogs were a real link between them" (qtd. in Mannoni 27).[216] Another story reports that once the Marquis smuggled his pet monkey on board by stuffing him down his pants.[217]

To Marthe Bibesco, Cuevas described a meeting with investors in Washington, in which he acknowledged the way he was perceived by others: "They look at me as if I were a phenomenon, something like the eruption of a volcano, or the stampido of a cattle of bulls but, in any way [sic], nobody in the States thinks that I am well-balanced. I don't care because anyway I get what I ask for" (26 Feb. 1954).[218] In this self description, Cuevas appears as willfully eccentric, capitalizing on his perceived madness to coax investors into funding his grand schemes. Sutherland suggests that the stance of Latin American dandies is more "erratic, fleeting, posing and parodic" (27).[219] The following section will consider the posing and parodic aspects of the foreign dandy.

Posing Threats

In "Notes on 'Camp'," Susan Sontag encapsulated the dandy as "the 19th century's surrogate for the aristocrat in matters of culture" (107).[220] In this description,

the dandy is a proxy, not an authentic aristocrat. Signaling a sartorial allegiance to the class, he fights against the flattening effect of democracy, which "invades everything and which makes everything uniform" (Baudelaire 21).[221] Since the dandy never engages passionately with any cause, given his studied indifference, the spirit of "opposition and revolt" (20)[222] that Baudelaire identifies in him is most often embodied in his pose.

The dandy's defiance should be more understood broadly, however, not only as homage but also as parody, a parody that allows him to be read as a superficial code that is recognizable at a glance. This coded attitude and toilette often diverted attention from more disturbing elements such as a deviant sexuality, a humble background, or an alien nationality. Clothes literally mask the person entirely in the satirical etching by James Gillray *Les Invisibles* (The Invisible Ones, 1810; see fig. 6), which shows men and women promenading in a park, swallowed by their fashionable poke bonnets and stiff high-standing collars. Although the image illustrates the general flamboyance of men and women who appear to be followers of fashion and not trendsetters, the idea that clothes can take over the person is prevalent in the discourse on dandies. This image is also symbolic of the act of disappearance often performed by the dandy who wants to fit into society, and who uses artifice as a means of shelter. Thus, the affectation of choosing to remain on the edges of society often hid or effaced reasons that would effectively cast the dandy out as alien.

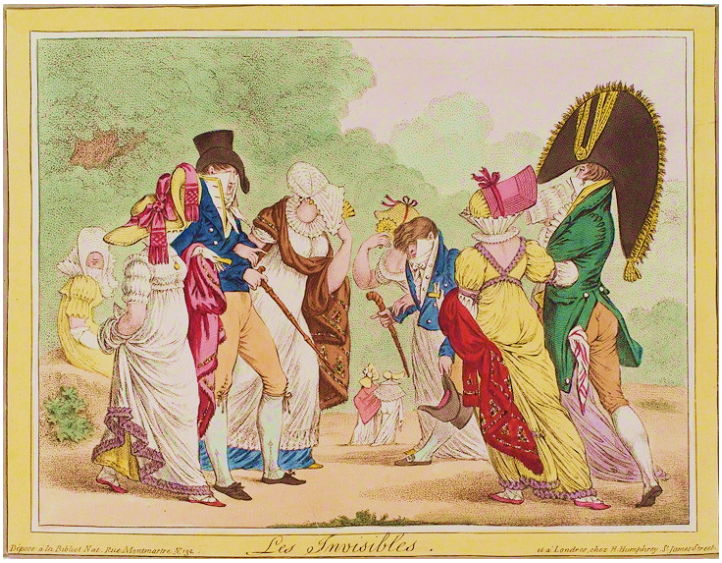

Fig. 6. *Les Invisibles*. Hand-colored etching by James Gillray. 1810.

In this sense, Santayana's first impression of Cuevas in Paris is meaningfully deceptive:

> not good-looking, not very young, not very small, but modest in appearance and manner rather like a youngish priest, and making the impression of a decidedly serious, sensible person, perhaps a trifle common, but not at all showy, flighty, or loud. . . . to my mind he seems commonplace and insignificant. Dangerous, is the last thing I should think him . . . I can't conceive of him as a lady-killer or as a fortune-hunter, unless it were in a very timid Tartuffian way. (24 July 1927; emphasis in the original)

The reference to Tartuffe is appropriate for a disguised and doubled identity. The ambiguity of Santayana's language, which describes Cuevas in negative terms, reveals

the difficulty that the philosopher has in fixing the young man's character. Santayana's appraisal of Cuevas as "commonplace and insignificant" might strike us as naïve or amusing in retrospect, but throws light on Cuevas's ability to blend in, and adapt himself to the situation in true chameleonic fashion. Four days later, Santayana sent another letter to Strong, which picks up on Cuevas's desire "to defend and to ingratiate himself." It also uncovers rumors that surround Margaret's fiancé, specifically concerning the "disturbing variety of acquaintances, [and] experiences" Cuevas apparently possessed (28 July 1927). In his next letter Santayana adds that "of course he is not a gentleman in the English sense; franchement canaille in some moments, but also full of nice impulses and a sort of merry good sense" (3 Aug. 1927, emphasis in the original). Santayana seems to feel that Cuevas is not exactly what he appears to be, but is at a loss to accurately locate him.

Cuevas's sexuality and nationality were certainly deemed suspect in Paris. A Rockefeller private investigator approached Santayana to inform him of the results of his inquest into Cuevas's character, carried out in part through the French police. Although nothing incriminatory was found regarding Cuevas directly, the report stated that, "he is known to move in circles of doubtful morals and manners; but the damning part is that a certain Soto, in whose establishment Cuevas works or figures, is a notorious emulator of Oscar Wilde and 'M. de Charlus'." In a later letter Santayana rectifies that "the head [of the establishment] is Prince Izoupoff (or something of that sort)" (3 Aug. 1927). Margaret was apparently aware of the reports and had known the circle for a long time, something that had "no influence on her decision to marry her friend" (1 Aug. 1927). Santayana objected to the medium and line of questioning of the police, and informed the

Rockefeller agent as much, arguing that the question "What are your attitudes regarding France" ("quels sont ses sentiments envers la France") (emphasis in the original), included in the interrogation addressed to Cuevas' friends showed "a desire to raise prejudice against the accused in the minds of the French officials, or to excuse their intervention in a private interest—servility towards John D. Jr.—under colour of patriotic zeal" (3 Aug. 1927). As Santayana plainly perceived, xenophobia justified mediation. Years later, gossip articles would note Cuevas's devotion to his young male friends. One malicious column remarked that "the newest de Cuevas protege [sic] was introduced . . . as 'Captain So-and-So.' . . . [although] when he served in Uncle Sam's naval forces several years ago he was a plain 'gob'!" (*NYJA*). A similar instance was reported in the case of the French parachutist Jacques Lacloche, who "became one of Cuevas's inner circle" after the war and to whom "Cuevas supplied . . . with the title of Count de Vallombreuse" ("Vatican Newspaper Rapped That Party"). Much as Cuevas himself embroidered his biography, his protégés also added creative details to their careers that usually raised them in social esteem.

In the Ballet, Cuevas was surrounded by young men, in which he often took a particular interest. The dashing Greek dancer Alexander Iolas joined the company early on and helped the Marquis with auditions, but was forced to leave due to an injury (Brooks). Francisco Moncion remembers that Iolas, "One of many [favourites at the time]" was going to play the main role of Sebastian, the martyr in a new choreography by Edward Caton. The choice of role can hardly be called coincidental, since the semi-nude figure of Saint Sebastian possesses great erotic appeal and has famously become a gay

icon. In letters to his friend Sofia Kochanski he also spoke candidly about his love interest for a handsome young man named Felix. From Genoa, where he was "taking care and accompanying Margaret," Cuevas confessed:

> Out of modesty, I had told you that I was not interested in Felix. But I must tell you the truth: I think about him constantly, and would like to fend off the dangers that follow him, and watch over him. I would like to help him, take care of him, guide him towards the port of health and nevermore abandon him. Felix is my Hamlet[,] full of poetry and contradictions: dangerous in his failings and touching in his selfish and childish charm. (12 Dec. 1936)[223]

Although the exact nature of their relationship remains unclear from the letters, Cuevas himself acknowledged that there was a strong dose of imagination in it, and that he "amuse[d] himself in embroidering and inventing novels [about Felix]" (16 Jan. 1937).[224] However platonic his relationships with his various protégés, his family and friends seem to have been well aware of his inclinations. His daughter reveals that she knew early on that her father was homosexual, through a revelation given by her nurse (Telephone interview). This aspect of his sexuality, however, which often simmered just beneath the pose of the dandy, was kept relatively quiet to the public.

George and Margaret began to spend time apart. He was immersed in the problems of his ballet and involved in touring events and advertising campaigns, while Margaret became more and more of a recluse, disliking social occasions and troubled by health issues. Several members of the company considered her exceptionally intelligent,

although her attempts at becoming more involved created tension, due to her tendency to favor Russian artists. In any case, she refused to keep up with the international agenda of the Ballet; prone to fits of depression, she often made elaborate plans and reservations, only to cancel them at the last minute.

Cuevas knew the value of posing, and thrived in the artificial medium of fashionable society. After the triumphant premiere of the Ballet in Monte Carlo in 1949, he wrote an ecstatic letter to Zosia: "I am pleased to see all the European aristocracy in the room . . . It was a perfect evening of perfection [sic], elegance, snobbishness, falseness, frivolity and the *appearance* of perfect happiness" (20 Mar. 1949, my emphasis).[225] As the Marquess of Queensbury had noted, this very appearance was enough to construct reality. In cultivating this polished façade, the Marquis felt most comfortable, safe in the knowledge that everyone was there to play their role.

Salvador Novo (1904-1974), the Aestheticist writer hailed as "the Mexican Oscar Wilde" (Josefina Caballero, qtd. in Miranda),[226] emerges as an important Hispanic model of resistance to heteronormativity from the stance of the dandy. In his book *Salvador Novo: lo marginal en el centro* (The Marginal in the Centre) Carlos Monsiváis explains that Novo's pose of an "upper class dandy" was meant as a "publicity method." In order "[t]o be recognized, Novo combines idiomatic opulence and banality and—since he is not allowed to join sex and eroticism—affiliates himself to the image of the world as aesthetic totality" (94-5).[227] For Sutherland, Novo's "staging reinvents new ways of appearing and disappearing at once." In this sense, the dandy pose or affectation can function as a strategic locus, a safe haven from which to defy normative power, thereby

"trafficking in indeterminate sexual alterities." The dandy never overtly states his sexual preference, and seeks to retain a level of uncertainty that allows the public to revel in his pose and witticisms, without having to take moral offence. His social—and often physical—survival, in fact, depends on retaining this ambiguity: "By definition the dandy will stay away from labels, knowing them very well, a sense of smell that he cultivates to socially eschew those who leave him anchored in a recognizable place" (23).[228] As Lord Henry responds when asked to describe himself: "To define is to limit" (215).

The mask of the dandy allowed the foreigner to present an impassible front that allowed free perambulation through the urban streets and social salons, and permitted mingling and even blending in with the crowds. Like the stranger in Kipling's poem, however, the mask itself became disturbing if it failed to match either the speech or the echo of a soul behind it. Often, the very success of its imitation of locals prompted fear. Oscar Wilde, the most famous Decadent dandy in London, sought to erase his Irishness under the veneer of a mask that made him "more English than the English" (Harris). Declan Kiberd discusses Wilde's "lifelong performance of 'Englishness' [as] . . . a parody of the very notion[;] . . . the clever strategy of an Irishman marooned in London" (36). For Kiberd, this came at the cost of a "massive suppression of personality," which entailed the exchange of "one mask for another, and [gave] rise to the suspicion that what these masks hid was no face at all—that the exponent of 'personality' was fatally lacking in 'character'" (36). Wilde himself broached the hollowness of masks in the brief story "The Sphinx without a Secret," where a woman who acts mysteriously is revealed to have no secrets to hide. For Saidah, the dandy's mask "gives visibility to the reality

forged by himself and only himself, a reality studied with care, forged, made-up, artificial, a reality produced by an effective will and the expression of a cult of form" (Saidah 144).[229] In this light, the mask worn by the dandy is artificial, but not necessarily hypocritical.

In "The Critic as Artist," Wilde reveled in one of his trademark paradoxes: "man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give a man a mask and he will tell you the truth" (282). This notion is crystallized in the context of the writer's national identity crisis; as Kiberd notes, "Oxford strengthened in Wilde the conviction that an Irishman only discovers himself when he goes abroad" (37). Jorge Cuevas experiences a similar transformation: once he puts on the mask of the dandy, his personality flourishes; a discovery that can only occur abroad. In Joaquín Edwards Bello's *Criollos en París*, Cuevas' alter ego, the character of Jorge Dueñas, declares that Chile "was an obstacle, that which did not allow him to be" (232).[230] In Paris, he decided to avoid his fellow countrymen and "took off [the Chilean colony] as one who takes off a dirty shirt" (236).[231] The use of imperial and sartorial rhetoric here is noteworthy in its alignment of Cuevas with the insider, and not with the indigenous self back home. I will not dwell on the colonialist French stance, since, as mentioned in the previous chapter, France did not intervene majorly in Latin America.

Significantly, both Wilde and Cuevas chose the mask of the dandy as an umbrella concept that encouraged "proper" society to feel comfortable with their alien identities. Any embarrassing sexual ambiguities in dress, manner, or opinions could be attributed to the affectation of the dandy, which was, after all, a familiar type of a trivial nature, and an

entertaining one at that. Whatever controversial political opinions he held were defused by his emotionless tone and dismissible paradoxes.

The inscrutable soul of the foreigner that perambulates through the streets of Paris, or London, or New York, with the same propriety as if he were local, threatens to destabilize the status of the native citizen, prompting fear precisely because he is "within my gate," as Kipling's poem "The Stranger" illustrates. This fear seems temporarily pacified when he adopts a visually legible code, such as the role of the dandy. Behind a mask that seems to be devoid of personality, or perhaps replete with the predictable sham of an othered identity, the potential threat of the foreign remains at a safe remove, at least temporarily. In this sense, the mask serves to at least suggest that the stranger is attempting to pass, and knows the codes that allow him to play along.

For the Marquis de Cuevas, and for other eccentric foreigners, the roles of dandy and *flâneur* served as vehicles to experience the formation of the self as perceived in the context of the modern city. Through their self-conscious posing, they avoided uncomfortable labels, creating a spectacle that resisted identification with potentially dangerous epithets. Highly aware of being perceived as threatening, the upstart foreigner self-consciously exploits the positions of dandy and *flâneur* in his favor, positioning and re-positioning himself in a fluctuating field of vision and spectacle within the cityscape.

Chapter 3

The King of Nature at the *Fête Champêtre*: The Perils of Staging a Costume Ball

On 1 September 1953, the Marquis held an indoor *fête champêtre* for 2,000 of the most fashionable people of Europe and America. This costume ball, inspired in an eighteenth-century aristocratic garden party, marked the height of his personal triumph and social ubiquity. In a sumptuously decorated country club in Biarritz, the Marquis reigned over his guests dressed as the King of Nature, and had his dance company perform for the occasion. The evening was enveloped in an atmosphere of luxurious decadence, but was also permeated by a sense of malaise, marked by a yearning for an era of stylization and leisure that in the wake of two world wars could not be retrieved. The uncertain success of the party itself also played a part in this uneasiness, reflecting the ways in which fashionable Europe—the so-called Café Society of the 1950s—negotiated the frontiers of belonging and acceptance within their exclusive circle.

The absence of key personalities to the ball, partly due to a context of strikes and general social restlessness in France, partly due to the Marquis's own dubious status within this Café Society, compelled many guests to think twice about attending, and made the event anticlimactic. The soirée was supposed to constitute Cuevas's definitive crowning as a world socialite; instead, it was widely and almost universally condemned in the press for its extravagance, and general lack of taste. Indeed, the social identity of this cosmopolitan Café Society was grounded on these exclusive festivities and, although

they were regularly criticized, attacks were hardly as vicious and widespread as those that sprung in the wake of Cuevas's party.

Daniel de La Vega suggests that those who were able to attend the party, said good things about it, and those who did not, criticized it (90), the implication being that envy dictated criticism. I believe the reasons to be somewhat more complex. In this chapter I will argue that the failure of this Café Society party in particular is due to three related elements.

First, Cuevas exploited the masquerade and costume party genre in ways that underlined its subversive potential, a potential that Bakhtin locates in the sense of communal, ritualistic celebrations that constitute a *carnivalesque* view of the world. These temporary disruptions emerge in the way that Cuevas flaunted a queered identity that transgressed the public's perception of what constituted an acceptable role, not only in terms of sexuality, but also in terms of national loyalties. Cuevas's queered self was considered scandalous, but the elements that queered his identity were not easily locatable on his body in the context of a costume party, which resists hermeneutic impulses that seek to delve deeper, beneath the mask of the guest. The costume party privileged surface appearances, and allowed status to be defined sartorially for the evening, so that all guests became dandies and *flâneurs* for the night, both objects of the gaze and active observers.

Secondly, the theme of an eighteenth century garden party was particularly provocative in this respect given the fact that the pose of effortless grace in the actors portrayed conflicted with the sense of their naturalized privilege, and served to highlight

the contradictions inherent in the authenticity of their social position. The overtly performative aspect of the celebration directly questioned the notion of aristocratic privilege, and reminded the international set of their own constructed identities, as a class that was essentially on its way out. Cuevas's stylized version of a European aristocrat questioned the way that this international set was constituted. The evening also allowed costumed intruders to breach the gates of an exclusive party, reinforcing the *carnivalesque* aspect of the event. Furthermore, the social setting and the staged dance conventions highlighted the fluctuating and arbitrary positions of viewing subject and viewed object that distinguished Self from Other.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, the theme of the party, particularly ill timed in a context of labor strikes in France and the ever-present fear of the spread of Communism, reminded the country and the world at large of a crisis in political and social history that had brought about a violent revolution. For his ball, Cuevas chose to go as the King of Nature, an eighteenth century costume meant to be inspired by French monarchical attire. Cuevas's decision to invoke the glorious era of the *Ancient Régime* exhibited a decided lack of taste, but he seemed to be condemned for it especially because he was a foreigner. His delight in a world of privilege appeared not only disrespectful and ignorant, but perhaps also illegitimate, since it revealed the rise of South American *parvenu*s, who failed to properly respect the tradition of privilege, and instead mounted a parody of it.

Mikhail Bakhtin identifies parody as inseparably linked to what he calls *carnivalesque*, a notion that he situates as a real ritual but that he analyzes in its literary

implications. For Bakhtin the original ritual of "Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without division into performers and spectators. . . . everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act" (ch. 4). Carnival turns life upside down, and is imbued with an essentially blasphemous spirit that profanes all that is sacred, suspending hierarchical structures, as well as all forms of etiquette, and all forms of inequality. These disruptions visually extend to changes in clothing that mark changes in social position. When viewed from outside, the behavior of people who participate in carnival is seen as eccentric; it crosses the line of propriety and strays from what is considered normal. Perhaps the most relevant element to consider in Cuevas's party is "The primary carnivalistic act [of] the *mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king*," which emphasizes the eternal cycle of "death and renewal" and well as "the *joyful relativity* of all structure and order, of all authority and all (hierarchical) position" (ch. 4, emphasis in the original). Although the court masquerade and the costume party as exclusive entertainment are not strictly speaking a carnival, since they do not include the community at large in the festivity, and instead seek to marginalize a great deal of the population to demarcate its territory of exclusivity, certain aspects of the carnival sense of the world are still retained, and will be explored in this chapter.

Cosmopolitanism and the Café Society

Cuevas's ball must first of all be understood in the context of the "Café Society"—a term some attribute to American journalist Elsa Maxwell (Coudert 8)—, also conceived in the press, notably after World War II, as the "international set." The

expression Café Society "evokes a cosmopolitan, superficial world, sometimes poisonous, often depraved, which ends by degrading into what Loelia Westminster called the 'Nescafé Society,' last stage before the decadence of taste of the vulgar jet-set of today" (Coudert 8).[232] In his lavish oversized book, presented as a homage to its main players, Thierry Coudert argues that the group, which caroused from 1920 to 1960, was a loose association of European aristocrats and millionaires from around the world, and the minor artists and socialites who fluttered around them; its members often in flux depending on whether they were included or not in the guest list for a party (10). After World War I many wealthy Americans had travelled to Europe and often married into aristocracy, becoming part of the local social scene, a phenomenon already seen in Edith Wharton and Henry James novels at the turn of the century. This offers a curious parallel to Cuevas's own story, where the impoverished South American marries the wealthy American instead. The group of transnational socialites was also known under the alternative name of "international set," a name often used by the press in the 1940s and 1950s, and included "film stars, steel magnates, playboys, and oil heiresses" (Anderson). As Coudert claims, however, Café Society's "real innovation . . . reside[d] in the apparition of South Americans within the people who set the tone" (15).[233] Among its prominent members, Coudert identifies the eccentric Mexican-Spanish millionaire Charles de Beistegui; Chilean millionaire and art collector Arturo Lopez-Willshaw and his elegant wife Patricia Lopez-Huici; as well as Chilean-born Georges de Cuevas. Indeed, Chileans in particular are abundantly present in the book and several receive separate sections: the distinguished Eugenia Errázuriz was a founding influence on the

Café Society in the 1920s; much later, there is Cuevas's "nephew" Raymundo de Larraín, who is also Patricia Lopez-Huici's relative, and the ubiquitous Antonio "Tony" de Gandarillas, both of whom, like Cuevas, mysteriously incorporated the aristocratic particle "de" to their names along the way. Other South American notables were Bolivian tycoon Antenor Patiño, Cuban-born architect and interior designer Emilio Terry, and Dominican playboy Porfirio Rubirosa. Initially considered *rastaquouères* by the French nobility in Paris at the turn of the century, as seen in Chapter 1, South Americans became more accepted as they began to create marriage ties with impoverished aristocrats (111).

Cuevas remains a particularly interesting figure within this group, since he often stood at the threshold of this perpetual party. Coudert identifies him as "one of the most atypical and [yet] most characteristic personages of the Café Society" (123),[234] attributing this borderline quality to his mysterious origin, his rather late-blooming and therefore suspicious passion for ballet, and a certain absurd quality about his person. Initially disdained, Cuevas became one of the major players of the Café Society after World War II, at a time when its cosmopolitan aspect was accentuated (132).

Given the contested nature of cosmopolitanism and its recent revival by Anthony Kwame Appiah and Jacques Derrida, it is important to conceive how this concept was understood at the time. The cosmopolitanism of the first half of the twentieth century was hardly the inclusive notion that Appiah rescues, wherein the cultural difference in other people is valued and appraised in its context (90), although this sense will appear in Cuevas's ballet troupe. Instead, the cosmopolitanism espoused in the first half of the twentieth century was predicated on belonging to an elite social and economic class, and,

less explicitly, on the privilege of travelling the world, and spending longer periods in certain exclusive cities (namely Paris, London, and New York). Additionally, it presupposed a certain broadness of mind, especially an aristocratic flexibility regarding sexual mores. When Margaret, Cuevas's wife, had complained to the Duchess of Miranda that the Ballet stole Cuevas away from her, the Duchess had exclaimed: "Margaret, how old-fashioned you are" (qtd. in letter from Cuevas to Kochanski, 20 Mar. 1949).[235] Café Society also had to exhibit a sensibility to taste, and a general enthusiasm for the arts, especially for the decorative arts, which were developed and exhibited at their parties.

In Chile, this notion of cosmopolitanism needs to be considered in terms of the Latin American imitation of everything European, as seen in Chapter 1. Cuevas certainly did not feel Chilean, but rather identified his national feeling of belonging to his most frequent residence, that of France. He also intermittently claimed allegiance to the US and to Spain, given his citizenship and title. Like Cuevas, many Chileans felts entitled to be considered part of this cosmopolitan world of the post-wars.

Coudert melancholically states that the Café Society represents "a world that will remain as a last burst of the Great Century, rapidly submerged by the bourgeois order and consumer society" (317).[236] In this view, Cuevas's ball becomes a sort of danse macabre of a society that is fast fading, which in its nostalgic staging of past luxury proclaims instead the demise of its current incarnation of privilege.

The cosmopolitanism of the members of this fluctuating group was illustrated by their ability to fly to different places in the world to attend exclusive international gatherings. For Coudert, "parties and balls . . . were the incarnation of Café Society"

(19);[237] indeed, parties were a form of artistic expression that defined and redefined the status of their members, since it allowed them to police boundaries by focusing on who was kept outside them (10). Foreigners came from all over the world to attend these balls, which were very frequently set in France. The hosts of these events dreamed up parties in different festive themes, "intending to create a total work of art, thus staging the Café Society" (20).[238] As Jean-Louis de Faucigny-Lucinge argued in his *Memorable Costume Balls 1922-1972*: "The aristocracy has always loved to stage itself" (qtd. in Coudert 19).[239] Given the fact that many Café Society members were themselves playing at being aristocrats, this staging had several layers, as Cuevas's party shows.

Ironically enough, it was often the South Americans who "consecrate[d] their fortunes to an art of living which was that of a French aristocracy, which either did not have the means, or perhaps prefer[red], given the mood of the period, to become more discrete" (112).[240] Aside from connecting the old remnants of the aristocracy with newer, wealthier members of society, these parties served to bring together artists and patrons in a joint project, so that the latter both "pa[id] tribute [to artists] and participat[ed] in the phenomenon of creation" (Faucigny-Lucinge qtd. in Coudert 19).[241] The dizzying display of parties that often functioned as privately developed art ventures, was given ample coverage in the press, which took on the role of harboring and propping up hosts and guests.

"Nature Has Had Her Day": Theatricality and Spectacle

In 1952 Cuevas's ballet company was in good standing, and the popularity of the Marquis, 67, was at its peak. From being an errand-boy to elderly aristocratic women on first arriving to Europe, Cuevas had jumped into the spotlight as a—somewhat buffoonish, but ever-present—socialite both for being the Rockefeller patriarch's son-in-law and for heading a ballet company that attracted fashionable crowds. The costume ball can be seen as the culmination of his life, and represented, as his childhood friend Joaquín Edwards Bello argued, "the explainable apotheosis of a Chilean who lived in disguises, fashions and the sumptuary" (201).[242]

By hosting such an ambitious party, Cuevas was making a conclusive statement regarding his global social transcendence that would ultimately prove to the world that he had grown from a mere supporting character to a full-fledged leading man in this social elite—albeit one rather past his prime. Indeed, Cuevas was performing his role in a highly self-conscious manner, which precluded it from being entirely successful, since his veneer of leisure and ease was created with so much hard work. In this sense, Cuevas seemed to have interiorized the quandary of the classical dancers he led, similarly reflecting a façade of effortlessness and grace that was constructed by painstaking training and hard work. The dance company thus seemed to function once more as an extension of the Marquis, who, as has already been discussed in the previous chapter, kept alive the aristocratic title he had officially given up by using it to name his ballet troupe.

Interestingly, the notion of *sprezzatura*, the studied nonchalance of performing an act without apparent effort, or, more accurately, hiding the real effort and work that went into learning the pose, is central to Castiglione's Renaissance book of manners *The Courtesan*, which emerges in the context of "a crisis of the aristocracy" (95), and its "increasing emphasis on the need to *perform* status, the need to develop strategies of self-representation and class self-definition" (Berger 96). *Sprezzatura* thus constitutes a "genre of performance, posing, and, within that, a particular subgenre of posing, pretending not to pose" (102). Berger examines what he terms the "sprezzatura of suspicion," which "involves not deceit *tout court* but rather the menace of deceit, the display of the ability to deceive" (Berger 98). For Patricia Pender, this makes "The performance of sprezzatura. . . a figuration of power . . . and simultaneously, a figuration of anxiety" (28). The effort at dissimulation thus creates a sense of paranoia, since all courtiers are suspicious of only pretending to be authentic; it also creates anxiety over the possibility of being found out as not matching the exterior pose. This notion will be useful to consider in light of the posed nature of the whole event.

The artificial pastoral setting for the Biarritz ball was essentially ironic, and particularly fitting. Indeed, in its nostalgic rendering of an eighteenth century court, the party seemed to participate in the modern argument of nature versus art that had been rekindled by Baudelaire's proclamation of the superiority of art to nature, and clinched by Huysmans's Decadent statement that "Nature . . . has had her day" (22). Appropriately, Coudert argues that one of Café Society's greatest achievements was its development of the so-called minor arts, such as interior decoration, which had gained firm footing with

Ruskin's writings as developed by William Morris in what became known as the Arts and Crafts movement. At the turn of the nineteenth century, decorative arts gained ascendance with the Goncourt brothers, Oscar Wilde, and Huysmans's Des Esseintes (186). Such display of precious artistry in the twentieth century was of course namely fostered in the context of the lavish parties given by prominent society members.

In "The Painter of Modern Life," Baudelaire had revealed his ambiguous fascination with modernity and the transitory aspects of its beauty, celebrating fashion and cosmetics as an improvement on nature. In fact, he controversially argued, it was only civilization that made man virtuous, for the animal instinct was base and evil—a vision that ran essentially counter to Rousseau's views. As Baudelaire posited in his poems, and as the Pygmalion fantasy imagines, art is superior to nature in that it gives it order and makes it meaningful. Ballet, an art whose movements are essentially artificial, and which requires the body to undergo the most awkward and uncomfortable positions, like turn out of legs, immobilization of hips, hyperextension of limbs, etc., goes to great lengths to make these movements appear graceful, effortless and natural in execution. The Romantic aspiration of making a woman's body ethereal on stage as an incarnation of male fantasies bore a more earthly reality backstage, as *abonnés* had access to their bodies in a less ethereal manner.

A similar tension between ideal and real permeates Baudelaire's poetry, and situates itself as the axis of a modern world. The ideal for Baudelaire is always a dream that can only be grasped in flights of fancy, in a reverie that is nostalgic for a lost past and an impossible future. This ideal strayed away from nature, which was often repulsive to

Baudelaire. In a similar way, Cuevas's ideal was far from natural, and offered instead a stylized view of life. Cuevas dreamt of a place of beauty, where luxury, calm and wealth reigned supreme, as suggested by Baudelaire's poem "Invitation to the Voyage," quoted in Chapter 1. An imaginary place that he sought to recreate on his ballet stage, where the universal language was beauty, with no ugly accents. Nature for Cuevas was linked to the coarseness of Chile, which was present as a permanent reminder in the title of Marquis de Piedra Blanca de Guana (or guano) that he had officially forsaken but continued to use.

By choosing to go to the party in the rather ironic guise of the King of Nature, Cuevas foregrounded the theatricality of both royalty and aristocracy. A costume ball was a particularly pertinent choice as well in how it focused on the changeable aspects of modernity, namely fashion, and deflected attention from skin color or gender onto attire; camouflaging the immutable features of the body with dress and makeup. The spectacle in which Cuevas wrapped himself was splendid enough to make him almost unrecognizable to those who knew him in Chile. Edwards Bello seemed incredulous on hearing about Cuevas's success, and wondered: "Is he the same man, the one we knew: small, dark-skinned, penniless, and always on the lookout for something?" (199).[243] In a satirical piece he comes to the conclusion that "This marquis, as we see, is a personal creation, that is, an original being, created by himself" (Edwards Bello, *Antología de Familia* 65).[244] In point of fact, Cuevas had reinvented himself several times over, and his costume ball simply invited others to do the same, setting the stage for a spectacle of self-fashioning, and creating an evening where authentication of social belonging was based on attire, as opposed to name, bloodline or race.

Fact and Fiction: A Brief History of Masked and Costumed Anxiety

The subversive potential of Cuevas's party was embedded in the very fabric of the costume ball itself, a distant embodiment of the *carnivalesque* spirit studied by Bakhtin. Indeed, costume parties and their close relatives, masquerades, have historically created anxiety because of their power to loosen social codes. For the purposes of this discussion, fancy dress balls and masquerades will be taken to pose a similar social threat, bearing in mind that the distinction between one and the other is often unclear, since masquerades almost always imply that the wearer of the mask also be costumed, or at least caped, whereas costumes for a ball will often include a mask or wig. Both costumes and masks are forms of hiding an identity, and all contain the possibility of subversion by revealing a breach. The costumed stranger can enter premises unknown, or can reveal an unexpected gender beneath his/her loose garb. The potential disruption in hiding beneath a surface that does not allow for clear interpretation of customary signs of gender, class, race, and political allegiance, always creates a certain degree of anxiety—hence the custom of unveiling your costume to the host before entering the party. Indeed, Mrs. Jennie Taylor Wandle, a contemporary American author of several guides to social decorum, offers telling advice on this matter:

> during the arrival of the guests, the hostess (or reception committee) stands at the entrance to the ball-room, and to her each guest must lift his or her mask just long enough to disclose the face, as this is the only way in which the hostess may protect herself against the intrusion of unbidden guests. Reception committees at society balls are obliged to be even more

> strict than this, and may exclude even a bidden guest who wears an objectionable costume. (9)

What exactly constituted an "objectionable costume" remains ambiguous, but serves to remind guests that certain limits may not be trespassed. This is, after all, not the unfettered frenzy of carnival.

Overall, masquerades contained a more risqué element since masks covered more completely any recognizable personal feature. Indeed, masquerades have often been associated with transgressing rules of decorum and boundaries of gender and nationality. The effeminate Macaronis discussed in the previous chapter as originators of the dandies in the eighteenth century, were also alternatively labeled "Cornellyan Brethren" after the renowned masquerades organized and hosted by Teresa Cornelys, the name that Venetian soprano, opera impresario and society hostess Anna Maria Teresa Imer had taken up when moving to London. Anti-masqueraders would often highlight the event's foreign roots and the corrupting influence of this import from the Continent (Castle 11).

Masquerades in general were also associated with sexual ambiguity and licentiousness, and the history of anti-masquerade sentiment in the eighteenth-century responded to the threat that these balls posed on several fronts: wearing costumes was feared not only because these "[hid] the anatomical distinctions that permit guests to be categorized as males and females," but also because they might blur the codes that "separate virgin from whore" (Craft-Fairchild 1), and therefore pose a threat to the legitimacy of power within a patriarchal lineage.

Similarly, the latent danger of hidden identities prevalent in costume parties was often linked to a potential lack of individual responsibility and a general relaxation of morality, which also illustrates how boundaries of all sorts became more fluid and could be trespassed more easily. French caricaturist Paul Gavarni has a whole series on *Les Bals masqués*, as part of his depiction of Parisian study of manners. One of his most picturesque is *Les Suites du bal masqué* (1839; see fig. 7), which shows the *carnivalesque* side of a public masked ball. Policemen are seen attempting to control the costumed crowds, but clearly failing. One of the policemen has fallen on his back, presumably after unlacing a corset that reveals a hairy-chested man underneath feminine clothing. The chaotic scene is evidently fraught with erotic tension, and seems to represent the dangerous moment at which the fantasy scenario of *carnivalesque* misrule trespasses its temporal boundaries and spills over into real life.

Fig. 7. *Les Suites du bal masqué* (After a Masquerade) by Paul Gavarni. 1839.

As Terry Castle shows, in its folkloric origin a public masquerade was traditionally hosted by a Lord of Misrule or Carnival King, usually associated with "sexuality and generation" (22), who presided over the proceedings with mock-authority. The origins of the masquerade must be traced to the carnival, which had its roots in the Saturnalia of Roman antiquity, and the medieval Feast of Fools, as discussed by James Frazer (11). In this light, Cuevas's disguise of King of Nature, despite its sophisticated aristocratic aim, becomes an unintentional but ironically appropriate costume that can be linked to this figure of the Lord of Misrule, who is leading a social, national and gender-bending event.

Fiction undeniably delights in the subversive possibilities that arise in the partial anonymity offered by masked balls and costume parties, which become what Castle labels, "[a] terra incognita at the heart of civilized life" (111). The transformative power of costumes is indeed vital to the fairy tale, and often central to its plot. Perrault's beloved *Cinderella* (1697) relies on the fact that the heroine can be entirely transformed by her rich attire and, despite wearing no mask, Cinderella can attend the palace ball without being recognized by her stepsisters or stepmother—even her father fails to identify the glittering young woman. Cuevas's life, as the Chilean press in particular liked to emphasize, was especially similar to this Perrault story, and the image of Cinderella was often linked to Cuevas in the collective imaginary.

Andersen's "The Porter's Son" (1866) narrates a similar tale of rags to riches, in which a poor lad falls in love with a young maiden from a noble family. At a fancy dress ball, young Emilie dances with a stranger who, dressed as a black Domino, is able to gain

access to her. Emilie's father, initially appalled at this revelation, is ultimately charmed by the young man, and comes to the conclusion that "Most certainly he is some scion of nobility; there are many such, and it isn't any fault of his!" The costume ball thus allows the poor young man to trespass a social boundary and "g[et his] foot under the table" (Andersen).

Significantly, the *Cinderella* fairy tale marks midnight as the moment at which the spell loses its effect and the gentlewoman turns back into the dirty "wench" (Perrault). Traditionally, midnight was also the moment at which guests had to unmask (Wandle 9), and it becomes apparent that at the height of this dangerous erotic game, society rules that order must be re-established.

The anxious desire to ascertain a seal of authenticity that goes beyond outward appearance also underlies the story of *Cinderella*. In the fairy tale characters repeatedly comment on how the strange princess's demeanor is noble, even if everyone fails to recognize her. When the Prince wants to find her again, she is not known by her visage, but by the silver slipper she leaves behind, i.e. by a token that measures her small feet as a sign of authentic noble physique.

The shadow cast by *Romeo and Juliet* and its pivotal masquerade scene must also have been present in Cuevas's mind. The company had shown the *pas de deux* choreographed by Serge Lifar in 1948, as well as a brief piece entitled *Tragédie à Verone* in 1950, both of which used Tchaikovsky's overture; more significantly, Cuevas would stage a lavish version of the complete story with music by Berlioz in 1955 (Crisp 16-7). The latter was a magnificent occasion on which Cuevas was invited by the Official

Committee of Parties for the city of Paris to stage a spectacle in the Cour Carrée courtyard in the Louvre, a production that included the Berlioz score in its integrity, and was performed by the Choruses and Orchestra of the Concerts Colonne (Weinstock), as well as 100 singers and other soloists, and the 60 members of Cuevas's company. The organizers would dub the performance "The Festival of the Century," an honorary allusion to his Biarritz ball of the century.

Wearing clothes that did not belong to one's social station had been historically forbidden through the various sumptuary laws enacted in Europe, which, although namely destined to regulate the consumption of luxury and thus create a state-wide sense of domestic frugality, also served as a way to easily distinguish social classes and gender. Alan Hunt situates the appearance of these laws around the twelfth century, at the gateway of the early modern world, as Feudalism is waning and mercantile capitalism develops, i.e. as part of the transition from "the theological discourses against luxury to the economic discourses of protectionism" (65). Hunt argues that "Sumptuary law was a response to at least three of the most distinctive features of modernity[:] . . . urbanization, the emergence of class as the pervasive form of social relations and the construction of gender relations in these 'new' conditions," which attempted to resolve the issue of "how it is possible to live in close physical proximity with others and sustain relations of mutual dependence with strangers" (64). Although these laws were often not strenuously enforced, their creation nonetheless shows the anxiety regarding the trespassing of the boundaries of self. For Hunt, sumptuary legislation in growing urban contexts "can best be understood as a response to the quest for recognisability" (66). In other words, it

reveals the need to be able to quickly identify strangers to the city, as well as distinguish social class and gender at first glance. In this light, etiquette manuals regarding dress codes appear as remnants of these sumptuary laws. Indeed, the fear inherent in costume balls and masquerades was often the unexpressed concern that wearing a costume to pretend to be something that one was not could extend this fantasy to real life, whereby a person from a lower order, for example, through the acquisition of material goods, such as fabrics, fashion or jewelry, could pretend to be higher up in the social scale and thus confuse the observer, or that cross-dressing might effectively transform a person's gender.

In general terms, external attire had historically been supposed to signal an internal coherence of identity, and any transgression, especially in terms of gender appropriateness and social class triggered public discomfort. In this sense, wearing disguises at a fancy dress party allowed for the safe, or at least safer exploration of what these transgressions might entail, and how they might effectively transform identity. These inquiries are carefully demarcated by time and often an implied code of etiquette that designates the limits of this transgression. Through the use of his King of Nature costume Cuevas, however, seemed to queer his identity on several fronts, transgressing the appropriate representation of national authenticity, sexual orientation, and social class, and breaching several of these implicit social laws.

Costume Parties in the Chilean Belle Époque

The creation of a widespread social frisson would certainly have been part of

Cuevas's reasons for offering a costume party, as would the desire to fashion a successful artistic event that rivaled those of other Café Society hosts. Further background on the ball must also consider Cuevas's Chilean origins. The sense of social inadequacy that had haunted Cuevas for most of his life was also at stake, and in this respect the costume party enacted a twofold fantasy: aside from recreating European—specifically French—aristocracy at the zenith of its power and decadent opulence, the ball also aspired to reproduce upper class entertainment in Chile during the Belle Époque—a period in which society ironically also sought to recreate French aristocracy, as discussed in Chapter 1. Within the Chilean oligarchy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, fancy dress balls and masquerades were very popular, and usually associated with some of the most powerful families in the country (Müller 33).

Interestingly, despite wholeheartedly embracing this mode of European entertainment, Chilean society exhibited some apprehensions regarding the dangers of allowing people to enter their houses hiding behind costumes and masks. As historian Fernando Silva points out, masquerades in Chile elicited some reservations because of the potential threat posed by the anonymity offered its guests (96). The reaction was comparable to that of fancy dress parties, in which the idea of a crowd of costumed guests prompted trepidation because "it was no longer possible to recognize at first sight the social precedence of strangers in the city" (Müller 54).[245] In these two accounts, one might venture to suggest that, whereas the fear of a masquerade was that a stranger—in every sense of the term—would enter the premises unrecognized, the prevailing trepidation with fancy dress balls seemed to be linked to the fact that the costume would

make it impossible to clearly identify social *parvenu*s.

In Chile, the danger of social misrecognition was symptomatic of a broader change in the availability of consumption goods with the emergence of ready-made articles of clothing sold in department stores that had opened in Santiago in 1910, in which the lower classes could have access to fashion previously denied them, so that clothing could effectively blur social parameters. Thus, in Chilean entertainment, "the fancy dress ball [can be seen] as a continuation . . . of this [social] masquerade" (54).[246]

The apprehension regarding disguises also extended to gender confusion. For Müller, the prevalence of oriental costumes in Chilean fancy dress parties, which responded to the far-reaching popularity of the Ballets Russes, was perceived as potentially dangerous: the androgynous look created by the "harem pants" in particular was regarded with suspicion because it could produce a transformation in women that would presumably make them more masculine and, what was even worse, could lead the viewer to gender misrecognition (69). Marjorie Garber analyzes the "Turkish trousers" as they passed into fashion as a rather conflicting "sign of women's independence, and of the reconfiguration of gender roles through the interposition of certain fantasy structures derived simultaneously from colonial dreams and colonial fears," that could be read equivocally as both "male and female, 'Arab' and European at once" (313-4). *Zig-Zag* magazine consecrated several articles to considering the effect of what was considered to be a Parisian fashion in Chilean society. In an issue in 1911, novelist Fernando Santiván used a flippant tone to reassure readers that most men did not mind what women wore, as long as they retained their femininity. Several cartoons offered a more alarmist view of

harem pants. An illustration showing an ambiguously gendered couple walking their dog offers the following amusing caption: "Once the Harem fashion becomes widespread, and when woman has fully appropriated the use of pants, there will be conflicts like the following: no one will know whether there goes Miss Dominga Rebusnante with her son Manuel or Mr. Domingo of the Same Name with his little daughter Manuela" ("Conflicts in Perspective").[247]

Significantly, the fancy dress ball greatly emphasized the role of the viewer, who could find him/herself dangerously implicated in uncharted territory. Gender transformations were rarely appropriate, except when the performative aspect was brought to the fore, as in the case of one male guest who came dressed as Napoleon II, in the exact same costume as Sarah Bernhardt used in the play by Rostand (Müller 59), thus, the opposite gender element is safely celebrated. Of course, there were several unstated rules in place for parties of the Chilean upper class to avoid uncomfortable issues of mistaken identities. Although the costumes were a way of playfully escaping everyday reality, Müller argues that decorum was essential: dresses could not be very revealing and, although allowances were made for a bare ankle here or there, in general terms, the characters chosen had to remain modest; what is more, costumes could not be so original that guests were unable to recognize them (29), presumably so as to keep the game within manageable boundaries.

For Cynthia Cooper, costume parties function in a very different way to masquerades, and, given that the latter were considered too obscene and dissolute for proper society in the nineteenth century, costume balls gained precedence (qtd. in Müller

29). In this sense, costume parties highlighted the identity of the individual and were used to distinguish the wearer for his or her creativity, taste and wealth. In fact, the choices in costume are quite revealing of the models that Chilean upper class society found to be appropriate, and also show what fantasies were prevalent and what tastes were like at the time.

On 28 July 1905 a twenty-year-old Jorge Cuevas attended the costume ball held by press-tycoon Agustín Edwards Mac Clure and his wife Olga Budge—both of whom would later act as godparents at his wedding to Margaret Strong in Paris. Eduardo Balmaceda, contemporary diplomat and writer, recounts how at the time Cuevas "was already recognized as being a refined man, an incipient artist"; indeed, "it was said that in the select gatherings offered by Agustín Edwards Mac-Clure and his wife in their large colonial house . . . all was directed by him with exquisite taste" (279-80).[248] Balmaceda's comment suggests that young Cuevas had already become a sort of decorating guru to powerful families in Chile and, given his later social career in Europe, it is highly likely that he found this to be a useful way to participate in the highest social gatherings.

Zig-Zag magazine, which had debuted earlier that year and was owned by Agustín Edwards Mac Clure, covered this party in depth in numerous editions. The main article records the high number of guests that attended dressed up as some of the most recognizable characters in French history, including all three musketeers, prominent members of the Directory and the Empire, Napoleon Bonaparte himself, and many *Ancient Régime* courtiers: "Louis XIV and Louis XV had all their court present, with their marchionesses in powdered hair and artificial moles, plucked at random from the

most charming paintings by Philip of Champagne and Watteau."[249] Two sisters of the host, María Luisa and Francisca Edwards, were dressed as matching Madames de Pompadour (Noir, "Otro aspecto de un baile"). *Incroyables* were also popular; described by the magazine as "*parvenus* of the French Revolution,"[250] their presence was certainly ironic, since these eighteenth-century dandies—who often belonged to the aristocracy, and just as often pertained to newly enriched social families who wished above all to stand out—were all dressed in similar fashion, so that the impact of their apparel was somewhat mitigated. All in all, the party showed a clear inclination towards French culture, as evidenced in Chapter 1, and within it, a prevailing fantasy to play eighteenth century aristocrats.

In light of this, Cuevas's vision of himself as an eighteenth century monarch can be traced not solely to his penchant for luxury, but also to the generalized aspirations and tastes of the Chilean oligarchy of the early twentieth century, at whose parties he participated as a discreet courtier. Indeed, Cuevas appears posing in a photograph in the Edwards family archives, attired with loose-fitting knee breeches, stockings, slippers, and a contemporary-looking dinner jacket, a modest version of an eighteenth-century gentleman (see fig. 8). Cuevas's photograph does not appear portrayed in *Zig-Zag* magazine; presumably, he was not famous or attractive enough to make the social pages, which in any case focused mostly on the women's costumes. The hostess, Olga Budge, for instance, is shown as wearing an Empire-styled gown, but the host himself is notably absent from the photographs, probably to avoid a portrait that might paint him in a ridiculous or frivolous light given his powerful position in the country. The magazine

does report, however, that Mr. Edwards wore a brown tailcoat in the manner of the First Empire to the soirée (Noir, "Baile de Fantasía").

Fig. 8. Jorge Cuevas dressed as an eighteenth century courtier for the 1905 costume ball in Chile ("Baile de fantasía en casa de D. Agustín Edwards").

In a subsequent dissection of the party, *Zig-Zag* magazine carefully highlighted the profit made by merchants from the costumes created for the occasion, obviously seeking to deflect criticism towards an event that underscored the breach in social classes. The author of the article, however, also declared with facetious satisfaction that in a somewhat "apathetic Chilean society" the costume ball was "a great social relief," for it gave people a topic of conversation that would furnish even the least eloquent with matter

for discussion (Noir, "Otro aspecto de un baile").[251] Aside from this advantage, the magazine explains that, "above all . . . it is a splendid revelation of the good taste of Santiago society."[252] The spirit guiding this sentiment must have caused an impression in Cuevas's mind; indeed, in offering his party of the century, the Marquis sought above all to create an event enveloped in the most refined taste, even if it was perceived as quite the opposite.

The most glamorous fancy dress ball in Chilean history came a few years later, in 1912. Hosted by Enrique Concha y Toro and his wife Teresa Cazotte at their oriental-looking palace, it remains engraved in the collective Chilean memory as the party of the century. Although it is difficult to ascertain whether Cuevas was present, the ball was the most important event of the year, and it was certainly one about which he would have been aware. Invitations for the 380 guests that would attend the event that took place on Tuesday, 15 October 1912 were sent out four months earlier (Müller 11). Here too, French royalty featured prominently: aside from the presence of the Sun King, there were three Marie Antoinette look-a-likes, eleven women dressed in Louis XV, and six in Louis XVI style (63). Other costumes are equally revealing: the role of opera as a social marker had become important, and several guests appear representing opera characters that, following the rules of decorum, must have been immediately recognizable. One such figure is that of Edgardo in the Romantic opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti, a character that is rather specific and can perhaps be explained by the immense popularity of the opera. Premiered in Santiago in 1844, the opera had been shown at least once every other year, and had last been performed in 1910 (Álvarez 24). Interestingly, at the 1905

Edwards Ball, a guest who came dressed in the role of Iago for the night was inspired not by Shakespeare's play, but by the nineteenth-century Verdi opera (Rojas and Imas).

Despite a proclivity for the French, costumes represented a diverse array of interests, such as *commedia dell'arte* characters (Müller 54-5), and a wide range of nationalities or cultural approximations, with numerous men and women dressed in "Oriental," "Japanese," "Mandarin," "African," "Turkish," and "Egyptian" guise (42-4, 60-1, 70-1). Müller describes the ball as having an effect of "delirious cosmopolitanism" (58).[253] Cosmopolitanism, however, functions not as an accurate expression of these nationalities or folk types, and rather more as cultural (mis)appropriation. Indeed, one of the "most popular subspecies of fancy dress was foreign or exotic costume" (Castle 60), which included all sorts of foreign dignitaries and royalty members. Castle interestingly considers the issue of this exotic proclivity not merely as a "displacement of imperialist fantasy," but also as a way to acknowledge the other in the self:

> at a deeper level, such travesties were also an act of homage—to otherness itself. . . . a kind of symbolic interpenetration with difference—an almost erotic commingling with the alien. Mimicry became a form of psychological recognition, a way of embracing, quite literally, the unfamiliar. The collective result was a utopian projection: the masquerade's visionary "Congress of Nations"—the image of global conviviality—was indisputably a thing of fleeting, hallucinatory beauty. (61-2)

Paradoxically, this cosmopolitan fantasy worked in similar ways in upper class Chilean society during the Belle Époque, given its exaltation and identification with the European elite. Indeed, within Café Society, South Americans were known for their snobbery and for a common taste for the lavishness of the eighteenth century (Coudert 112). Interestingly, the specific "cultures" performed sartorially—Japanese, Chinese, African, Turkish, Egyptian, and Oriental—represent not only the European other, but also a cosmopolitan ideal of identities that were felt to be entirely missing from Chilean identity. Asian immigration was virtually non-existent in Chile at the time. The black slave trade in Chile had been mostly limited to the colonial period between 1580 and 1640, and the African population had become mixed since then ("La esclavitud negra en Chile"). "Oriental" immigration was more prevalent, as many ethnic groups under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire, including Greeks, Armenians, and especially Palestinians, fled to South America, many arriving in Chile, which was offering safe haven ("La inmigración en Chile"). As can be seen, the "races" represented in the costume party were, for the most part, not felt to be an essential part of the Chilean landscape, thus costume functioned, as Castle shows, to perform the racial other. The party thus became a way to participate in the outward exhibition of the Chilean elite's European self.

Although the Concha-Cazotte palace that hosted the event was demolished in 1935, it retained ascendancy in the collective imagination as the grandest fancy-dress party in Chilean history. In what is a clear mark of Cuevas as a somewhat equivocal and uneasy symbol, his name is often mistakenly associated with the 1912 costume ball. In 2007 and 2008, the Municipality of Santiago celebrated a citywide party under the name

"Baile de Máscaras" (Masked Ball) to commemorate the 1912 party. The party—described in newspaper articles as being an annual event, although no further evidence has been found regarding it being held since then—commemorated the Concha-Cazotte costume ball, as part of a cultural project called "Santiago in 1900" ("El Marqués de Cuevas y su baile de máscaras"). To host the event, an actor dressed in a garish late-eighteenth century costume presented himself as none other than the Marquis de Cuevas, and was showcased in press coverage of the event. This instance illustrates how Cuevas has become a figure that epitomizes luxury and social mobility for Chileans—and shows once again the confusion that emerges between masquerade and costume ball. The original aristocratic hosts and their costume ball have been erased from the occasion and replaced with Cuevas and the more salacious masquerade motif. Ironically, the fact that anyone in Santiago who purchased a ticket could attend the event, precluded it from accurately representing its original spirit of elite exclusivity, and opened it instead to aspirational social classes. In the pictures for the 2008 ball, Cuevas appears to host the event together with an anonymous "Countess" (see fig. 9). Although historically inaccurate, the convergence seems highly appropriate. In this light, Cuevas, who is described in the photographs for the party as born in a poor neighborhood of Santiago and becoming rich and famous in Europe, becomes the guide for a source of entertainment that capitalizes on its aspiration to exclusivity. Interestingly, Cuevas seems to be doubled in the figure of the Countess, who also offers a sort of gender reversal for Cuevas. The title of this hostess also seems to elevate Cuevas's peerage by one rank, ironically illustrating the organizers' desire to create a varied display of nobility and

heighten the importance of the party.

Fig. 9. Photograph showing the Marquis de Cuevas and his Countess for the Santiago ball in 2008 ("El Marqués de Cuevas y su baile de máscaras").

Cuevas was well aware of the power held by the party host in his ability to dictate fashion, and was certainly looking to command the exclusive attention of the world press as well as that of Café Society, in the wake of other notable balls in his time. It seems most probable that Cuevas's direct inspiration for the costume ball was the event hosted in 1951 at Palazzo Labia in Venice by eccentric millionaire Carlos de Beistegui, a prominent European socialite, art collector and interior decorator born in France, but of Mexican and Spanish origin. Beistegui's "Bal Oriental" took place on 3 September 1951, almost exactly two years before Cuevas's party. This ball became the most fashionable party of the year and is considered in retrospect as one of the most extraordinary masquerade balls of the twentieth century. Guests included Aga Khan III, Barbara Hutton, Gene Tierney, Countess Jacqueline de Ribes, Count Armand de la Rochefoucauld, Orson Welles, Cecil Beaton, Alexis de Redé, Arturo Lopez-Willshaw

and his wife Patricia, the Duchess of Devonshire, Christian Dior, and Salvador Dalí. Cuevas was invited to bring his company to perform for the occasion and willingly complied, flying the whole troupe with him to entertain guests at his own expense—he was later "justly upset" when Beistegui failed to show up for his ball (Maxwell). Indeed, one journalist would later describe Beistegui as the Marquis's "rival" (Craven), something that Thierry Coudert also reinforces (112). Apparently, Cuevas "had sworn to outdo [Beistegui]" (Craven). There were, in fact, many similarities between the two events, not the least of which was that the Cuevas ballet troupe performed in both instances.

Coudert argues that Beistegui's ball "consecrates the pinnacle of the phenomenon" (115),[254] but also symbolized the beginning of its end. Sharing the melancholy spirit with the city of Venice, the party became an event "to celebrate a world that does not know that it is dying" (8).[255] In this context, Cuevas's attempt to outdo Beistegui appears as already doomed to failure, considering that the fashion for Café Society parties had already peaked.

As a matter of fact, Cuevas was not the only one to take inspiration from Beistegui. Another prominent guest to the party, Alexis von Rosenberg, Baron de Redé, would give another "Bal Oriental" in 1969. By then Café Society as such was over, but Redé had managed to outlive the period and maintained his social transcendence in the following decade (Coudert 132). Interestingly, however, since Redé had inherited his fortune from Chilean millionaire Arturo Lopez-Willshaw, this lavish form of entertainment was once again foreign in its conception, and thus essentially parodic of the

aristocratic ritual it sought to recreate.

Fête Champêtre: Artifice, Aristocracy, Dance, and Masquerade

The self-conscious theatricality of Cuevas's costume party was palpable from the outset. The hand-painted invitations set up the motif of ball-as-spectacle: the card was folded to resemble curtains that opened upon a red Oriental-looking tent. The orientalist flair of the invitation suggested that the party was also to be understood as a continuation to Beistegui's oriental themed ball. The illustration on the card showed couples dressed in eighteenth-century attire, surrounded by meadows strewn with candles, and combined a contrived staging of nature with the frame of a sophisticated party, which included chandeliers, fireworks and doves flying over the guests. Appropriately, the colorful card was created by set designer Federico Pallavacini in "'trompe-l'oeil' style" (Randolph). The wording on the invitation did not mention Cuevas's name, but instead asked guests "to honor the *fête champêtre* with their presence" (see fig. 10).

Fig. 10. Invitation to Cuevas's *Fête Champêtre* designed by Federico Pallavicini.

The *fête champêtre* or garden party was a leisure activity enjoyed by the French aristocracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Depictions of the nobility engaged in outdoor festivities became the subject matter of the eighteenth century *fête galante* painting style, which Watteau is credited with creating (Milam 100). French rococo artist Antoine Watteau placed his aristocratic subjects in gardens, parks or in idealized visions of the countryside, often in the guise of mythological figures. As Posner argues, "[t]he *fête galante* was an escapist activity": "[music, costumes and bucolic play] were not absent from real life [aristocratic] entertainments, but they belonged to special moments when, through the mystery of the masquerade, the magic of song and dance and the fantasy of the theatre, one occasionally escaped into an actualized dream" (181). Watteau's pastoral paintings are deeply linked to performance arts, especially as embodied stagings of aristocratic flights of fancy.

In this light, the choice of theme for the ball does not seem fortuitous. Cuevas certainly had Watteau in mind when he conceived his party, and even included a Watteau painting as part of his *tableaux vivants* panorama. Indeed, an article that described how guests had wet their feet in the lake at dawn, actually called the atmosphere painted by partygoers as a "Watteau vivant" (Craven).

Setting up a faux pastoral scene as conceived by a court painter created a layered mask of artifice that ironically seemed to disprove the ideal of authenticity pursued by Cuevas, who sought to legitimize his claim to the Café Society. Part of the paradox lay of course in the essence of Watteau's *fêtes galantes* paintings themselves, which portray scenes that remain deliberately opaque in meaning and, rather than depict entitled

aristocrats, render them in the very act of proving their worth, thus foregrounding the artificiality of their privilege. These pastoral scenes, according to Jennifer Milam, "[remain] vague, even mysterious . . . [because the] facial expressions are difficult to discern, and the backs of central figures are turned to the beholder" (11). For Milam, the aim of these paintings is to allow the reader to focus on the form rather than on the narrative content of the scene; specifically, Milam suggests that Watteau's "painting[s] engage with elite codes of behavior related to the cult of *honnêteté*, an idealized way of life that defined noble deportment in France from the middle of the 17th century onward" (11). The ideal of *honnêteté*, contemplated a sense of honesty that was manifested as grace and general likeability, an ambiguous term that nonetheless remained very influential throughout the eighteenth and even early nineteenth century in France, and which was associated exclusively with the aristocratic elite (Montandon 224). Although the subject of some discussion in literature, seventeenth century painting offers no explicit pictorial representations of the *honnête homme* (honest man), the person who was seen to embody this ideal. In this sense, scholar Alain Montandon ventures to call him a "man without a face" (224).[256] Rémy Saisselin traces the evolution of the *honnête homme* into the eighteenth century, as he becomes more tangible and acquires the characteristics of the *homme de goût* (man of taste), who in paintings now appears "completed by [the language] of forms and colors."[257] This man of taste—or woman of taste, for Saisselin does not make gender distinctions in this regard—makes his social and political importance visible through material inscriptions; his fortunes noted in the color and richness of his clothes; his grace and refinement coded in the musical instruments and

other arts or sciences implements he holds in his hands, such that "taste is made manifest through exterior signs,"[258] and *honnêteté*, recognizable "by the ease, that indefinable intelligence, charm, which distinguishes the man or woman of status and state" (12).[259] The development of this man of taste comes about as a direct result of the new ideas about the refinement of taste emerging from Hume's discussion "Of the Standard of Taste" (1757), a standard set by the individual who possesses "delicacy of imagination," which will find its central model in the dandyism of Beau Brummell, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Watteau's paintings are described as encapsulating this very ineffable feeling, in "a style that embodied the values of his intended viewers, particularly the desirable notion of effortless and artful presentation of the self . . . seen as synonymous with an aristocratic way of life" (Milam 11)—and which can be linked to the coveted pose of *sprezzatura.* In *The Aristocrat as Art*, Domna Stanton argues for a spiritual and formal affinity between the seventeenth-century *honnête homme* and the nineteenth-century dandy, since both used an aesthetic deportment to link themselves to an aristocratic status.

Sarah Cohen further explores the theatrical connections in the staged posing seen in Watteau's paintings and describes how "*fêtes galantes* were also being staged in the theatre as witty commentaries upon the self-conscious display inherent in elite social life" (94). Indeed, many of the gatherings depicted by Watteau show groups of people engaged in dance. The care with which this grace is staged can also be linked to the aforementioned aristocratic search for the signs that portray class authenticity and

distinction. Ballet was in fact at the height of its popularity in the early eighteenth century, and was both performed in the Opéra and in ballrooms at court (Cohen 95), which further emphasized how aristocratic life was permeated by a sense of theatrical awareness.

Watteau's *fêtes galantes* paintings return repeatedly to dance, as if the artist were attempting to capture this elusive representation of movement, and perhaps making a comment on the evanescent quality of this leisurely world. Sarah Cohen notes that there are many figures in Watteau's paintings that seem to be poised in the midst of a minuet, one of the most popular social and staged dance forms during the early eighteenth century. In *The Shepherds* (1717) an aristocratic-looking group watch on as a couple of them dance in the countryside; a similar set-up occurs in *Party in the Open Air* (1717-8), where a couple to the right dance undisturbed, the man holding his left foot gracefully in the air. In *The Pleasures of the Ball* (1714), a large group of people under a domed garden structure surround a couple who is dancing; the woman holds her skirt, while the man is suspended in transient balance, his foot forward and his arms tilting to either side. The subject of dance in painting offers an elegant way of showing an instant that cannot be prolonged lest it become ungraceful.

In Watteau's *L'Indifférent* (1716, see fig. 11) a young man richly attired in velvet and silk stands in balletic fourth position—with one foot in front of the other, toes pointing outwards—and with his arms delicately poised mid-air. Usually translated as *The Casual Lover*, the original title in French also makes reference to the general demeanor of the dancer, who is shown to be effortlessly graceful. Poet Paul Claudel

highlighted the figure's sense of precarious balance, as if his pose were about to be broken, and indeed, is already breaking, as can be seen in the uneven arching of the arms. Resisting the label of indifference, Claudel lyrically describes the liminal sense he sees in the posture of the young man:

> he balances flight and tread . . . it is not that he is already dancing, but that one of his arms is stretched and the other extended in an ample arch deploying the lyrical wing . . . He is in position of departure and entrance, he listens, he waits for the right moment, he searches for it in our eyes; from the trembling point of his fingers, to the extremity of his open arms he counts, and the other volatile arm with its ample cape prepares to second the leg. Half fawn and half bird, half sensibility and half discourse, half poise and already half relaxation! (241)[260]

Fig. 11. *L'Indifferent* (The Indifferent Man) by Jean-Antoine Watteau. c. 1717.

Claudel uses the picture as a point of departure for a meditation on the role of the poet, but his description of Watteau's indifferent lover—or indifferent dancer—illustrates the inherent problem in capturing the fleeting moment of dance through the static medium of painting. Claudel seems to be arguing that representing a dancer in mid-movement is always necessarily a representation of the liminal, of a pose that is ready to be disturbed, and therefore comprises diffuse or permeable boundaries. Indeed, Claudel's poetic flight of fancy is prompted primarily by the representation of a figure preparing to dance, and only secondarily by Watteau's genius in capturing such a moment in this particular dancer. Thus, Watteau's focus on dance entails a representation of the liminal in a much broader sense. In Cuevas's ball, the staging of the fleeting is also at the core, partly enacted in the ballet company's performance, partly in the attempt to rekindle a past moment in history.

Interestingly, masks and masquerades feature prominently in Watteau's work, often related to *commedia dell'arte* characters that reflect his early studies in the workshop of set and costume designer Claude Gillot (Sheriff 18). The painting *Maskerade* (1717, see fig. 12) represents a festive if somewhat odd group of people, among which stands out a woman that has removed her domino mask; with her face averted from the viewer and partially obscured to us, her expression remains nonetheless mysterious. In Watteau's *fêtes galantes* paintings, the enigmatic ambiguity of the masquerade appears in the flirtatious attitudes of partnered dances and intimate tête-à-têtes, as well as in the partial anonymity offered by costumes, and a general sense of indefinable narrative opaqueness. As Cohen puts it:

> Our uncertainty as to what a particular gaze or gesture in the painting might mean, or what a person with his or her back turned might be thinking or desiring, is just the kind of uncertainty cultivated in the masquerades, where the attention of the dance was compounded by costumes and masks that could, if desired, conceal one's motives and identity. (100)

Fig. 12. *Maskerade* (Masquerade) by Jean Antoine Watteau. c. 1717.

The *honnête homme* identified as an aristocratic ideal of the eighteenth century can thus be seen to bear some characteristics that are the complete opposite of the defining label of "honesty," such as posing, theatricality, artificiality, and ultimately dishonesty. An identity based on outer perception needs a stable hermeneutic ground on which to stand, otherwise its connection to authenticity and honesty becomes suspect. This brings to mind the concept of "suspicious sprezzatura" once more. Indeed, this mutable and

potentially deceitful spirit can be seen in a further incarnation of the *honnête homme* under the eighteenth-century label of *homme à succès* (the successful man), a man of graceful spirit, who also possesses "a talent for imitation" that makes him "elusive like Proteus, by adopting all forms" (Dornier 116).[261] Proteus, the Greek god of sea, was associated with the changing nature of water, which symbolized fluidity, permeability and the flexibility to adapt to different environments. Dornier identifies these as vital elements in the character of the successful man: "Inauthenticity and perpetual variation are keystones of this art of appearances: the man of success, by manifesting only simulacra to others, is perhaps he himself a spectator of their mistakes and of their façades to thus ensure a dominant position" (116).[262] The protean nature of the successful man is a particularly apt comparison to identify Cuevas's changing national allegiances, as I shall consider below.

Dornier's description invites further scrutiny: the man of success is universally likeable because he adopts the aspect that his addressees will like, albeit maintaining a certain intellectual distance. In this he very much resembles the dandy, who seeks the perpetual admiration of an audience, and also offers a link to the *honnête homme* that graces the landscapes of Watteau's paintings. Dornier also discusses the power of the successful man, which she seems to locate in the consciousness the character has of the strengths and weaknesses of his audience, and in his capacity to reflect—in the sense both of mirroring and considering—his interlocutors. The successful man is, in other words, both a skillful imitator and an insightful philosopher.

Finally, Dornier invokes the notion of simulacra, to refer to the ever-changing masks of the successful man. For Baudrillard, simulacrum is the mask that conceals that there is in fact no original model behind it anymore. In his theory, the philosopher discusses the different stages of the evolution of the image with respect to the original to which it refers, and considers the ensuing distance enacted between them as the referent progressively loses its meaning in regards to the real:

> When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared.

Although Cuevas's conscious replication of the past and awareness of the distance of reproduction does not truly posit him as living in the hyperreal world, the layered artificiality set by Cuevas's *fête champêtre* in fact draws it quite near to Baudrillard's notion of simulacra. Cuevas's party seems to be situated at this very junction in which there is a proliferation of signs of an aristocracy whose original has been lost. In this light, the faux peasant costumes worn by guests at the party seem to mask that, in fact, there is no aristocracy left to imitate. Cuevas is certainly not fooled by the imitation, but does play along for a night in rendering an adult playground that recreates an era of supreme luxury. The reproduction of this luxury is not quite as abundant or refined as its original, and is reproduced by its participants in approximate versions; it is certainly not the mass reproduction of simulations envisioned by Baudrillard.

Cuevas's choice of theme for his party is however infused in a nostalgic longing that seeks to revive an aristocratic society in an age of splendor, but, ironically, does so through a pictorial setting that shows aristocracy in the process of seeking to legitimize its own worth and identity—with men and women eagerly searching for a graceful pose that will capture their aristocratic soul of *honnêteté* in the setting of an aestheticized countryside inspired in theatrical settings. It is of course doubly ironic that these Café Society "aristocrats" are themselves playing at being peasants, to show off the "honest" gracefulness of their artificial poses.

The King of Nature: Deconstructing Models of Monarchy

Cuevas's pastoral costume party appears then as an imitation of a pose of aristocracy, and, what is more, of a painting of a pose, which is always at a remove from the reality of aristocracy, whose defining spirit seems to have been artificially conceived in the first place. Cuevas himself wore the mask of the King of Nature, inspired in the costume of the French kings of the eighteenth century, which further highlights the ironic hollowness in this succession of impersonations.

In fact, Cuevas was known for having adopted mock-monarchical ways, having taken to conducting his business affairs from the comfort of his dormitory. Since he suffered from poor health, and tired easily, he used to get up late, and work in his bed, receiving visitors with all sorts of requests, as a sort of *levée* in the manner most notably developed by Louis XIV. Marie de Freedericksz-Kiriloff, the ballet company's administrator, remembers calling on the Marquis for the first time, and being received by

a young man wearing sandals in May. Orphée, the "majordome sécretaire"—an assistant butler—, took her to the second story of the house, and ushered her into Cuevas's bedchamber. Going on his knees, the young man embraced the Marquis's feet, and presented the newcomer to his master (qtd. in *Le bal du siècle*).

An in-depth exposé on Cuevas described the similar experience of a reporter who interviewed him at a press conference held at his apartment at E 68th St in New York, in order to relate the success of his new Ballet de Monte Carlo, which would appear at the Champs Elysées the following month in Paris. On Cuevas's bed were several Pekinese dogs, for he was always surrounded by at least eight of these dogs, among which he had favorites. The accompanying photograph shows the Marquis propped on plump silk pillows in the Spanish iron-wrought bed on which he had slept since his boyhood (see fig. 13). The room had several paintings by Salvador Dalí, which were copies of the sets he made for the ballet; there were also Spanish and Russian icons, two petrified tree trunks, rare stones from Arizona, a huge bouquet of American beauty roses, satin damasked drapes, a zebra skin on a chair, and many ornaments from fifteenth-century Spain. The Marquis's responses to the journalist were interrupted several times, since he often had to answer the two telephones on each side of the bed, which he did in several languages. Secretaries came with inquiries and Margaret Strong also made an appearance. The Marquis apologized by saying: "I am a busy man. I have two families. My own and the ballet" (qtd. in Phelan). The description clearly shows the theatrical quality of the press conference, in which the alleged central topic of the ballet troupe's performance takes

backstage to Cuevas's own staging of a royal façade, surrounded by an ample cast of supporting characters.

THE NEW YORK SUN, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1948.

IN A SPANISH SETTING

Sun Staff Photo.

The Marquis George de Cuevas in the bedroom of his home at 56 East 68th street.

The Marquis Holds a Levee

Fig. 13. Photograph of Paul Phelan's article "The Marquis Holds a Levée." *The New York Sun.* 4 February 1948.

The image in Cuevas's bedroom was partly pastoral, but interestingly created in an urban context. The antiques from different parts of the world seemed to function as atavistic décor that turned the place almost into a cosmopolitan museum. The effect was eclectic and pointed to a hybrid taste that perhaps also literally exhibited Cuevas's desire to participate in the international set as a world citizen. He is seen as belonging to

multiple cultures, ready at a moment's notice to adopt whichever one the interlocutor requests.

Cuevas's persona was not only inspired in eighteenth century French monarchs, but was also more or less consciously based on another kingly figure of the arts, the ground-breaking impresario for the Ballets Russes, Sergei Diaghilev, who had shaped the way that Europe looked at Russian culture, modern dance, and art in general in the first decades of the twentieth century. Diaghilev had given a new and vital impulse to the art of dance and choreography—which had hitherto lagged in its development in the arts world—, and had also radically altered the course of fashion, music, and painting with far-reaching consequences. As creator and producer of the most famous dance troupe in Europe, Diaghilev had sponsored the work of choreographers and dancers like Balanchine, Massine, Fokine, Lifar and Nijinsky; composers like Prokofiev, Debussy, Satie, de Falla and Stravinsky; and artists like Picasso and Bakst. Diaghilev had organized an exhibition of Russian painting in Saint Petersburg, an artistic inclination that Cuevas had also revealed when curating his European masterpieces exhibition in New York, and which points to a similarly creative spirit in men that were not artists themselves, but who were looking for ways to participate in aesthetic endeavors as taste-makers.

A curious anecdote that illustrates the key catalyzing role played by Diaghilev also serves to highlight the royal aura surrounding the impresario. When King Alfonso XIII of Spain met Diaghilev at his court he asked him, "Now, what do you do in the company? You don't conduct. You don't dance. You don't play the piano. What *do* you

do?"—to which Diaghilev presumably replied, "Your Majesty, I'm like you. I don't work, I do nothing, but I am indispensible'" (qtd. in Karlinsky). Although it has not been possible to verify the authenticity of the quote, the colorful anecdote is frequently mentioned in connection to the impresario. Whatever its accuracy, in the context of a post-industrialist society that sought quantifiable productivity, King Alfonso's question becomes illuminating when considering the function of art in general, as well as the role of the aristocracy—or what was left of it after World War I—; the last remains of a decadent, paradigmatically non-productive social class in the mid-twentieth century. In this light, Diaghilev's reported answer is interesting in how it correlates his role as an impresario, i.e. a capitalist agent that facilitates productivity, with an aristocratic class that is symbolic of leisure and non-productivity, thus removing one of the essential core characteristics of nobility from its designation.

Like Diaghilev, Cuevas, albeit in his late fifties, created a dance company over which he ruled like a kingly entrepreneur, managing business, and actively organizing the artistic productions. Cuevas had a lot of influence within the company, and often decided who would dance which role, with great balletic instinct (Pagava). Although Cuevas stated that he "imitated no one,"[263] his source of inspiration for the role he played in the company was obvious to everyone: Ethéry Pagava, a young dance star who had joined the ballet when she was 15, described the Marquis as "a catalyzer of talent, in the image of Diaghilev."[264] Composer Jean-Michel Damase similarly described the Marquis's aspirations: "He dreamed a little of being a second Diaghilev"[265] (qtd. in *Le bal du siècle*). Cuevas certainly had Diaghilev in mind when he conceived the creation of his

ballet company, as a way of forging a legacy that would allow his name to be showcased together with his artistic endeavor. As shown in Chapter 2, in every poster and every program, the name of the Marquis de Cuevas was highlighted, framing the performance as a brand. The press had also picked up on the parallel early on: "A Maecenas and a Diaghileff—together!" rejoiced an article on the Marquis in 1950, in anticipation of his first American tour. The author explained that Cuevas was not only the sole financer of the company, but also offered "a single, unifying, inspiring imagination" (Sayler 13), and went on to state that "Not once, but many times, the press of France and Spain and even stolid Britain has hailed the Marquis de Cuevas as the new Diaghileff" (46).

Diaghilev was above all an entrepreneur with a keen commercial insight who saw an opportunity to capitalize on European audience's desire for authenticity, and manufactured an exotic version of Russianness based on an aestheticized and cohesive view of Slavic folklore. Cuevas's company, on the other hand, bore the imprint of an international troupe, which marketed itself as transnational in its inclusiveness. However, at several points in time this self-description changed to suit the mood of the country in which the company was based. Following its owner's variable citizenship, the company became chameleonic, shifting its national allegiance to survive, much like the protean aristocrats of Watteau's landscapes, who molded themselves to adjust to the readings sought by the viewer. Despite seeming different, the projects spearheaded by Diaghilev and Cuevas both seem to engage in exploiting their exotic roots. Whereas Diaghilev's still retains the origin of his exoticism, Cuevas's offered a more diluted and rather more vague version of the Other. Both seemed to search for the way to present the familiar art

of ballet in a shocking new guise that would thrill spectators, as well as guide the audience's taste. In this sense, Cuevas's artistic accomplishments pale next to Diaghilev's contributions, even as they follow a similar aesthetic impulse.

Cosmopolitanism and National Authenticity

Baudelaire's shocking declarations of the superiority of artifice over nature must be read in the context of an emerging capitalist world were artists are constructing themselves as a social necessity, a self-consciousness that both Diaghilev and Cuevas incorporate to their artistic endeavors. Diaghilev used the mask of the perfect dandy, while Cuevas, often more of an eccentric than a dandy, similarly disguised his perceived deficiencies by permanently shifting his national allegiance—and those of his company—since wartime in Paris had taught him that foreigners could easily become suspect.

In his historical appraisal of the Cuevas company Quentin Crisp argues that the troupe in fact "benefited from the caprices, the taste, the extravagance and the grand passion for ballet of a single man, whose troupe was the mirror of his being" (8). The metaphor here is ironic, since the mirror functions in a deeper manner, avoiding the merely superficial reading of its surface. Audiences certainly delighted in the unorthodox and startlingly fresh repertoire of the Ballet, which offered a wide array of dance styles and often seemed to be reinventing itself. Critics, however, sometimes considered this to be one of its weaknesses, since it precluded it from having an identity of its own.

The Marquis had originally created the school in New York thinking of the European immigrants who had fled the Russian Revolution or, more recently, the Nazi

occupation. From its inception, issues of national allegiance regarding Cuevas's company were consistently brought to the fore. An article written in 1945, for instance, made derogatory remarks on the Marquis's Ballet International (original name for the company in New York) and his expensive endeavor in commissioning *Mad Tristan*, a piece designed by Salvador Dalí, suggesting that "Uncle Sam" had intentionally brewed trouble for the company that year. The author claimed that, by establishing the company as a non-profit foundation in New York, Cuevas was only allowed to deduct fifteen per cent in taxes, a miscalculation that turned out to be financially disastrous. Ballet International was also affected by wartime concerns, and the article sardonically explains: "the draft board decided that if the ballet's young men were strong enough to do the entrechats and the pas seuls, they could probably heave a grenade and carry a tommy gun just as well." Subsequently, Cuevas had to file for twenty-four members of his *corps de ballet* to be reclassified so as to make them inadmissible for war duty. Shortly after, the company made plans to go on tour, but the Office of Defense Transportation, which regulated wartime travel, created problems (Robb 17). Given many of these issues, the company was disbanded after that season.

When the Marquis became director of the Monte Carlo ballet company in 1947, taking over the artistic direction from Serge Lifar, nationality issues were also a concern, especially in a post-war context. Significantly, the ballet company at this point seemed to work as a national symbol for Monaco, while at the same time offering a transnational, essentially cosmopolitan watering place for the elite international set. After the Liberation, Lifar had been banned from the Opéra de Paris, under suspicion of having

been a collaborator for the Vichy regime, and had been forced to withdraw to Monte Carlo. Protests against his removal had been vocal in Paris and resulted in the lifting of the ban, and Lifar's reincorporation to the Opéra. Impresario Eugène Grunberg, director of the Monte Carlo Opera House, had then telephoned to offer Cuevas the vacated position of artistic director (Crisp 2-3). Although the Paris Opéra Ballet and the Marquis's company rivaled for the attention of audiences in the most amicable of terms, Cuevas and Lifar would headline a picturesque conflict that will be described in the following chapter.

The renewed Monte Carlo ensemble cultivated a sense of cosmopolitan inclusiveness, and for its premiere, the press highlighted the fact that "Nationalities are represented in the troupe" ("Aga Khan at Party in Paris" 16). The presence of Russian dancers was especially important, since it signaled the company's Ballets Russes heritage. Several members had in fact recently belonged to Ballets Russes heir companies, formed after the death of Diaghilev in 1929. Cuevas's Monte Carlo Ballet Company initially included Tamara Toumanova, a Russian émigré made American citizen—born in Siberia, of Armenian and Polish descent—the most famous of Diaghilev's "baby ballerinas," who stayed for one season with Cuevas. André Eglevsky, another Russian émigré who became a leading dancer at the Ballets Russes, was also a soloist for a few seasons in the early 1950s with the Marquis before becoming a star of the newly founded New York City Ballet. Rosella Hightower, of Native American heritage, was originally a dancer for Basil's Ballets Russes, and had later joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, where she met Eglevsky, who was to be her frequent dance

partner. Hightower joined the Marquis de Cuevas's company in 1947, drawn by Bronislava Nijinska's presence as choreographer, and became one of the leading figures in the Marquis de Cuevas Company; she was considered Cuevas's closest friend within the troupe, and remained with the company until it was disbanded in 1961. The troupe also had in its ranks another Native American dancer, Marjorie Tallchief, younger sister of Maria—the famous star of the New York City Ballet and Balanchine's third wife. Marjorie danced with the Marquis de Cuevas Company from 1948 to 1955. Georges Skibine, a Russian dancer who had been part of the Diaghilev troupe, became part of the Cuevas company when the Marquis took over the Nouveau Ballet de Monte Carlo; he later married Marjorie Tallchief and became choreographer for the company in 1950. Russian ballerina Nina Vyroubova joined the company in its final years, and got to dance with Rudolph Nureyev himself, who initially joined Cuevas's company when he defected. Other guest stars were also linked to Russia: Tatiana Riabouchinska performed in a London season, while Alicia Markova, the renowned English ballerina who had Russified her name, was invited to lead the cast for a brief interval. The company's stable ballet master, John Taras, was an American who had also worked with the Ballets Russes heir companies. Taras also choreographed several works, including a piece for Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly's wedding in Monaco, and stayed on with the company till 1960.

As Cuevas would later argue, many of his dancers were French or French-born. The young Éthery Pagava, a child prodigy of Georgian roots, started her career at the Ballets des Champs-Élysées under Roland Petit and later became a star dancer for the

Marquis de Cuevas Company. Serge Golovine was another French dancer who was immensely popular with audiences.

Victoria Beller, an American who danced with the company from 1957 to 1959, identified "14 nationalities represented in its personnel of about 50, with emphasis on French, American, English, Spanish and Brazilian dancers" (qtd. in "The De Cuevas Ballet"). The Marquis considered the dancers to be his children and devoted most of his time to them, a slight that his own children would feel deeply (John de Cuevas qtd. in *Le bal du siècle*).

In a post-war scenario, where companies were permanently losing their funding, it was not surprising that this one was formed by an internationally diverse group of artists. The dancers created a transnational family brought together by the offer of a financially stable income, and the opportunity to work with some of the leading artists in Europe. Interestingly, each member of the company had his or her own distinct nationality, and the ancestry of the dancers was often underlined in reviews. This was one of the ways in which Cuevas positioned himself as a world citizen. Indeed, with his multinational dancers, Cuevas participated in a more wide-ranging concept of cosmopolitanism, as espoused by Appiah, wherein the cultural difference in other people becomes important. In this light, the increasing contribution of Latin Americans within the dance world at this time is interesting to consider—one need look no further than the great Margot Fonteyn, "English" star of the Royal Ballet, who was actually of Brazilian origin. Leading his cosmopolitan embassy of dancers, the Marquis de Cuevas toured extensively, visiting Vichy, Brussels, Lisbon, Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao, Deauville, Amsterdam, Lausanne,

Rio de Janeiro, and Cairo, among many others, and holding longer seasons in Paris, London, Biarritz, and Monte Carlo. Press for the ballet company was generally positive: both the London season and a performance at the Mohamed Aly Theatre in Alexandria were considered "triumphant" (Ch.; Critti). Reports on the company often focused on its international cast. *Variety* described the troupe as an "Anomaly": "a Russian ballet company with a French name, and American principals . . . received everywhere as 'goodwill ambassadors of the arts;" and, despite the international flavor of the company, being accepted as 'American'" ("U.S.-Led, French-Named" 48). The composition of dancers varied from season to season, and despite the Marquis's idealized vision of ballet as a world art, he repeatedly encountered problems related to the national identity of the company.

In 1948 the Marquis had to respond questions about the nationality of the troupe to resolve a dispute about the sale of his Paris apartment, which had been carried out without the approval of the French Exchange Office. A newspaper column reported that the money was to be spent in France to pay the dancers and considered this ploy a government scheme to force Cuevas to pay in American dollars. The Marquis was vocal about his outrage: "Considering I am giving work to 35 French citizens, I find this behavior of the French most extraordinary. But they can rest assured that once my contract with the Monte Carlo Opera is finished I shall not renew it. And I will not forget the intrigues against my American company" (qtd. in Cassini 25 April 1948). Whether Cuevas was in the right or not about the transaction—the Marquis's finances tended to be muddled affairs and the Rockefeller family was permanently attempting to keep him and

his wife in financial order—it is note-worthy that in this excerpt, Cuevas considers his company as American, despite the mixed composition of its members. This response, however, can probably be considered as little more than a defensive maneuver, and not a firmly held belief. On 19 November 1949 he was invited to the coronation of Rainier III, Prince of Monaco, and, if reports are to be believed, despite the fact that he was unable to attend, Cuevas oversaw the festival, sending instructions on the phone from New York (Belmar). The threat was enacted only partially, and when, in 1951, the Marquis cut his connection to Monte Carlo, changing the company's name to Le Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas, the ballet adopted Paris as the seat of its central season, and continued its touring pattern. That same year Cuevas commented in a newspaper report that he had received an angry anonymous letter from a Frenchman who said that he should take his ballet back to America (Phelan).

Ironically, however, due to its almost exclusively European tours, the company was never really accepted as American. In 1955 Cuevas had sent a letter to the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA), a non-profit organization that sponsored US theatre groups in the country and abroad, in which he asked the committee to recognize his company as American. Cuevas's rather obvious aim in writing this letter was to obtain financial support for the company. The committee denied the Cuevas ballet the designation of being American, namely because it had not performed in the United States for ten years and so was not considered representative of the performing arts scene. In its New York visit in 1950 the company had received generally poor reviews; a typical assessment read: "It has flash, chic, and a few top stars. But behind the façade are a weak

ensemble and still weaker artistic direction" (Herridge 37). It is equally likely that the American institution did not see fit to support an organization that was already indirectly financed by the Rockefellers. A few years later, in 1957, Cuevas wrote again, this time to Nelson Rockefeller—by then an important political actor—, to ask him to intercede with the State Department in order "to send a circulaire to all American representatives in foreign countries that our Ballet Company is an American one." Cuevas had run into a problem when his company was performing in North Africa, and sought protection from potential political instability, which had been refused by the mayor of the town, because the company was not American. A month later, Cuevas received a letter from John E. Lockwood, on behalf of Nelson Rockefeller who was away travelling, in response to his letter "relating to the Ballet Russe" (sic). Lockwood continues referring to the company under this mistaken moniker for the rest of the letter, explains that he has been "attempt[ing] to obtain in the US the information needed to establish that the Ballet Russe is an American organization," and asks for further information to be able to prove this. Lockwood inquires about the country of incorporation of the Ballet; the nationality of its owners, directors and staff members; and the location of its main office and records. He mentions that he understands the Ballet has an office in New York and promises to bring the matter to Mr. Rockefeller's attention upon his return. No further correspondence on the matter could be located in the archives. The incident is fruitful to consider the notion of what being an American might constitute. Cuevas certainly thought that because of his own citizenship, if not cultural affinity, and given the nationality of his wife, and her family ties to one of the most prestigious American families, he should have the right to

call his "family" of dancers American. It is interesting to note that Cuevas had had similar difficulties with his blood children—and because his eldest daughter Bessie had been born in Europe, she had the right only to be Chilean, so he had to become a citizen himself to be able to apply for her nationality (Stasz 287).

The outcome of the petition must have been negative, for the grievance stuck and, in an article written by Dance Magazine in 1960, which described the company as essentially American, given the origin of its financing and the citizenship of its creator, Cuevas is quoted as saying that the United States "does not appreciate 'true art'" and that "[the company] is at least as worthy as many of the Rockefeller European projects—like rebuilding museums, ancient villages, etc." ("The De Cuevas Ballet"). Here, Cuevas seems to posit the artistic value of the company as essentially American, even if its projects were more European in taste.

In truth, like his company, Cuevas similarly played at being a citizen of different nations, twisting what the authenticity of belonging to these nations meant. Sayler's laudatory article in the 1950s characterized Cuevas as an "aristocratic recruit to American citizenship, by way of Chile, Spain and the cosmopolitan Paris of World War I" (45). By that time, Cuevas was officially an American citizen, who still retained his Chilean nationality, but seemed to represent an odd version of the American dream, since he had married into wealth, a wealth forged by the vision of risk-taking venture. Although he had initially attempted to participate in these fortune-seeking ways, the Rockefeller family had repeatedly prevented him from doing so, not least because he showed a reckless management of money—a weakness he shared with his wife. Although Cuevas's

aestheticist tastes were really closer to those of the European aristocracy, particularly the French, his title was taken from Chilean aristocracy, specifically near the North of Chile, close to La Serena city. The ironically unrefined title of Marqués de Piedra Blanca de Guana—stone white from guano—had been given to Pedro Cortez Monroy, a rich landowner, in 1697, when Chile was a Spanish colony. Despite the fact that one of the leaders of the Chilean independence, Bernardo O'Higgins, had banned titles of nobility in 1817, many aristocrats continued to use them (Eyzaguirre 171). The rehabilitation of titles remained controversial, often seen with envy or criticized as being "a spectacular step back in the history of our old society,"[266] as Eduardo Balmaceda argues in his analysis of the Chilean Belle Époque (286). Cuevas would remit his plea to obtain the title of Marquis to the same Alfonso XIII that had questioned Diaghilev's role in the ballet company. The king was deposed shortly after Cuevas's request, at the onset of the civil war, and he abandoned Spain in April 1931. Although there remains some mystery surrounding the validity of the title, it seems that King Alfonso never got around to signing the royal decree. Cuevas, however, registered the document in the College of Arms of England (Cassini, "Self-Made Man"). In any case, at least formally, he later renounced his title to become an American citizen.

When touring in Spain, however, Cuevas made sure to emphasize his Spanish roots: "My house is a Spanish center, and my staff, Spanish. When [Juan] Cárdenas was ambassador in the US [1932-4] and went to New York, my house was a branch of the Embassy. . . . From the first moment I stood by the *Caudillo* [Franco], to whom I dedicated my efforts and enthusiasm, with the unfailingly pure Spanishness that flows in

my veins" (Belmar).[267] Cuevas might very well have been grateful to Franco, not least because he had invited his ballet, but the effusiveness of the sentiment sounds opportunistic or, perhaps more accurately, shows how the Marquis molded his national persona according to the context, offering the demeanor that would most please his audience, like the "successful man" of the eighteenth century. Unlike Diaghilev, Cuevas did not market himself as an exile, but rather sought to emphasize his partial link to the community where he currently performed. In all truth, it seems that despite the fact that Cuevas worked with many of the artists that had emerged from the Diaghilev era, his project was much less clear in its national allegiance. Indeed, at times it seems like the connection came almost as an afterthought and much less intentionally than the press made it out to be.

Thriving in an atmosphere of cosmopolitan upper-class exclusivity, Cuevas made it a point to bridge national differences at the premieres of his international company. In this sense, class seemed to trump nationality because many of the elite had very clear national titles, often connected to geographically defined land that precluded the possibility of slippage. Despite its dubious nature, Cuevas's title also served as a social passport and business card used to draw fashionable crowds. The Marquis de Cuevas's ballet premieres were attended by popular actors, members of the lesser aristocracy, and many of the rich and famous of the European set that graced the red carpet and appeared in the social pages of the media. Audience members for the ballet were very diverse and greatly enthusiastic. After every performance, artists were approached to sign autographs—Ethéry Pagava remembers having even signed a pillowcase. A sense of

cosmopolitanism was present not only in the troupe members themselves, but also in the audience. For the Monte Carlo ballet opening in Paris, many high-profile celebrities were present: there was the Grand Duke Vladimir Cyrillovich, self-proclaimed Head of the Imperial Throne of Russia; Mathilde Kchessinskaya, a former dancer of the Russian Imperial Ballet; and the Aga Khan—an *habitué* ("Aga Khan at Party in Paris" 16). The Marquis himself viewed the success of his audience as his greatest achievement. From Cannes, Cuevas wrote to his friend Sophie Kochanski after a season premiere in Monte Carlo:

> The triumph of the Ballet . . . was impressive. It made me happy to see all the aristocracy of Europe in the house: . . . The Larroche Foucauld, d'Harcourt, and Gramont. All the Castesá. My dear old Madame Bittancourt. Finally Lady Mildforkhave, . . . the ambassadors who are passing by and all the men in gala clothes, and the women in grand toilette[;] it would seem that there had never been a war."[268]

Cuevas flourished in the theatrical atmosphere he cultivated around him. Dancer Liane Daydé vividly remembers how he always wore "a black cape with red silk lining with which he used to play," and contents: "he was an actor."[269] For Pagava, the Marquis's "life was like a theatre play,"[270] while his daughter Elizabeth sentenced: "he himself was a spectacle."[271]

Aside from his trademark costume, the Marquis's voice was immediately recognizable in an audience. When Maria Callas returned to the stage in 1958 at the Charity Gala at Palais Garnier, with tickets that cost up to 20,000 francs, audience

members included Charlie Chaplin, Jean Cocteau, the Rothschild, Aristoteles Onassis with then wife Tina, and the Marquis de Cuevas (Mancini 87). The latter stood out prominently because after the introduction of the cavatina for *The Barber of Seville*, "Una voce poco fa," his was the first voice that risked the shout of "brava!"—followed by interminable applause and loud praise from the rest of the audience (Lorcey 330). The celebrated bravo of the Marquis de Cuevas was an honor he bestowed only on people he greatly admired (Pagava). Elizabeth Strong-Cuevas recalls seeing her father many times get up in Parisian theatres and shout "*public de merde* why don't you applaud such wonders."[272]

Interestingly, the Marquis was not the only Chilean who figured among the wealthy socialites that appeared in the fashionable press. "The Smart Set," a society column for the *New York Journal American* written by Cholly Knickerbocker—penname for Igor Cassini—, frequently discussed Chilean members of the Café Society. The Marquis de Cuevas was often mentioned in the same breath as other wealthy Chileans from the colony. Cassini's gossip often ran along the following lines: "Chilean-born Countess Wilcsek, whose famous castle in Austria was occupied by the Duke and Duchess of Windsor right after their marriage, [was seen] lunching with her cousin, the Marquis de Cuevas, whom she is visiting." In the same column, another fellow countryman is mentioned: "Tony Veiga Jr., the wealthy young Chilean step-son of Suzie Schrafft Guinle Veiga, tells intimates he will soon wed Helene Simpson, the model. They hide away nearly every night at the Hapsburg House" ("Smart Set: Café Chatter"). The other famous Chilean Café Society member to appear periodically in the press was

millionaire and art collector Arturo López-Willshaw, whose heir, the Baron de Redé, would offer one of the most spectacular costume parties of the century, slightly after Cuevas's time. The gossip columns made a point of marking the difference between the more permanent residents, and the foreign visitors. Thus Cuevas is rarely described as Chilean in these columns, perhaps because he appears so frequently in them that his background is taken for granted; perhaps because the confusing background (French residence, American citizenship, Spanish title, rarely mentioned Chilean nationality) made it a moot point to attempt to set it out clearly. Similarly, Arturo López-Willshaw is identified as an "art collector," his Chilean roots effaced by his contribution to French society and his ready acceptance within their circle.

For his grand party, Cuevas sought to be the exclusive host to this Café Society crowd, and acknowledged his longing to take the spotlight by using his ballet company not as the main event, but as an accessory performance. Significantly, Biarritz, where he chose to set the spectacle, sat "on the west coast of France right on the Spanish border" (Craven)—a fact that Cuevas highlighted in interviews, and which shows that he was conscious of the symbolic borderline quality of the city, linking his Spanish heritage and peerage, to his French home. At a dinner party he offered for some of his guests the day before the ball, he "thank[ed] France for honoring him with the Legion of Honor." Characteristically, his words on the award brought out once again national inconsistencies: "I owe myself to France," he was overheard repeating that night (qtd. in Craven).[273]

The Biarritz Ball: The Dance within the Dance

In her etiquette guide to fancy dress costumes, Mrs. Wandle describes those who attend "Masquerades and kindred festivities"—costume parties are included in this category—as "render[ing] honor to Terpsichore in her fantastic moods" (3). Emphasis is placed on the social dance involved in the fancy dress ball, which is above all an event in which movement and change are heightened by the elusive property of the costume. Mrs. Wandle depicts the picturesque dance scene naively in a manner that becomes unwittingly charged with eroticism:

> Borrowed characters and borrowed plumage have ever possessed a fascination for the multitude . . . the borrowed plumage leads to merry happenings among the maskers; most incongruously assorted pairs whirl in the mazes of the dance or wander about among other grotesquely attired guests, each individual peering inquisitively from behind his mask at his neighbor; and fun and frolic grow apace, leading up to unexpected disclosures and laughable climaxes at the hour of unmasking. (7)

The wording in Mrs. Wandle's advice is telling: *borrowing* the outer look of someone involves the idea of temporality; as Bakhtin's *carnivalesque* suggests, the disruption of identity is marked off by time, in this case, the hour of unmasking, which was usually at midnight. It also implies that the costume will be returned, symbolically signaling a return to order. For the duration of the party, however, the "borrowed plumage" seems to automatically invest the wearer with the internal characteristics of the costume, thus leading to "merry happenings." In this case, the external look transforms and matches the

internal nature, a disturbing idea that recalls the fear that women wearing harem pants would undergo a real gender change. Mrs. Wandle's description of these encounters seems traversed by sexual overtones: aside from the orgasmic unmasking, the reckless movement and the grotesque, uncanny atmosphere add an uneasy pleasure to the event.

In this light, Cuevas's ball is doubly charged with the eroticism inherent in dance and movement because it offered two stages and multiple viewing positions: on the one hand, there was the straightforward spectacle offered by the dance troupe on the lake; on the other, the performance offered by the revelers themselves, with Cuevas as the lead *danseur*. It is interesting to note, as will be discussed later, that there were several types of audience members present. Aside from the rich, famous or noble who were there to offer a spectacle of pedigree for the Marquis and each other, there was the press, some of whom were minor celebrities in their own right, as well as guests who had bought their way into the party by purchasing invitations from impoverished nobility.

The costume ball was thus structured as a play within play or, more precisely, as a dance within dance, which recalls Romeo and Juliet, especially in its balletic version, where a masquerade allows intruders to slip into the rival family palace. This structure produces a slippage between viewing subject and viewed object that can also be linked to the (self) consciousness of the performer, as explored in Heinrich von Kleist's "On the Marionette Theatre." Kleist had ironically proposed in his 1810 essay that "Grace appears purest in that human form which has either no consciousness or an infinite one, that is, in a puppet or a god" (244), i.e. that the less self-conscious people were, the more graceful their appearance.

The costumes worn for the evening, at least by the less prominent guests, partially cloaked their identities and allowed subjects to observe anonymously, much like the dandy-flâneur types who viewed dancers behind caged boxes at the theatre (see Chapter 2, fig. 5). This allowed the viewer a sense of freedom and uninhibitedness that other types of parties would not have allowed. By viewing the dancers on stage in the context of a ball, this licentiousness must have been partially curbed by the consciousness that they were also participating in a staged event, and were as liable to observe the spectacle as to perform in it. This effect had been noticeably present in the dynamics of nineteenth century elite theatre performance, in which the staged spectacle was as important as the spectacle offered by elite audience members, as illustrated by the illuminated house, that Wagner so adamantly sought to dim out. Such a structure is wonderfully depicted in the opening scene of *The Age of Innocence*, in which upper class New Yorkers use their spying glasses to gaze and dissect audience members, as well as performers. In this light, the description of guests at Cuevas's ball, who are shown to be "not disguised, but costumed,"[274] offered in voiceover for a French news clip, seems particularly fitting (*Le bal du siècle*).

In *Visuality in the Theatre* Maaike Bleeker analyzes the pleasure taken in the observation of dancing bodies. Following Kleist and dance critic John Martin, Bleeker argues that "looking at dancing bodies is so attractive because—in the ideal case—it allows for direct contact with the moving force—or vis motrix—behind the movements seen. In this way, dance can compensate for something lost, for a lack" (124). This lack would correspond to the stunted potential of the individual living in modernity, where

dancing—and even looking at dance—would act as a compensating mechanism "for the denials and suppressions that occur in daily life" (124). The viewer of a moving body would be able to connect to the soul of dance, and have "access to a universal core of basic human feelings" (124). The lack referred to above remain ambiguous, and the moving life force to which the viewer might have access through the spectacle of dance remains elusive. If one considers the permanent rush and unceasing pace that comes with living in a modern city, the viewing of a dancing body might interestingly offer an outer, unmovable perspective that allows for pause and analysis. Looking at dance, as well as dancing itself would allow for conscious perception and production of movement, an aspect that is lost in the hectic pace of modern life, which does not allow for reflection.

T. S. Eliot's lines from "Burnt Norton" recalls a similar universal potential in dance: "at the still point, there the dance is . . . / Where past and future are gathered" (177). As Susan Jones claims, the speaker in the poem "alludes to dance as representative of the human experience of timelessness" (31). Eliot's concept of stillness holds all of space and time, and offers wisdom that goes beyond linguistic communication, which Modernists set out to prove was an unreliable and limited tool of communication. The still point allows for a vantage point from which to observe the "moving force" invoked by Bleeker. Eliot portrays dance and movement in this poem as the most essential of arts, although, paradoxically, he shows it as being motionless.

Movement is indeed essential in the often frustrating experience of modernity. Writer José María Eguren, considered the only Peruvian symbolist poet, conceived aesthetics as dependent on movement: "I have seen inexpressible beauties pass by

rapidly, that once still and fixed have lost their delightful glory. Mobility is eternal like time; the static is a kind of death" (80).[275] Interestingly, for Cuvardic, "the *flâneur* will be the subject that perceives modernity, experience of the transitory, the fleeting, the fugitive" (19).[276] Ferguson underlines the fact that movement for the artist-flâneur "is a mode of comprehension, a moving perspective that tallies with the complexity of a situation that defies stasis" (91). In this sense, the *flâneur* becomes a sort of perceptive dancer who is able to capture the essential beauty in the fleeting movement of other people, who, in their impermanence, similarly behave like pedestrian dancers. As an art that cannot be fixed, dance becomes the quintessential symbol for the change of pace brought about by modernity and the urban city. As Eliot's paradox illustrates, however, the impossibility of translating movement intellectually remains a fundamental foiling that permeates modern art.

It is only fitting then that Cuevas, the epitome of the artistic entrepreneur, an unrecognized or dubious artist who searched for beauty his whole life, found it in dance, i.e. in a creation that is essentially dynamic and ever changing. In this light, his party of the century, a dance within a dance, becomes a lavish artistic creation that supremely embodies this modern spirit of impermanent beauty.

A few weeks before the party, the Marquis was invited to write the column "The Voice of Broadway," to fill in for Dorothy Kilgallen who was on vacation, and he took advantage of the occasion to promote his event. With rather naïve conceit, Cuevas declared that his guest list "reads like a combination of Burke's Peerage, the Almanac de Gotha [a directory of Europe's nobility], the Social Register, Who's Who, and the guest

list for a theatrical benefit," and gauchely revealed that he "tried to think of all the important and amusing people . . . the most glamorous people on earth," even if he had not met them. To conclude, he reiterated his promise to host "the most spectacular party of this century." The adjective is significant, since it emphasizes once again the idea of observation and artifice in the creation of identity within the Café Society. As Marie de Freedericksz-Kiriloff recalled, the event was "more of a spectacle than a ball" (qtd. in *Le bal du siècle*),[277] and no detail was left to chance.

The ball was partially staged and guests were in fact coached on how to behave. Significantly, the production of the performance was almost as important as the event itself, and details of the party's development were publicized and scrutinized by the press. Audrey Whiting of the *Daily Mirror* reported that the ballet troupe's choreographer Bronislava Nijinska was leading the guests' social training and that she had demanded two rehearsals for the party. Although some guests had protested because of the heat, the Marquis explained that one "must just grin and bear it." She also revealed that Madame Nijinska had criticized several guests: "You are too self-conscious. Do try and pull yourselves together" (qtd. in Whiting, "Bad-Tempered Town"). As professional dancers for the night, guests were asked to work on their self-awareness, in an attempt at performing their role more naturally. Cuevas gave his own directions to the guests: "I want this to be a most uplifted, highbrow ball. Remember, we are patron of the Arts, so do not let us indulge in idle chit-chat" (qtd. in Whiting, "His £60,000 Ball").

Dance News magazine cheekily reported that Cuevas was the "busiest man in Marquisdom" in the months before the ball ("When a Marquis Gives a Ball" 8). In

August, however, publicity for the event took a negative turn when the French labor force went on strike "to challenge a government change in the status of workers in the public sector." The wave strike was one of many in post-war France, but it became particularly strong as means of transportation, municipal services, the civil service, mines and metalworking industries shut down (Shorter and Tilly 139). In this scenario of social unrest, orchestra rehearsals were carried out with difficulty, because the conductor had problems getting from Paris to Biarritz due to the strikes. Since telegrams were only allowed in matters of life or death, the conductor found an astute way to wire his message of distress: "Johann Sebastian Bach died. Arriving tomorrow" (qtd. in Lyons).

Although the strike was settled just before the party on 25 August, the issues exposed by workers struck a discordant note and a month was enough time for public opinion to turn against the Marquis and what was perceived to be an inexcusably frivolous endeavor. The workers' discontent seemed to echo a sense of generalized outrage in French public opinion. In this light, Cuevas's choice of theme for the party was particularly unfortunate, since guests were pretty much "dressed as their ancestors before their heads were cut off," as Art Buchwald of the Paris edition of the *New York Herald Tribune* cleverly phrased it (qtd. in "When a Marquis Gives a Ball" 8). The report also added that Communist signs along the road leading up to the gate of the Chiberta Country Club at Biarritz read, in what seemed an uncanny historical flashback: "Down with Aristocracy!" and "Remember the Revolution!" (8). Cuevas had unintentionally summoned an accurate depiction of French aristocracy in his fantastic vision. The reporter himself, defying the dress code, but picking up on the rebellious ardor, came

dressed as a "Red Indian . . . [with a] tribal tattooing [which read] 'U.S. Go Home'" ("2,000 Guests, Five Orchestras").

The widespread impact of the strike had naturally dampened Cuevas's merry preparations, but the event schedule went on as planned. Photographs of Cuevas's costume fitting highlighted the expense to which the Marquis had gone for his kingly inspiration: the gold fabric was valuated at $42 a yard, and the wig of golden grapes put the finishing touch on this artificial conception of nature (see fig. 14). In the picture, Cuevas appears as if dressed by fairy godparents that are making his dream of being an authentic aristocrat come true. The Cinderella motif that can be read in Cuevas's costume party also circled the ball in other variants, such as in the case of a pastry baker who had been invited by the Marquis, upon having sent a "naïve request" to attend the ball. Curiously, this story casts Cuevas, who "is unable to say no,"[278] as the fairy godmother who brings to life the dreams of Marthe Figué, the shopgirl who received a personal visit from Count Rasponi, Cuevas's publicist, to deliver the invitation ("Au Bal de Chiberta" 12).

Fig. 14. *Ready for the Big Shindig.* 1 September 1953. Associated Press Photograph.

On 3 September 1953 the Marquis de Cuevas received his guests "with a kiss . . . sitting on a pinewood throne." The Marquis had explicitly warned guests that if they were not properly attired, they would not be granted access to the ball. However, this condition unexpectedly became a ticket that allowed uninvited people to purchase their way in. Indeed, several guests who attended Cuevas's party bought their invitations from impoverished noblemen. Wearing their costumes as camouflage, they civilly breached the gates of an exclusive social circle for the night. One newspaper report mentioned up to "100 gate-crashers" to the event ("When a Marquis Gives a Ball" 8), while another suggested half that number, adding that, "if the host noticed the costumed imposters, he didn't have them tossed out" (Kilgallen 15). The latter description becomes deeply ironic

when considering how all guests to the party could be described as "costumed imposters"—starting with the Marquis himself.

As Terry Castle argues in her discussion on eighteenth-century masquerades, the "basic paradox of masquerade sociology" lies in the fact that, "though on one level the masquerade advertised itself as a gathering of the upper classes, on another it was popularly recognized as the event, virtually unique among modern civil institutions, that did in fact 'promiscuously' mingle the classes" (Castle 28). This is exactly what happened during Cuevas's party, bearing in mind that the host himself might be considered a social intruder. In this sense, despite the desire to create an exclusive event, the very nature of the entertainment allowed uninvited guests access to the party. Indeed, as Castle puts it, "the 'Lower Orders' invariably did penetrate de inner sanctum" (28).

Whether Cuevas noted the uninvited guests or not, it is significant that costumes largely worked as social passports that night, both for the host and his guests. In fact, Cuevas was most concerned with maintaining the illusion of the party's theme, and no one was allowed to take off their wig, despite the heat ("Party of the Century"). Even the policemen, there for the security of guests, especially those wearing expensive jewelry, were in knee breeches, wig, lace ruffle, and holding muskets ("Their Eyebrows Lifted," "All Will Wear 18th Century Dress"). The sumptuary code imposed on the evening recalls early modern laws. As Hunt argues, "[t]he sumptuary ethic lived on long past its active legislative existence as a component of a cultural nostalgia for a time when people knew their allotted social place which was recognizable through a semiotics of appearance" (67). Paradoxically, eighteenth century aristocratic dress encompasses

elements that often render the wearer virtually unrecognizable, including a powdered face and powdered white wig, so that intruders might not have been clearly identified. In what constitutes the epitome of irony, Cuevas's daughter Elizabeth recalls with amusement that her father was outraged when he arrived at the ball in a Peugeot, and was barred entrance since he failed to be recognized (qtd. in *Le bal du siècle*).

Cuevas had the chance to create a second first impression, however, and the photograph that captures the moment of his arrival to the party shows him striding in grandly, "in flowing red robe and white wig" (Oberon, "'Dream Come True'"), and wearing a proud expression on his face (see fig. 15). In the spirit of the original monarch, guests who arrived presented themselves to the Marquis, who sat "ensconced on a golden throne" ("Lady Godiva-On-A-Camel"). Video footage of the event for *British Pathé* shows the stage that was set up for the arrival of courtiers as they paid their respects to the king, highlighting the spectacular and specular quality of the ball ("Party Of The Century 1953").

Fig. 15. "The Marquis de Cuevas Makes His Entrée as the God of Nature" (Aguilera).

The evening featured two pieces performed by the ballet company, which were staged on the set that was erected in the middle of Lake Chiberta, and designed by none other than Cuevas's friend, Salvador Dalí ("The Voice"). There was also a boat parade of *tableaux vivants* on the lake, which further stressed its theatrical atmosphere. Indeed, these living paintings were a frequent part of masquerades, and Mrs. Wandle suggests in her etiquette guide that they were particularly well suited to begin the evening festivities (9). The ball thus consisted of multiple stages that functioned in tandem, each alternately highlighting one function of the viewed/viewer dichotomy in a spectacle. As the *tableaux* paraded in front of guests, "Cuevas . . . sat [watching] for two hours almost motionless, with his feet placed in the fifth Ballet position" ("Vatican Newspaper"). In this

description, Cuevas becomes yet another *tableau vivant*, a notion that emphasizes how the boundaries of viewer and viewed remained fluid throughout the night.

Among the twelve posed compositions was a restaging of Goya's *Blind Man's Buff*, a painting that shows a joyful circle of young men and women playing in a pastoral landscape. The game depicted shows a blindfolded figure attempting to touch another player, an image that adds a stimulating reminder on the visual ascendancy in making out the other. Cuevas had revealed that some of his closest friends had urged him to add one more tableau to the set, which would depict his own funeral, but, either because he felt it struck too close to home, or, as he declared to the press, that he felt the "somewhat ghoulish tableau sounds very much like me imitating Ophelia floating onto the lake on a barge," the idea was finally discarded ("The Voice of Broadway" 15). It is interesting to note in this quote that Cuevas's vision of himself as a romantic heroine—one might guess he has Millais's iconic Pre-Raphaelite painting in mind—not only reveals his humor, but also casts him as a passive victim and an object of aesthetic gaze. On this point, the *Sunday News* added further information on the Marquis's odd pastime:

> the Marquis has a hobby—playing dead. For this he always wears—as he does most of the time at home—a Spanish cape of black velvet with a violet and pink lining which was given him by the late Alphonso XIII of Spain. In his cape he lies on his bed surrounded with candles. He says that at these times he reflects upon death and other mystical matters. He rises, he says, greatly refreshed. ("Vatican Newspaper")

This element of death that was to be included in the ball remained as a ghostly

preoccupation in Cuevas's mind. Indeed, for Bakhtin, the *carnivalesque* joy "always include[s] . . . a perspective of negation (death)," an image that will inevitably appear in the uncrowning of the King.

Divertissement **as Royal Entertainment**

Despite these macabre considerations, the prevalent mood was one of gaiety. The dancers offered an eclectic program for the ball: Rosella Hightower and George Skibine opened the evening with *Rondo Capriccioso* ("When a Marquis Gives a Ball" 8), a ballet which they had premiered the year before in Paris, with choreography by Bronislava Nijinska, music by Saint-Saëns, and costumes by Jean Robier (Crisp 16). The program ended, rather appropriately, with a scene from *Swan Lake*, on the stage set up on the lake and to which the dancers were brought on a raft ("When a Marquis Gives a Ball" 8).

Significantly, the troupe's musical intervention functioned within the social costume party as a throwback to the origins of ballet as a form of entertainment offered at the French court of Louis XIV at the end of the seventeenth century, where the spectacle served as an intermission to divert guests. At the time, ballet was a form of dance that was less structured and more improvised, in "the tradition of the Italian *intermedii* and the French *masquerades*" (Nordera 23). Indeed, ballet's Italian roots highlight the idea of dance as a leisurely interruption of the party, whereas its French origins point to the fact that costumes and sometimes masks were involved, which rendered the group homogenous. This private and rather exclusive court entertainment was considered a *divertissement*, a minor entertainment.

In the history of musical theatre in France, these *divertissements* became known as *fêtes galantes*, and they would often include balls, fairs, serenades, and garden parties (Nordera 17). As mentioned above, a variant of this type of staged intermissions was called *fête champêtre*, which was specifically set in a rural atmosphere and showed "the dances of shepherds and shepherdesses, peasants, sailors, and wandering gypsies" (Cowart 10). Thus, the theatrical, and more specifically, dance undercurrent present in Watteau's pastoral scenes discussed at the beginning of this chapter, comes full circle.

Indeed, Watteau's paintings "stand as iconic representations of the lyrical and the performative" and the "similarities of his backgrounds to theatrical stage sets have been noted frequently" (17). In this sense, Cuevas's bucolic setting for his revelers was part of the balletic tradition of staging dancers in a pastoral mode. Through his staged costume ball, Cuevas was therefore participating, albeit unconsciously, of the origins of ballet itself.

In the heyday of classical ballet, the *divertissement* was incorporated to the plot of many works now considered canonical. In these *ballets d'action* (plot-driven ballets), *divertissements* are included by framing them within the storyline as "village festivals, masked balls, entertainments for royalty, [or] celebrations of wedding and military victories" (Smith 143); a moment of concentrated dance music "when the action is temporarily halted" (142). Ballets such as *Swan Lake* (1877), *La Bayadère* (1877), *Sleeping Beauty* (1890), and *The Nutcracker* (1892) all include a court scene interlude, where a royal member offers a palace ball at which guests, presumably coming from all over the kingdom, represent different national characters and/or fairy tale figures. Many

of these dances are of "national" or "character" types and are supposed to represent either a country or an ethnic group, a choice driven by the colorfulness of the folkloric attire and the ability of the spectator to identify at first sight the represented stereotype, but most especially, the type of music that accompanies him. *Swan Lake* includes Hungarian czardas, a Spanish bolero complete with castanets, an imagined Neapolitan creation that includes Tarantella music (Greskovic 245), and a Polish mazurka in Act III, representing the nationalities of the brides who wish to be considered by coveted bachelor Prince Siegfried. For the final wedding ball in *Sleeping Beauty*, in turn, some of the guests invited are the Bluebird couple, Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, and Puss-in-Boots. Smith highlights the close relationship between ballroom and theatrical dancing, which are both structured along similar musical and choreographic lines and progressions. Dance fashions were thus replicated on the stage and vice versa: "staged ball dances at the Opéra looked so familiar and inviting that spectators occasionally tried to join in the dancing onstage" (143).

Guests at the Biarritz party certainly offered entertainment to each other. Early rehearsals of the party describe an extravagant entrance by Salvador Dalí, who was supposed to be coming from Barcelona with a troupe of Spanish gipsy dancers, coincidentally one of the set numbers of folk dances in a ballet performance. Dalí, who hobnobbed with many of the Café Society members, wrote his only novel in French—of which only an English translation survives—, a *roman à clé* appropriately entitled *Visages cachés* (Hidden Faces), which portrayed many prominent members of this social circle in a rather cruel way, revealing their petty concerns and superficial art endeavors

(Coudert 303). Dalí wrote the novel in four months during the war, while he was exiled in the States, in some accounts on the property of the Marquis de Cuevas in Palm Spring, in others, at the residence of the Marquis in New Hampshire (Coudert 303; Villacèque). Whether Dalí made it to the actual party remains unclear, as no reports mention his presence.

The guests who did attend offered ample material to feed the press. Fashion designer Pierre Balmain, who created Cuevas's costume, was there controversially representing "a planter in the islands of the Antilles with a following troupe of 30" ("Eighty Sheep"). Lady Sylvia Ashley, who came as Flora, was repeatedly described in reports as "four times divorced"—"she had been married to Clark Gable, Douglas Fairbanks and two English lords" ("Stupid Is the Word for This Party"; "Marquis Tosses Lavish Ball" 2). Other prominent partygoers included loyal Prince Aly Khan, the Baron Philippe de Rothschild, film director William Wyler, Empress Bao Dai of Vietnam, and actor José Ferrer. Hollywood star Merle Oberon came dressed as Titania, together with Count Rasponi as a somewhat inexplicable dancing monkey. One of the *tableaux* included the designer for the event, artist Valerian Rybar, as a devil, accompanied by the Duke and Duchess of Argyll as angels ("Vatican Newspaper"). The Duchess of Argyll had a reputation as a notoriously scandalous British socialite, so her attire was ostensibly provocative. A later recap of the evening drew attention to one of the petty conflicts of the night: "Ann Woodward, of the New York Woodwards, slapped a woman she thought was dancing too often with her husband, William, whom she was to shoot and kill two years later" (Mayo). The photograph that shows the Marquis surrounded by some of his

friends is an example of the sort of provocative image that was published in the press (see fig. 16). This one in particular has a homoerotic undertone, since it shows the aging Marquis surrounded by attractive young men: a young friend with his shirt partially open represents one of the four seasons to his King of Nature, next to him the figure of a handsome devil grins at the camera, and slaving at the Marquis's feet, the grimacing monkey of Count Rasponi. Although Merle Oberon would write a dazzling column on the party which she called "Dream Come True: Ball Turns Time Back 200 Years," scandal seemed to simmer on the surface of a party that presented the outwardly polished *bella figura*, while often attempting to hide the darker, more shameful *brutta figura*. In fact, another possible reason for the many absences of key figures may also have been intrigue. Apparently, as recounted by the Baron de Redé: "The Marquis d'Arcangues, who considered himself the King of Biarritz, fostered a particular resentment against Cuevas, and in a fit of jealousy, sent out fifty telegrams saying the ball would not take place due to the sudden illness of the host" (Mayo).

Fig. 16. Valerian Rybar as devil, an unidentified young man (possibly Count Charles de Ganay representing one of the seasons—Spring?), the Marquis de Cuevas, and Count Rasponi dressed as a monkey ("Margaret Strong de Cuevas de Larraín").

Aside from La Maxwell who, as one unkind report put it, "almost brought down her donkey," the most discussed entrance of the night was French dancer Renée "Zizi" Jeanmarie, who rode in a camel in "the briefest of sequin patches and jewelry" ("Their Eyebrows Lifted"). The greatest outrage, however, might very well have been caused by the way in which "commoners" became aristocrats. One light-hearted report described just such a transformation over "Countess Quintanilla of Madrid (formerly Aline Griffith of Pearl River, N. Y.) . . . [as h]er escort Luis Miguel Dominguín, Spanish bullfighter [who came as a magician], waved a wand over her and instantly transformed her into a regally attired court lady" (Brandeis). This account emphasizes what seemed to be the main theme of the party, that of the creation of the self. Another famous guest, who came dressed as one of the Four Seasons—the quartet of costumed friends formed the closest

entourage to the Marquis that night—was none other than Marella Agnelli, Princess Caracciolo. Famously labeled by Truman Capote as a "swan," Agnelli was one of the fashionable, wealthy women who had created themselves, "spen[ding] decades turning themselves into works of art" (Davis).

In this spirit, Cuevas's balletic *divertissement* was intended to offer a stylized version of ballroom dancing to guests. The photograph in figure 17 shows the stage around which Cuevas, the King of Nature, and his guests look on with immobile pleasure. The seating arrangement clearly replicates the *divertissements* that recur in classical ballet.

Fig. 17. Photograph of a *pas de deux divertissement* starring Rosella Hightower, performed in front of the Marquis and guests ("From the Editors: Faux Pas de Deux").

The most sublime moment of the evening was supposed to be the *ballet blanc* section from *Swan Lake* in which the dancers flit on the stage set over the real lake, like true white swans. As dancer Arlette Castainier noticed ruefully, however, the

performance ended in disorder and the aestheticized veneer that held the party together was broken up by the bodily instincts of the crowd: thus, when the buffet opened, everyone left to eat, except a few well-educated guests who remained till the end of the ballet performance (qtd. in *Le bal du siècle*). In fact, rather than reviewing the quality of the dancers, newspaper reports focused at length on the decadent menu, which was often discussed in terms of quantity: "25 roast calves and 10 suckling pigs . . . 3,000 quarts of champagne . . . 20 barrels of still wine" ("Mad, Mad, Mad!"); "12 buffet tables" ("2,000 Guests, Five Orchestras"). The moment powerfully recalls Blest Gana's novel *Los trasplantados*, when party guests behave like hungry beasts, as discussed in Chapter 1. In a night in which boundaries of all types became blurred, those between fiction and reality were not the exception.

Revealing Accusations: Transgressing Boundaries at the Biarritz Ball

Much like the fleeting sense that accompanies the art of dance, Cuevas's ball was described as ephemeral. One rather dramatic description of the event likened the guests to "ghosts dressed in silk, satin and velvet . . . who haunted the edge of a lake, and then vanished in the early morning mist" ("Au Bal de Chiberta").[279] This melancholic description marks an absence that resonates with the theme of death present in the *carnivalesque*. The ghostly environment also highlights the permeability of boundaries enacted by Cuevas's ball, which weakened borders that defined nationality, citizenship, gender, and social class, and laid them vulnerable to breaching. Symbolically, the event marked the decline of Cuevas as a public figure; the beginning of the end of a lifetime of

achievement, and perhaps the beginning of the end of the Café Society as well. As Coudert argues, the whole of Café Society can be described as "a society where the mad search for pleasure leads to a sort of dance of death, in which the rhythm accelerates until the dancers collapse and cede their places to others" (303).[280]

When the party ended at 7 am, every guest received a bronze medal ("When a Marquis Gives a Ball" 8). Cuevas was concerned with creating a sense of exclusivity for party members to record the ball in collective memory, but the gesture oddly reads as a third-place prize of endurance. The gift was an attempt at engraving the ball into the fabric of reality, and perhaps also a way of resisting the ephemeral aspect of a dance, which failed in the same way as photographs or video intended to capture the choreographic movement of the party and the dance. As an inscription already always of a past, it could not be actualized in its reading; for dance, in particular, it is an immobile way of apprehending an essentially mobile art, and so doomed from the onset. The attempt at creating a sense of permanence was certainly associated to the effort required in a performance that lasted so little. In broader terms, the medal can be read as an impulse to return to an arguable golden age of French history, an atavistic imperative that the public refused to accept.

It was not only guests who "spent most of the evening just staring at each other" (Bryce qtd. in Dunne); curious bystanders were also privy to the event, albeit from a distance, for the ball was also witnessed by "about 3,000 people" . . . from the other side of the lake" ("Lady Godiva-On-A-Camel"). Similarly, as if reviewing a public performance, newspapers from around the world gave their heated opinion on the final

production. Despite some rosy accounts, reports ranged from mild disdain to unmitigated repudiation, in a response that brings to mind the *carnivalesque* impulse that marks the end of the festivity, that of the decrowning of the King. Bernard Valery illustrates this critical approach, when he compares the ball to a film at the beginning of his article: "The event, while glittering like a Hollywood production at certain intervals, was also extremely dull" ("The Marquise Regrets").

At the height of the Cold War, Cuevas's "ill-timed . . . display of wealth and luxury" was considered not only in poor taste, but also politically dangerous. Ed Sullivan of the *Daily News* dismayed at the fact that, like for the Beistegui party, the "Commies" were sure to "w[i]n tens of thousands of votes" (13 Aug. 1953). American magazine *Quick* entitled its lengthy photographic report: "A Marquis' $100,000 Monument to Bad Taste," and similarly deemed the party to be "glittering ammunition for Communists." In a more personal attack, it also described Cuevas as "gargoyle-faced" (14). *The Portland Oregon Journal* attacked the thoughtlessness and frivolity of the "so-called international set" in its article: "Stupid Is the Word for This Party," while *The Florence Times* stated that "the Marquis' costume ball has a sort of zoological flavor . . . insofar as a lot of supposedly sane people made a lot of monkeys of themselves" (Brandeis 4).

The virulence of the press towards Cuevas's gaudy ball cannot solely be attributed to fear over the Cold War climate. Sullivan also described the Marquis as "exhibitionist," and boasted that "this column was the first to suggest that the Marquis de Cuevas was identifying himself as a drip of large proportions by tossing that Biarritz shindig, [and he was] happy to note that Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, Orson Welles, and half of the 4,000

invited guests snubbed the festivities" (3 Sept. 1953). Although Sullivan's moral crusade purportedly focused on the extravagance of the party and how it had created gratuitous communist propaganda, he also wished to call out Cuevas for seeking to climb above his proper social station, and displayed satisfaction at being the first to mark the latter's lack of credentials to stage such a party. Similarly, Bernard Valery of *The News* gleefully reported that, "The big sour note of the night was that several hundred nobodies showed up." The press also had a field trip reporting that none of the Rockefellers attended; his wife Margaret, notoriously averse to large crowds, also failed to show up, a slight that was reported as far off as Sydney by the *Australian Sun* ("Marquise Snubs"). The distance established by the Rockefellers was consciously conceived, since the family was well aware of the negative impact of the party, and had dutifully archived all press reports on the event. Despite generally criticizing the extravagance of the party, one article commented at length on the cheapness of the Marquis, who presumably provided too little lighting, and skimmed on liquor and food, as illustrated by "guests fighting their way to the Mother Hubbard-type buffet or guzzling the inadequate bubbly and cheap rum punch" ("Vatican Newspaper"). That is to say, a crime worse than the extravagance of throwing such a party, seemed to be the fact that Cuevas did not have the standard of elegance to do so, in other words, that he didn't do it well.

Class codes were not the only ones broken by the Marquis with his scandalous party. Sexual boundaries were also effectively disrupted. The display of extravagant décor seemed to work as a public flaunting of a sexual nature. Indeed, some critics took it upon themselves to reveal secrets about the Marquis when reporting on the ball. In his

column, Walter Winchell indignantly declared that the very night that Cuevas "squandered thousands on costumes" and a "perfumed lake," "U.S. Prisoners of War were being carried out on litters in Korea," adding maliciously: "[U.S.] Immigration is welcome to this tip: Ask him (under oath) about his companions. It's the Scandal of Biarritz" (underlining in the original). Winchell seems to be using here the reference to a "perfumed lake" as additional proof to his thinly veiled charge of homosexuality against Cuevas. Bernard Valery wrote more obliquely: "The party had almost as much advance publicity here [Biarritz] as the new Kinsey book in the U.S. (and the good doctor might be interested, too)" ("The Marquise Regrets"). A similar accusation might have been leveled at several members of the Café Society, however, since many were quite open as to their queer sexual relationships. As Coudert explains, in the world of Café Society, which performed its social spectacle so openly, "homosexuality played a major role" (16).[281] Indeed, Arturo Lopez-Willshaw put up his lover, the Baron de Redé, at the Hotel Lambert, while his wife Patricia lived in their private hotel in Neuilly. Both locations were put to use to give grand parties, and the trio often travelled the world together quite amicably (119).

Although the Marquis was widely accused of debauchery and indecency, the most bitter attack came from the publication *Catholic France*, which declared that the party was "not only pornography, [but also] bitchery," and considered the event as a whole to be "criminal folly" (qtd. in "When a Marquis Gives a Ball" 8). Cuevas, who identified himself as Catholic, was particularly offended, and responded rather dramatically that the editorial "was a downright provocation to murder"—it remains unclear whether he feared

for his own life or whether he was considering murder himself—and threatened to sue the Vatican paper for slander and "incitement to murder" (qtd. in Valery, "Marquis of Shindig"). Cuevas's lawyer, Armand Utudjian, also declared to the press that he would base his case mainly on one sentence in the article, namely, that the Marquis's "wealth [had been] earned one does not really know how" (qtd. in "Marquis to Sue").

The public at large also voiced its repudiation. In a letter to the Rockefeller Estate, the Wichita Public Schools Coordinator, Clifford D. Miller, described his outrage as "sum[ming] up the popular reaction of nearly all Americans." The *Wichita Eagle* went even further in this moral objection, expressing indignation in the name of "Thoughtful Americans, concerned over the condition of the world, with its widespread hunger," and concluding that "the party itself . . . can be put down as little less than a display of paganism, taken from past centuries" ("The Rockefeller Party").

The New York *Sunday News* made fun of the farcical potential of the masquerade itself: "What with all their masquerade parties [the poor rich international set] never know whether it's friend or foe lurking behind the mask. It behooves hosts at these shindigs to allow a 'slight pause for facial identification,' lest the anonymity of the guests lead to some very embarrassing moments." Taking issue with what he somewhat curiously calls the "never-ending Halloween" revival of masquerade parties after World War II, the author further argued that, "the cultural climate [of the plush mansions of Europe's aristocracy] is conducive to *make-believe* frivolity" (emphasis added). This odd wording seems to cast doubt on the reality of the entertainment, either suggesting that the pleasure of the guests is counterfeit, or, in what seems a more involuntary insight, that the

"international set" is itself fake, a mere shell of a crowd. Highlighting this disguise motif, the author points out that masks were used at the costume ball, and that "One guest [Henriette Pascar] went all out, wearing a half dozen funny faces during the evening." What seems to him most censurable is that "Even the clubhouse—where the bal was staged—had a phony front, giving it the appearance of a chateau" ("Masquerades"). The reporter zeroes in on the façade of this spectacle, on its superficiality and, most significantly, on the fact that it is built of surface. In this description, the Marquis is criticized not only for his debauched and frivolous lifestyle, but, most significantly, for *staging* this lifestyle and pretending to belong to a class to which he has no right. An additional implication is that the class as a whole is made up of exchangeable masks. It is worth noting that once more, the line between costume party and masquerade became blurred as several guests showed up in masks (see fig. 18). Indeed, the protean nature of the guests involved was also considered by the report, which argued that the one who gained the most was hairdresser and beautician Fernand Aubry, "most adept at the business of making people (mostly women) look like someone else." The prevalent anxiety seems to be the suspicion that by staging this party, Cuevas had revealed that the signs that marked the authenticity of this elite class had been lost. That, like Baudrillard suggests, there was only simulacra, and no original model left behind the masks. In brief, that the Café Society that acted as heir to the aristocratic remains of Europe, had no distinguishable social anchor anymore.

WAS SHE ROBIN HOOD OR SANCHO PANZA? Elsa Maxwell among a group of guests at the ball given by the Marquis de Cuevas, held at the Chiberta Country Club Biarritz. Second from left is film actress Merle Oberon, who danced a gavotte

Fig. 18. Photograph taken of the event with a caption that comments on the costumes worn by Elsa Maxwell and Merle Oberon. Several unidentified guests wear masks ("The De Cuevas Ball at Biarritz").

The only explicit sense of danger in the party, however, was perceived with the arrest of a man who insisted that he was the King of Ireland (Maxwell)—in other reports, a "self-styled 'Marquis O'Reilly'" (Freidin and Richardson). The Republic of Ireland had been officially proclaimed in 1949, and there had been no Kingdom since Ireland had joined the Commonwealth in 1800. Tension in Northern Ireland would emerge in the form of the civil unrest most violently during the 1960s. The arrest incident at the party however was covered in a mocking tone: the man in question, a Mr. O'Malley Keyes, allegedly wielded a large cavalry sabre, and "tried to carve up ex-King Peter of Yugoslavia," only to be "carted across the border into Spain by police, in his party dress and handcuffed." Although the report argued that this arrest was "About the only tangible result so far of the costumed clambake" (Freidin and Richardson), it is interesting to note in it a recurrence of the carnival motif of social mobility and social transgression,

whereby a commoner becomes royalty for a brief interval, signaling the frailty of social class demarcations.

Above all, the real bad taste of the ball seemed to lie in its retrograde and static impulse to preserve in bronze medals a world whose time had been bypassed by modernity. Its atavism, and the way it seemed to reenact the disturbances that led to the French Revolution, was more troubling than its costliness. Most tellingly, even sympathetic columnists for the most part failed to show up for the ball, bowing out due to the general sense of crisis. Cholly Knickerbocker excused himself from flying to Biarritz to cover the party because given the "unrest in France . . . to embark on 'operation de Cuevas ball' would be poor timing" (Cassini, 28 Aug. 1953). Only Elsa Maxwell, with her irrepressible contempt for public opinion, attended the ball, making a triumphant entrance as Sancho Panza riding on a donkey. Maxwell, who had also risen from obscurity to entertain nobility, and whose queerness was hidden behind a tale of self-creation and resilience, was a notable foil to the Marquis that night. Not only a popular gossip columnist, but a famously successful hostess herself, Elsa Maxwell had given some of the most memorable parties of the century, including a *fête champêtre* where the young choreographer Serge Lifar had entered naked, painted in gold, on a white horse, and another at the Paris Ritz, in which the Diaghilev ballet had specially performed (Huffington 165). As she explained in her column: "Like people who love to collect antiques, I have the same passion for collecting people" (12). The atavistic impulse of collecting here is significant, since it highlights a certain museum like quality about the event, as if to preserve and perhaps recreate a memory that ran counter to modernity.

Similar words might have been said of the Marquis. Maxwell's decision to go as Sancho, the earthy companion to idealist Don Quixote, is also telling, since it flouted both gender and aesthetic conventions for the night. Her attitude was that of a woman who, like the Marquis, had forged her persona by entertaining the rich, and perhaps also hinted at her ambivalent sexuality—refusing to marry, she would declare instead in the title of her 1955 autobiography: *I Married the World.*

Irene Lidova, correspondent for Dance News in Paris, who was a dance Maecenas and one of the founders of the Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées, one of the first companies to emerge in post war Europe, also came dressed in drag, as an eighteenth century nobleman ("When a Marquis Gives a Ball" 8). The subversive act was rather defused by the fact that she was married to dance photographer Serge Lido, and the two formed a socially conspicuous couple.

A more favorable article on the Cuevas party was equivocally entitled "Eighty Sheep Go to a Party"; meant as a literal reference to the animals used to enhance the pastoral setting, it also read, perhaps unintentionally, as a metaphorical description of the guests. The piece defended the Marquis's motives as an attempt to "help friends in the area," and as an expression of "an artist who has the money to create beautiful pictures." Actress Merle Oberon offered similar views in her column for the *New York Post*, in which she agreed that the ball was "To give employment to as many as possible" ("On the Ball"). The Cholly Knickerbocker column likewise argued in favor of the artistic nature of the party, in a dubiously worded defense that depicts it as a mediocre creative

project: “When a movie producer invests thousands in an insipid picture, no one seems to have anything against it” (Cassini, 28 September 1953, 6).

The Marquis himself was pleased with the artistic result, and was overheard murmuring: “Beautiful, beautiful. Simply beautiful. It was like an ancient tapestry. It has lived up to my dream” (“Vatican Newspaper”). Highest praise for Cuevas, however, came from the unlikeliest of quarters, a communist newspaper of Biarritz that announced: “The Marquis of Cuevas has saved Biarritz” (qtd. in “Beauté et Elégance de Paris”).[282] Grateful for the tourism and affluence brought to its citizens, for whom the party meant months of work, the town of Anglet “presented to the Marquis de Cuevas a gold medal in recognition of the publicity the Basque coast ha[d] received” (“When a Marquis Gives a Ball” 8).

In retrospect, the party entered the public imaginary as an overly ambitious, flawed enterprise, which some viewed as a lesson in social propriety. Two years later, however, its imprint still lingered and, in his review of Hitchcock’s *To Catch a Thief*, critic Bosley Crowther described the spectacular scenery of the French Riviera in the film, drawing attention to “a costume party at a villa outside Cannes—that should make the Marquis de Cuevas turn green.”

The Perils of Staging a Costume Ball

Whatever difficulties the party might have had, Cuevas did not waver in his public enthusiasm: “I am so happy. It was worth every penny. It was so uplifting for us all” (qtd. in Whiting, “His £60,000 Ball” 9). The comment, which brings together

financial expense and wellbeing, would have served as fodder to critics who pointed to Cuevas's general lack of refinement, and yet its final adjective reveals a spiritual dimension that seems to indicate a relief, an appeasement that is almost moving in its delectation. The ambiguous invocation to this spiritual community remains intriguing. Who is the "us all" invoked by the Marquis? A number of answers seem possible: from the guests who attended, to society at large, including the readers of gossip columns. Ostensibly, as the prevalent mockery and criticism of the event evidenced, most of the Café Society seemed to have largely disowned Cuevas.

The brutality of some of the reports on the ball reveals a latent anxiety that appears to go beyond concerns over the party's over indulgence. Indeed, the snide or outraged comments seem to point to the fact that, through his party, Cuevas had brought into question the rituals that identified class, sexuality, and nationality in a way that was felt to be threatening.

With Cuevas reigning over his guests as an aestheticized King of Nature, artifice became the common denominator for a party that celebrated the staging of codes in a very cognizant manner. The artifice of a class that based its worth on the appearance of ease and the naturalization of privilege was brought into question by this self-conscious theatricality. A costume ball thus became the perfect framing device to dramatize the mutable aspects of the creation of identity, and the inconsistencies of its various frontiers.

The theme of pastoral leisure, which showed aristocratic guests in their quest of validating their own worth, became particularly appropriate. As portrayed by Watteau, a painter who often focused more on form than content, the *fête champêtre* motif

represented a self-conscious performance of aristocracy, and it is not a coincidence that masquerades and dancing feature prominently in the painter's work. Similarly, dance as both a social form and as a staged spectacle became the twofold pivot on which Cuevas's ball hinged. In this manner, the positions of viewer and viewed became exchangeable for the night, bringing into question the stability of the social persona.

Cuevas's ball can also be read as part of the Western narrative tradition of masquerades, which participates in the *carnivalesque*. In literature, masquerades and costume parties have often framed moments of normative disruption, and the fear of such transgressions is similarly palpable in the reception of the party. However justified some of the comments from the press, many seem to reveal a fear that Cuevas has broken several unspoken codes of conduct and put social boundaries at risk. Ultimately, the masquerade staged by Cuevas seemed to reveal the simulation entailed by the so-called international Café Society, and show that there was no longer any definition or marker by which to identify the old elite society based on aristocratic bloodlines. Indeed, the party itself entered the social imaginary, especially in Chile, as a mythological event that became detached from its original context, and is remembered as a night of (social) role-playing, in the original spirit of the carnival.

The ultimate transgression of this *carnivalesque*, however, seemed to be present in the way that Cuevas attempted to revert the temporal rules of the carnival, and give a sense of transcendence and permanence to it. The press and the general public were not the only ones who were scandalized by it. In fact, Café Society, or at least the judges that dictated the "who's who" lists in the United States deemed the event unworthy of the

peerage, and Cuevas was struck off the New York Social Register. In 1952 he still appeared under the heading "De Piedrablanca de Guana Mqs & Mqsa (George de Cuevas)" (191). He must have been removed in the year following the party, for in the 1956 register he no longer appears. According to dancer Ana Ricarda, the Marquesa was very upset at Cuevas for this humiliation suffered by the family (Interview).

The fact that most members of the Café Society turned their backs on the Marquis for his grand ball seems only natural, considering that the group was defined by how it periodically redrew its borders of exclusion. The phenomenon becomes more interesting when examining the reaction of the press, which also seemed intent on policing the boundaries of this Café Society, a society upon which it looked from the outside, or else, like Elsa Maxwell, viewed with only one foot in. The way that the media repeatedly foretold the failure of the ball, announcing its fake qualities and calling attention to the artifice of the society it constructed, made the public at large pay attention. Readers who might once have more or less contentedly turned over a page that commented on yet another grand ball for the exclusive delight of the Café Society members, in the context of widespread social restlessness, were instead made to sit up in alert, and carefully follow the creation and outcome of the performance. The widespread anxiety created by the party reveals a conflicting response to how privilege was constructed, a response that often became a judgment on the merits of members that participated in the delights of moneyed leisure. Cuevas staged the identity of the Café Society at a costume ball, and used the *fête champêtre* motif in particular to create a sophisticated notion of disguise. In this light, the anxiety surrounding the party's *mise-en-scène* can certainly be attributed to

the fact that it also offered an invitation to participate in a masquerade of nation, class, race, and gender; in other words, an offer to partake in the dangerously radical celebration of self-fashioning.

Above all, the costume ball in Cuevas's version created anxiety in the press and the general public for its insistence on recreating and attempting to give permanence to a controversial time in history that remained particularly present in the waves of protest that France was undergoing at the time, and that would reemerge in the 1968 revolution.

Chapter 4

The Tale of the Wounded Bird: Epistolary Agony and the Abject Self

The Marquis George de Cuevas led a colorful, outwardly charmed life, but to friends, family and acquaintances he wrote lengthy, melodramatic letters to bemoan the irreparable advance of old age, as well as his numerous illnesses and mental sufferings. Although Cuevas had signed with a publishing house to write his memoires, he never really got around to them; instead, he channeled his thoughts into his letters, which reveal aspects of both his personal life and professional aspirations. Through his letters, Cuevas creates a more solid sense of his constructed self, even as he constantly undermines the stability of that self, which he represents as marred by torment and threatened by death.

The Marquis corresponded frequently with French-Romanian author Princess Marthe Bibesco in the last decade of his life. In these letters Cuevas discusses the libretto commissioned for the ballet *L'Oiseau blessée d'une flèche* (The Bird Wounded by an Arrow), based on La Fontaine's fable. The plot of the ballet returns to the familiar trope of the woman-as-bird, which conceives of femininity as fragile, elusive, mysterious, and fatally attractive. Cuevas identifies with this wounded bird, which becomes a metaphor for his sense of having been injured—by friends, by country, by destiny. The death of the bird also serves to discuss Cuevas's aesthetic ideals, in which Beauty appears as essentially opposed to the mediocrity of modern life, as well as essentially feminine. Around 1955, when his health began to seriously decline, possibly with the onset of

cancer, this theatricalization of the self takes a darker turn. As his disease advances, the aestheticized image of the agonizing bird, who is alternatively identified as a heron and a phoenix, becomes more sordid. The encounter with the experience of death within his body brings about a mixture of fascination and repulsion, which can be linked to the notion of abjection.

For Julia Kristeva, abjection is the reaction of horror and physical disgust that emerges when the subject is exposed, for example, to an open wound, body waste, or a corpse, which threaten with the loss of the distinction between subject and object, breaking down the barrier between self and other. In other words, by feeling a violent identification with the corpse, for instance, one internalizes the threat of death as real. Horror is then a reaction of fear at the materiality and mortality of our human body. The abject "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4) and seeks to undermine order, rule, and established positions, such as boundaries of selfhood. As the self observes the emergence of uncanny familiarity in this corpse, it is drawn to a "place where meaning collapses" (2). Threatened with "non-existence," in a second moment, the self rejects this "thing" and thus safeguards its boundaries (Kristeva 2). Abjection for Kristeva is predicated on *jouissance*, a term that can be understood in Lacan's philosophy, simply put, as "a sensation that goes beyond pleasure" (Braunstein 104), in other words, as the satisfaction of the death drive. *Jouissance*, for Kristeva, occurs at the moment "in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant." Kristeva thus explains the sense of mixed joy and repulsion produced by the abject, which disgusts but also fascinates, and points to how

"many victims of the abject are fascinated victims" (9). As Menninghaus explains, "to *jouissance* . . . belongs the pleasure in one's own non-being" (376). The moment of the abject is violent and threatens the ego with non-existence, with death: "The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away—it assigns it a source in the non-ego, drive, and death" (15).

In this chapter I will examine the corpus of Cuevas's letters found mainly in the archives of close friends Sophie Kochanski and Marthe Bibesco, to consider the way that these writings obsessively dwell on disease and pain, usually in aestheticized ways, to construct a sense of self. Cuevas's masochistic relish in suffering and mental agony is initially linked to ennui, conceived as romantic melancholy and artistic mediocrity, to which he opposes an abstract sense of Beauty and Art. Ultimately, I will argue that Cuevas's aestheticized wounds occasionally breach their veil of immateriality to reveal the horror of the real, thereby partaking of the abject.

Cuevas's Memoires from Beyond the Tomb

In 1954, the *Daily News* reported that Cuevas was the "latest celebrity to be signed by author's agent Carlton Cole for his life story" (Walker). Cuevas seems to have been paid an advance on his autobiography, but there is no record of him producing any significant writing. At the end of the following year he writes to Marthe Bibesco that he is overwhelmed by the duties imposed by the Ballet administration, and dejectedly argues

that "If I don't find the time to die, I find even less to write" (29 Dec. 1955).[283] The paradox is delightfully absurd especially because Cuevas appears sincere in his gloom.

Cuevas's letters crowd the archives of many of the artists with whom he came in touch. His large and round handwriting is distinctly recognizable, and generally, quite easy to read. In a book written to defend the Marquis from the attacks received after the extravagant Biarritz ball, Pierre Daguerre poetically describes his friend's expansive handwriting, with "letters round like the wheels of a carriage . . . which seem to rest on high axles" (46).[284]

An examination of the numerous letters shared with friends and acquaintances serve as guide to imagine what Cuevas's memoirs might have included. Cuevas was especially close to Sophie "Zosia" Kochanski, née Kohn, wife of the celebrated violinist Paul Kochanski, after the death of the latter in 1934. From the peacefulness of his residence in Palm Beach, Cuevas wrote about his struggles to overcome obstacles in life, recalling his youth in Chile: "When I was in school, I had composed a "motto" that I would write on the first blank pages of my books: A Dracone liber te ipsum. The literal translation is: Of the Dragon free yourself—you yourself. I was never able to accomplish this, and as a child, I already knew that I would be defeated" (16 Jan. 1937, underlining in the original).[285] The brief anecdote shows Cuevas's pessimistic view of his own worth, but is also revealing of his literary aspirations. The symbol of the dragon as an obstacle is pregnant with literary associations: from greed to lust to power, the dragon is often linked to the hero that defeats it. Eurocentric young Jorge Cuevas must surely have considered the whole gamut of heroes connected to this symbol: Archangel Michael, Saint George,

Siegfried, and the Arthurian Knights Tristan and Lancelot, both dragon-slayers. In the context of his Catholic upbringing, the dragon would have stood as a symbol of the Christian battle against paganism and, perhaps, in broader terms, against sin. Furthermore, considering the dragon as a near relation to the Edenic snake, one might read a sexual connotation in this struggle, perhaps that of a young man coming to terms with his first sexual impulses in the context of a mostly Catholic society that considered homosexual feelings a sin. In the excerpt above, the dragon symbolizes an obstacle that Cuevas must have the courage to overcome on his own.

The wording in the letter also seems to posit the dragon as an obstacle within the self. This self-centered consideration recalls Kristeva's discussion of narcissism in her essay "The Powers of Horror," where she understands primary narcissism in conversation with Freud's notion of the formation of the ego, and Lacan's mirror stage, by adding a transitional structure that allows for the child's formation of subjectivity. Narcissism as explained by Kristeva "is predicated on the existence of the *ego* but not of an *external object*; [in this sense] we are faced with the strange correlation between an entity (the ego) and its converse (the object), which is nevertheless not yet constituted; with an 'ego' in relation to a non-object" (62, emphasis in original). This transitional moment of narcissism also enacts a moment of abjection, since the demarcation between self and other, subject and object remains dangerously unresolved. As Kristeva argues, "The ego of primary narcissism is thus uncertain, fragile, threatened, subjected just as much as its non-object to spatial ambivalence (inside/outside uncertainty) and to ambiguity of perception (pleasure/pain)" (62). In locating the dragon within himself as something that

must be excluded and rejected to attain the completion of subjectivity, Cuevas seems to be taking on the role of both the object and the subject. He becomes the object of an imperative (the rejection of other) to constitute himself. Cuevas also establishes the impossibility of achieving this ultimate separation, so that the nausea of the abject is periodically overcome as abjection in writing, reenacted and recreated in Cuevas's own admitted failure to recognize the dragon as distinct object.

In a more literal analysis, the fact that Cuevas writes the motto in his schoolbooks also links it to a quest for knowledge. Ambiguously, the motto seems to point both to young Cuevas's desire to liken himself to a hero with an honorable mission, but also, considering his aristocratic aspirations, to possess a titled coat of arms that might include just such a motto of honor and sacrifice. Cuevas's defeatist description of the preemptive failure to follow his own battle cry engenders within it a punitive impulse that gives masochistic delight to the dictum.

This anecdote of youth allows Cuevas to dress himself in metaphor, a mode of writing that became recurrent. Indeed, Cuevas viewed himself as a fictional character, and frequently reminded his friends as much. To Zosia he writes of how he conceives himself as someone who is already dead: "For delicate souls all is nostalgia, regret, sweet and resigned sadness . . . I can already talk of life as someone who has lived intensely and who has appeased himself. I remember and am afraid of everything that has happened [to me] as if I were reading the story of Tristan, Mélisande, Carmen or Werther! There is the echo of all suffering in us and that unites us!"[286] (5 Mar. 1942). In this excerpt he becomes again both an active subject and his own fictional object in another moment of

narcissistic visualization, of creative abjection writing. Cuevas compares himself to some of the greatest romantic figures in literature, all of which are importantly marked by doom; significantly, two of them are women. The story of Tristan, the Arthurian knight, constituted the main focus of the original ballet *Tristan Fou* (Mad Tristan), staged by Cuevas's Ballet International in its New York era in 1944. With libretto and designs by Salvador Dalí, and choreography by Léonide Massine, the abstract ballet portrayed the errant knight as he wandered in a crazed search for his beloved Iseult, who, in his madness, he sees as "a praying mantis preparing to devour him" (L. Norton 284). This bizarre rereading of the legend was generally not appreciated, except by Cuevas, for whom Dalí was "the greatest painter of the century" (Braggiotti 43). A photograph taken around that time shows Cuevas and Dalí as part of a group who is gathered around Bronislava Nijinska (see fig. 19). Both Cuevas and Dalí stare intently at the camera, the only two actors who seem especially aware of the how they are being portrayed, a stance that hints at their kindred personalities.

Fig. 19. Photograph taken backstage at a performance of Ballet International at the Boston Opera House. 8 Jan. [c. 1944]. *The Bostonian* ("Ballet International"). Bronislava Nijinska appears seated, dancer André Eglevsky looks at her (second from the right); the other women remain unidentified. Cuevas, third from the right, and Dalí, far left, stare intently at the camera.

Cuevas's letter also refers to Goethe's sorrowful Werther, the epitome of tormented adolescent love, appropriately brought to life through his passionate letters to his beloved Charlotte. Mélisande, in turn, is the doomed heroine at the center of Maeterlinck's immensely popular symbolist play, which deals with the forbidden love between the heroine and her husband's half-brother. The seductive and carefree gypsy Carmen seems to be the odd one out in this group, in that she is not in the throes of anguish; flitting from love to love in carefree fashion, she is finally murdered by her jealous former lover, Don José. In Bizet's opera, Carmen's most famous aria is the Habanera, where she defines love as "a rebellious bird / That no one can tame" (Meilhac

and Halévy).[287] The character's colorful orientalist conception would also have resonated with Cuevas, who profited from people's perception of him as exotic. In any case, Carmen is doomed, like the rest of these characters, because of her passionate nature, a trait that Cuevas will treasure.

Although Cuevas rarely mentions any literary texts, and the extent of his readings is unknown, the tradition of French literature, especially the Romantic one, most possibly extending to Baudelaire who seems very present, as seen in previous chapters, aligns closely to his sensibility. With this in mind, there is an interesting parallel to be drawn here with the writings of Chateaubriand, who paved the way for how early Romanticism was to be created and consumed in Europe. His popular sentimental novella *Atala* (1801) and the even more popular *René* (1802) include title characters that mirror Cuevas's masochistic enjoyment of suffering. Cuevas's letters often recall the lament voiced by old Chactas in *Atala*, who grieves over the passing of pain: "it is one of our greatest misfortunes: we are not even capable of being unhappy for very long" (155).[288] The narrator revels in his *mal du siècle* and is saddened by the thought that the intensity of emotion is deadened by time. Similarly, the disaffected René, who has escaped from civilization, tortured by the forbidden love for his sister, rejoices in finding true sadness, which seems to give him a sense of purpose: "I no longer felt like dying after I became truly unhappy" (232).[289] The feeling of ennui remains a recurrent lament for Cuevas, and it is only appropriate that he commissioned a ballet entitled: *Le Mal du Siècle, A Souvenir for a Future Generation*, a work that encases romantic misery as a desired pose to be imitated or perhaps mourned by the audience, thus becoming a melancholic piece about

melancholy itself. The ballet, with music by Alex North, choreography by James Starbuck and designs and costumes by Alwyne Camble, premiered in Paris in 1958.

Cuevas is aware that he is theatricalizing his suffering, and confesses as much to Zosia, to whom he reveals his cognizance of this rhetorical strategy as a way to create passion in his life:

> I am complicated and imaginative, to the point of inventing sentiments, and of giving the impression to others that I am deeply sentimental, when in truth I am nothing but a disabused skeptic who does not believe in anything or anyone and who poses as a victim of life. But, if you don't create mental complications, existence is monotonous. . . . I live in reality and I amuse myself in playing the madman; that is nothing but a willed pose. I know my darling that life will never be like we desire it to be. We have too much imagination and we also want absolute things, when unfortunately we must content ourselves with 'the close enough.'" (9 Feb. 1937)[290]

Cuevas invokes the Romantic tradition, or more exactly the sentimentality of *The Man of Feeling*, but the ironic distance enacted in the passage above, and the humor that emerges in other passages suggests that he belongs to a post-Romantic sensibility that looks on the earlier tradition as lost and irrecoverable. As Cuevas suggests in this excerpt, he can only invent sentiments, that is to say, pose as a sentimentalist, to avoid falling into the ennui of mundane life. The notion recalls Baudelaire's consideration of posing and his position as

one who participates in the discussion of Romantic writing, rather than being an actual Romantic himself.

Cuevas's imaginative impulse leads him to create an invented persona, one that lives beyond the limited existence of life and transcends into fiction. The nostalgic reverie in Cuevas's letter draws him close to the Romantic heroes of Chateaubriand's early novels, but also to the Romantic author's autobiographical self in his *Memoires from Beyond the Tomb*. Often considered as his masterpiece, Chateaubriand's memoires were written over the course of several decades, and published posthumously. The author conceives his autobiography as having been written after death, which gives a sense of closure and finiteness about it. Similarly, Cuevas casts himself as a narrator of his own past life, even as he spends a great deal of time dwelling insistently on his own agony.

Pierre Daguerre transcribed some writings from Cuevas's personal notebook of thoughts, which he only allowed close friends to peruse from time to time, and which he would publish in a limited edition as his *Pensées et Poèmes* later on. In these excerpts, Cuevas reveals a more positive facet: "Let us be optimistic. Old age oppresses only those who are born pessimistic or fearful and who have a sick pleasure in complaining about everything" (qtd. in Daguerre 46).[291] The thought is uncannily ironic, and reveals the way that Cuevas struggled between his perception of himself and his behavior. Most probably, these meditations, inasmuch as they were circulated—albeit privately and in a limited fashion—can be considered as constituting Cuevas's public persona, perhaps more closely tied to his media personality.

Another of Cuevas's life maxim reads: "One does not like to inspire pity, it is too close to contempt" (qtd. in Daguerre 55).[292] Although Cuevas does not mention Nietzsche in his letters, the line here seems remarkably close to the philosopher's aphorism in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*: "To show pity is felt as a sign of contempt because one has clearly ceased to be an object of fear as soon as one is pitied." Nietzsche's phrase focuses on the power dynamics of pity, which places power on the one that offers the pity. In Cuevas's case, fear does not seem to be part of the equation. Indeed, despite this potential Nietzschean invocation, Cuevas contradicts himself, since the main reason for writing his letters seems very much to be that of inspiring pity in others. In 1959 he wrote to his friend Marthe Bibesco that he "has been very busy at preventing himself from dying. . . . I spent Christmas and New Year in a coma. I set myself to work on the book that Putnam is claiming from me" (30 Jan. 1959).[293] The style of the letter is typically self-indulgent. There is no sense of urgency in the need to write his memoires, and there is little thought as to what exactly the activity of preventing himself from dying might have entailed, other than the urge to write a letter to share this vital victory.

Indeed, the act of letter writing seems to be a victory over life: the letter becomes a sign of life, a testament, and also a way of purging death. In this light, Kristeva's conception of the writer comes to mind: "The writer is a phobic who succeeds in metaphorizing in order to keep from being frightened to death; instead he comes to life again in signs" (38). As long as he continues to write these letters he remains alive in the consciousness of the addressee, and he clings to his letters as though to life itself. Sara Beardsworth argues that in Kristeva's consideration of the phobic, writing is an act "that

accesses and gives form to the semiotic, one distinguished from symbolic discourses that serve to communicate" (90). In other words, writing exorcizes the dragon that Cuevas seems unable to fully abject from his self, at least temporarily.

In fact, Cuevas's letters appear as monologues, especially since there is no archive that retrieves the answers to his missives. In any case, as Mexican author Salvador Novo insightfully wrote in his "Of the Epistolary Genre and its Lamentable Decadence": "he who communicates by letter to a friend, enjoys the advantages of a monologue, and eludes such interruptions that fragment ordinary conversation; avoids the twists and digressions which constantly fringe alternated dialogue" (107).[294] For Cuevas, letters function as a way to present the self to others, the self that was intimate and private, but equally staged. Illustrative of this function is the way that he portrays the outer and inner space of his self in a letter to Bibesco; from his villa in Cannes, Cuevas, although sick, receives journalists from *Nice Matin* who wanted to do an interview. Greeting the press "in robe of disgraced mandarin," Cuevas explains that he "Allowed himself to be photographed and interrogated and then went up again to write to you [Marthe]" (20 n.m. 1954).[295] Cuevas displays himself here almost as a victim, who sits passively by as the press ravages him for answers, while later unburdening his real self—or an invented version of himself—in his letter. In this sense, the letters also function as an act of creative confession.

In his youthful novella *El amigo Jacques* Cuevas had praised the act of sharing a secret: "Sometimes telling something in confidence relieves us of a heavy weight, the fact of communicating with a loved one makes pain more bearable, but the people who suffer

in silence and concentrate on themselves, drink up the chalice of bitterness to its feces" (34).[296] Although in Spanish feces (heces) refer to the technical term of dead yeast, which in English translates more accurately into *lees*, I have retained the original ambiguous signification in Spanish, which points to excrement, and conveys the perversity of the act of drinking, especially since the word in Spanish is odd; a more common technical word for it would be *borra*. Other writers have similarly referred to the bitterness of the chalice, and indeed the image is recurrent in Western literature. In Tennyson's "Ulysses" the aging hero, who is restless back in Ithaca, wishes to embark on yet another voyage, so as to "drink / Life to the lees" (589). In this case lees metaphorically refers to a voyage that will be the death of him, but that will also inscribe him once more in legend, and not allow him to fade away in pedestrian reality. Goethe recurs to a similar image in "Der König in Thule" where the King drinks from the golden goblet given to him by his dying beloved. Faithful to her, he drinks deeply from the chalice, until the day he throws the goblet away to the sea, which filling up signals his death. The last fatal drink will also echo Tristan and Isolde's potion of love that dooms them to unhappiness. Cuevas's text resonates with these literary tropes that invoke bitterness, but also incorporates a pun that, associating withheld confession to the drinking of bodily waste, could be considered as an appearance of the abject. In this conception, the subject, unable to communicate with another, and thereby reaffirm his self, is engulfed by silence, internalizing that which needs to be expelled in order to exist, i.e. bodily excrement or spiritual secrets. The subversive quality of the passage also lies in how it desacralizes a religious image. If the chalice turns out to hold excrement, this makes the quest for the Holy Grail an absurd

one. The stoic silence of the hero is understood as self-sabotage, whereas the weeping, garrulous social hero acquires worth because he can communicate to another, and gains subjectivity through his friendships. In Cuevas's case, communication in confidence emerges at its most undiluted through the medium of the letter.

There is little optimism in the ultimate power of the letter, however, and Cuevas's written communication powers remain stunted; despite his aesthetic sensibility, he knows he is not a poet. The expressive problem has to do first of all with the fact that his mother tongue is Spanish, a language that he barely used; indeed, all of his letters in French contain spelling mistakes,[297] and sometimes the sentences seem confusingly obscure, as if they were transcribed from an oral conversation. Most of his letters seem to have been written quickly, in a desperate, urgent flow of thought that shows no traces of having been revised in any way. In several letters, Cuevas regrets his lack of talent, and the limitations of the expressivity of language without divine inspiration. To Bibesco he writes dejectedly: "Chosen beings like yourself know how to free themselves through their thoughts. Life is enriched and gives the opportunity to express oneself through the language of the gods. Poor us that suffocate in confusion without knowing how to define ourselves clearly" (6 Oct. 1958).[298] The passage also suggests that lack of expression is potentially fatal—and again brings to mind the dangers of not allowing for abjection, for rejection of that which maintains the boundaries of the self.

In another letter to Bibesco Cuevas discusses how each person has a "field of action," and considers his own limited artistic talent: "I can only do my modest work of perseverance, patience, and will, of resignation and strength of character and

renouncement" (20 n.m. 1954).[299] Curiously, Cuevas represents his work as a negative force, one that creates through lack, passivity, and somehow active will—a comment that is also potentially Nietzschean in its invocation of the passive Dionysiac force. The picture is that of a martyr, who offers a vague notion of how he is being useful. In a reversal of the dandy notion that conceives life as art, Cuevas seems to be making an art of death or, more precisely, an art of dying.

Notably, for Kristeva, the abject in literature is present in the way it explores and is founded on a "void" that is essential part of the arbitrariness of language. In this sense, literary language is tinged with fear, because it is "Not a language of the desiring exchange of messages or objects that are transmitted in a social contract of communication and desire beyond want, but a language of want, of the fear that edges up to it and runs along its edges" (38). Consequently, the very act of writing is itself fundamentally inscribed as lack, so that Cuevas always falls short of his grand confession, and is thus always aspiring at memorializing his self in these epistolary memoires.

The Queer Epistolary Self: Homosexuality and the Discourse of Disease

The format of letter writing itself is also relevant in the way that it shapes the consciousness and permanence of self. If we understand Cuevas's widespread and fragmentary epistolary corpus as a sort of disjointed memoir, it is important to briefly consider the historical resonance of the epistolary narrative as a framing device for the self.

The epistolary genre has been historically associated with the feminine, although this is more of a traditional conception than a fact. As Amanda Gilroy and W. M. Verhoeven argue in their introduction to *Epistolary Histories*: "The most historically powerful fiction of the letter has been that which figures it as the trope of authenticity and intimacy, . . . which construes the letter as feminine," an association "that derives largely from a particular view of the eighteenth-century novel and its association with women" (1), as seen in Samuel Richardson's popular heroines in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. In the eighteenth century, "the form of writing most accessible to and acceptable for women was letter writing" with topics that "traditionally focused on domestic life or on love." From this notion emerges the conception of language as expressive of the writer's deepest, most intimate thoughts: "At the heart of this fiction [of the feminine, private letter] is the notion of transparency, of both language and woman"; thus, a letter becomes "a type of written mimesis of the heart, a document that authenticates the self" (3). Contextualizing the emergence of the notion that letters functioned in society as a reflection of literature, Nancy Armstrong further argues that, "The most private self was the self expressed in certain kinds of writing rather than in speech" (32). In this light, the epistolary novel works as a way to "enhance the value that people from the middling classes had already begun to invest in literacy[;] it was because those novels added metaphysical flesh to their conviction that you are what you read and write" (42). This conception seems valuable to a consideration of why Cuevas so insistently writes letters to connect to people, and especially to the reason why he used older, lonelier women in particular as a way to build a sense of self. For Armstrong, the epistolary novels

portrayed a way "in which women who have forsaken every other form of value manage to accrue extraordinary value to themselves exclusively through the act of writing" (42), which is of course ironic considering that it was often male writers like Richardson who were writing this feminine self. It is curiously appropriate then that Cuevas's epistolary persona emerges as a feminine voice: passionate, yet often passive, seemingly trapped in the confines of his words, and yet using the letters as a means of catharsis.

Cuevas, as has been seen in the previous section, was keenly aware of the failure of communication posed by his linguistic and literary limitations. His persistence in using the format of the letter might be attributed to the fact that the subject that emerges in this medium is mediated very explicitly through an object, which gives the illusion of physically accompanying the reader. Through letters, Cuevas disseminates his presence to different women, and also receives their visits in the intimacy of his own room. Since the letter acts by proxy, i.e. offers an indirect way to power, this posits the subject within the letter as metaphorically feminine. In Barbara Kellerman's terminology, "Men dominate, women defer" (Guy 245). Complaining to Bibesco about the fact that his wife Margaret thinks that his concerns are frivolous, Cuevas dreams of teaching his parrot to say: "Marguerite, sic transit gloria mundi" (20 n.m. 1954). In this comical fantasy, Cuevas defers the proclamation of his message of doom to his pet, which would have presumably inveighed it with supernatural authenticity, as if the animal were possessed and offering a piece of wisdom directly from the gods.

The epistolary dynamics of Cuevas's correspondence with the French-Romanian writer are interesting to examine in terms of their construction of gender subjectivity.

Cuevas had met Bibesco the day after the Libération in Paris in 1944 (Obituary), and he had been immediately drawn by her aristocratic lineage, and presumably her solitude. Marthe had married Prince George Bibesco III, a notorious womanizer, who died in a car crash in 1941. Aside from being a talented writer, Bibesco was also an important society figure that counted many of the most brilliant artists and some of the most powerful men in politics among her friends, including Jean Cocteau, Paul Valéry, Rainer Maria Rilke, Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle; indeed, there was rumor that she had had a brief love affair with Alfonso XIII of Spain ("Princess Marthe Bibesco"), the same king that had failed to confirm the title of nobility for Cuevas. When the communist government that had taken over Romania confiscated Bibesco's property in 1948, she had been forced to flee to Paris and never returned to her homeland, where she had left behind several family members. In her youth, Bibesco's beauty was famous, and she had been frequent muse to painter Giovanni Boldini (see fig. 20), best remembered for his portrait of dandy writer Robert de Montesquiou, who was her cousin. In his letters, Cuevas repeatedly refers to Marthe as his muse, thereby assigning her the traditional role of beautiful female inspiration. One letter typically reads, "Marthe Muse Sublime" (24 Sep. 1950), while another words the invocation more paradoxically as "Marthe, the unique, My Muse and my mirror!" (19 Jun. 1960).[300] The latter combination intriguingly makes her both the original, unique muse as well as a reflection of the creator (Cuevas), mediated by his own creative vehicle. The narcissistic effect is paradoxically displaced unto Marthe as Cuevas creates his muse, and then replicates her as his own mirror. Perhaps by this address, Cuevas sought to remind her of her former days of youth.

Ironically, of course, Bibesco was the professional writer, while Cuevas the one who acted as her muse.

Fig. 20. *Portrait of Princess Marthe-Lucile Bibesco* by Giovanni Boldini. 1911.

Although the epistolary genre's association with the feminine and the erotic has been challenged throughout history, it is hardly surprising that Cuevas, as an eighteenth century enthusiast, retained the superficial stereotype that emerges in sentimental novels. Cuevas certainly used his letters as one of the ways in which he seduced the aristocratic women with whom he came in touch, and wrote to them in similar tones of intimacy. To each, he offered a platonic relationship made up of passionate verbal exchanges with the persistency of a love-struck adolescent, and with the flattery of a seasoned Casanova,

enveloped in a chaste form that was devoid of any of the erotic complications of physical affection.

Indeed, the language of Cuevas's letters is a curious mixture of the passionate, yet sexless. For instance, he often addresses Sophie Kochanski as his "little martyr Saint Sophie" and tells her, "I venerate you".[301] The use of religious imagery to invoke erotic union is a familiar literary trope, most famously put to work in Romeo and Juliet's shared sonnet that begins with Romeo's seductive offer to "profane with [his] unworthiest hand / This holy shrine" (1.5.94-5). Saint Teresa of Avila also uses similar language in the account of her ecstasy, as will be considered later. Cuevas's letters to Kochanski are often ardent, and make use of romantic appeals: "Zosia write to me, but write for a long time. / Make your writing less elegant but less reduced so that you can write many lines on a page, and fill many pages" (17 Dec. 1936).[302] Here Cuevas seems to be asking for company, rather than actual news. In fact, it is Cuevas's own writing that becomes larger and more desperate in this letter, almost as if he were urging her on. The fact that his ardor is placed upon "his little sister" does not seem problematic given her saintly, chaste state; furthermore, the image borrows from the incest taboo popularly engendered by the suffering René in Chateaubriand's novella. Appropriately, in this exchange with Zosia, Cuevas signs as "Your old Christophe,"[303] the name possibly a connection to Saint Christopher, who bears the weight of the sins of the world. The rhetorical trope of religious fervor remains an empty promise that is based more on form than on matter, much like his request of her writing. The force of the letters resides then in their

periodical exchange, in their phatic rather than in their communicative function, to follow Jakobson's linguistic functions.

Despite these rhetorical ambiguities, theirs was an explicitly platonic relationship, and Cuevas wrote candidly to Zosia about his desire for young men. For example, he repeatedly confesses his interest in "Felix," a young man who is on board his cruise, and to whom he refers as an "Adonis" (15 Feb. 1937)—Felix remains an unidentified actor in this exchange, a young man with Hollywood aspirations, who succumbed to drinking and gambling, and in whom Cuevas eventually loses interest.

Sexual satisfaction had little to do with Cuevas's courtly relationship with women. As his friend Joaquín Edwards Bello recalls, Cuevas's chivalry reached levels of insincerity that never failed to attract the women he seduced and was eyed by men with antipathy, as seen in Chapter 1 ("Las condecoraciones"). When Edwards Bello asked what had allowed him to achieve such a prestigious international position, Cuevas answered that he had chosen to become "the favorite of old women" ("El marqués de Cuevas" 66),[304] and indeed, throughout his life, the Marquis cultivated friendships with distinguished old ladies who had been cast aside by a younger generation. Cuevas listened to them and charmed them with his sincere, if hyperbolic, admiration. To Zosia he wrote that he had been to London to visit a beloved friend who could not reconcile herself to her aging: "I have given her a little illusion that she is still young, and that has done her good" (6 Apr. 1937).[305] Like a doctor for the wounded ego, Cuevas found satisfaction in spreading his medicinal flattery. Zosia must have been around forty-eight at the time (according to Ellis Island passenger records), so that the comment must also to

some extent have been directed at her. Indeed, Cuevas considers his relationship to Zosia to be predicated on suffering: "I think of you a lot, of your anguish, of your frailty" (12 Dec. 1936).[306] His words are meant to be endearing, but sound as if they relish her disgrace. For Cuevas, suffering appears as the great equalizer, capable of bridging class and age differences. Because he is in pain, he can reach out to others who seem to suffer in equal measure. Thus he calls out to Sophie: "little orphan, like me!" (17 Dec. 1936).[307]

Throughout his life, Cuevas dwelled with insistence on the topic of sickness, old age, and death. The obsession with old age was not uncharacteristic of dandies, who were fixated on beauty and youth; indeed, Lord Henry warns Dorian Gray about how essential it is: "Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!" (28). Cuevas broached these topics repeatedly in a theatricalized, highly embellished manner in his letters to friends, lending a patina of melancholy to his discourse that often rang fake or at least highly self-aware. Rather than calling the persona adopted in these letters as essentially feminine, however, it might be more productive to consider the ways that Cuevas queers the notion of the female epistolary subject.

In the epistolary friendship with Marthe Bibesco, the Marquis enacts a dramatic persona that often casts him as an ailing victim. Cuevas seems to conceive of himself as a wounded bird, in perennial danger, with death at his door. This rhetorical effeteness, also displayed in his elegant stance, coupled with his fascination for ballet, and the distant relationship with his wife, threw suspicion on his sexuality. Indeed, the effeteness of Cuevas seems to be a recurrent motif in contemporary articles that always stop short of calling him homosexual. An in-depth exposé for *Vanity Fair* on the eve of the trial

against the Marquis's purported Chilean nephew and designer, Raymundo Larraín, describes the first meeting between the Marquis and Margaret. As narrated by the article, George de Cuevas worked at Yusupov's couture house, in which Margaret Strong Rockefeller walked in one day. In answer to her question, "What do you do at the couture?" Cuevas had presumably replied, "I'm the saleslady." The author of the article adds that Cuevas "spoke with a strong Spanish accent and expressed himself in a wildly camp manner hitherto totally unknown to the sheltered young lady," and further comments that this made Margaret acquire "a lifelong predilection for flamboyant, effete men" (Dunne). Gossip columnists also mentioned young male socialites in connection to the Marquis, hinting at homosexual liaisons. For instance, Lee Mortimer of the *Daily Mirror* dropped the name of Florida lifeguard Tommy Chatfield, Cuevas's "adopted son," and explained that the latter got disowned upon getting married. In her memoires Agnes de Mille also hints at Cuevas's sexuality, by recalling how, when being ushered into his bedroom, she noted a "drawing by Dali of a very naked young man," as well as that of "an equally aggressive naked youth by Sandro Botticeli," facing the bed (124).

Oral history interviews gathered in the 70s and 80s by the New York Public Library show a more candid account of the Marquis's sexual orientation. Dancer Francisco Moncion remembers that one of the Marquis's current favorites had become interested in ballerina Katia Geleznova, something that the Marquis suspected but didn't approve. Upon surprising the young couple together in a dressing room, there was an altercation and Cuevas, screaming, had begun to pommel his friend. As the dancer was about to hit the Marquis in return, Moncion "instinctively picked the Marquis up . . .

threw him over [his] shoulder, and raced out with him to the dressing room . . . [where he] sat him down and gave him cold towels." Somewhat amused, Moncion explains that the story then became that he had "saved the Marquis' life and that [he] was his savior." This anecdote throws light on the way that Cuevas sought above all to portray his life in general, and his love life in particular, as novelesque.

In this light, Cuevas's sexuality can be described more accurately as queer, since his arousal seems connected to vital excitement and drama rather than to specific erotic relationships. Cuevas seems to engage in the very queer act of drawing attention to the theatrical nature not only of the masculine gender, but also of desire itself. As a married man, Cuevas technically represented a normative form of desire, legally framed as conventional. However, he took little pains to hide his favorites male dancers within his troupe, and his predilection for this or that young man did not pass unnoticed by the press, which often dropped hints that were not very subtle as to the nature of Cuevas's relationship with these men. Moreover, Margaret and George were no longer living together, since the former had decided to live near her family in New York. The separation was not only due to Cuevas's sexual orientation; Margaret had also become more of a recluse as the years went by, and had no desire to participate in the social events that Cuevas designed as part of his troupe's promotional activities. Their marriage had never been of a conventional kind, but the distance between them had grown over the years. Cuevas's flamboyance and passion for his company of dancers, who had avowedly become his new family, further develops this notion of queerness. One of the ways that this queer orientation is manifested in Cuevas is in his choosing a new model of family

relationship, in this case, by forming and adopting the company as a travelling companion. Additionally, Cuevas represented his romantic relationships as devoid of physical intimacy, a move that Oscar Wilde had also resorted to when defending his relationship to young men during his trial as platonic. To his friend Zosia, Cuevas explained that his desire for Felix is not actualized, and that he uses the young man as a way to invent novels surrounding his character. Because "all of this happens in my mind," Cuevas argues, "I can live like an ascetic." In this sense, he conceives himself as "mystical, but in the fashion of the Satyrs" (9 Feb. 1937).[308] Much later, in an interview to promote his ballet company, he declared: "Oscar Wilde said that one resists everything except temptation. Well, I have found the means for this: I stay in bed. Oh, yes, I am very ascetic" (*Le Bal du siècle*).[309]

His letters to Russian dancer Sergei Ismailoff in 1945 seem to reveal a more passionate sexual nature. Cuevas writes to "Cher Serge" explaining the details of his medical ailment, but his discourse soon turns to matters of the heart:

> I have moments of insurmountable anguish, the days are too long. I cannot read, I sleep badly, and thoughts as burning as thorns removed from a burning bush torture my brain and my heart! What to do? You help me so much when you are with me. But if I miss your presence, I succumb! Perhaps in a week I will go for a few days to New York. I cannot continue like this because it is too cruel. I have nothing to do. The joy around me, the unconsciousness of everyone to whom I hide my illness, wounds me in

> spite of myself. There is no worse suffering than that which we cannot acknowledge. (20 Jul. 1945)[310]

In a second letter, he tells Ismailoff of the details of his upcoming visit, and lets him know that he "need[s] to see him that same night." The next few sentences are about having got better from a contagious disease for which he had needed a vaccine (30 Jul. 1945). Interestingly, love and sickness mingle in Cuevas's discourse in a way that makes his sexuality abject, a position that homosexuality metaphorically occupies in Kristeva's discourse, whereby the heterosexual "normal" discourse repudiates non-heteronormative desire. Cuevas thus seems to view his sexual preference as a disease in this letter, or at least closely connects it to sickness. The association might be attributed to the internalization of the idea of homosexuality as a disease; in the nineteenth century Cuevas's condition would have certainly been diagnosed as inversion, as discussed notably by psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebbing in his influential study on sexual inversion *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), a concept that was still prevalent in the medical literature of the 1950s. A year later, the relationship between Cuevas and Ismailoff seems to have cooled off. Cuevas now only wishes that Serge have "good company" and avoid "solitary nights that make us inclined to neurasthenia" (12 Jun. 1946).[311] Here, Cuevas refers to the popular nineteenth century diagnosis of a nervous disease first described by doctor George M. Beard as "'exhaustion' of the nerves" due to the "excesses of modern life," and which was deemed to be predominantly American. Freud would attribute "masturbation and coitus interruptus" (Groenendijk 361) as two of the main causes of neurasthenia. In the letter, Cuevas seems to consider sex as a treatment for a nervous

disease, and indeed inquires immediately after his medical prescription, "How is your health?" (12 Jun. 1946).[312] The question appears to be almost compulsive.

The Bird Wounded by an Arrow: The Aesthetics of Beauty

The notion of a queered self also emerges in letters surrounding the discussion of the ballet that Bibesco and Cuevas were working on together, in which a female dancer would play the role of a bird fatally wounded by an arrow. In letters to Bibesco, the image of the dying bird became recurrent, often as part of playful erotic metaphors: "When you come to see me, we will listen to the music for attracting the bird . . . you have aimed the arrow straight at my heart" (4 Feb. 1950).[313] In this image, Cuevas becomes the female bird, and Bibesco the hunter that wields the phallic instrument of death. In a letter of sympathy to Bibesco, who has apparently suffered an accident, Cuevas instead turns her into a mythical bird, "a Phoenix wounded in its wing, because like the traveller Mercury, you also have winged feet" (19 Feb. 1950).[314] Thus, the malleable symbol of the bird also becomes a source of renewed vivacity and strength, given that the phoenix represents immortality through resurrection. George Zoritch remembers a compliment offered by the Marquis that bears a similar sense when, backstage before his next entrance, Cuevas told him, "Yuri, your heart beats like that of a bird" (148).[315] Curiously, Agnes de Mille also used a bird simile to consider Cuevas. Unconvinced by his accomplishments, she describes how, "Like a tropical hummingbird, [he] buzzed about teasingly, only to elude all efforts at capture. Why he chose to build a ballet company we can only guess, but he did" (118). The simile here is significant in

establishing Cuevas as foreign, and also feminine in his elusive motives and general capriciousness.

The image of the bird as foreign other recalls another fable by La Fontaine with which Cuevas must surely have been familiar, that of the "Le Geai paré des plumes du Paon" (The Jay Adorned in Peacock's Feathers). La Fontaine's version has the rather more handsome blue-feathered jay borrowing the feathers of the peacock to appropriate the latter's beauty as his own; the moral of this story is focused on plagiarism, following Horace's version more closely (Bassetti). Aesop's original fable summons the less colorful daw or crow that dresses itself in the feathers of other birds in order to be chosen the most magnificent of all; on the verge of fooling Jupiter, he is recognized by peers and humiliated by all (Aesop). Phaedrus's account interestingly considers the Jackdaw's "empty pride," and the borrowing of Peacock feathers as an attempt to mingle with a more beautiful flock. Upon being discovered, he is scorned both by the Peacocks and by his own kind; the moral is to be "content with our station" (368). An eighteenth century musical rendering of the poem presumably taken from La Fontaine, actually picks up on Phaedrus's lesson, and advises that every person should keep to his own (social) level (Metz). The latter concern might be fruitfully linked to the fear of how clothes and outward appearance might allow a man to pass by undetected in a social group to which he does not belong, as explored in the previous chapter. The image of the changeable bird as an aesthetic pose appears frequently in Cuevas's letters. It is an image with which he covers himself, and an image that he bestows on others as a compliment of beauty. Moreover, the image of this bird can also be applied to dance as a medium, given its

malleable form and significance in balletic tradition.

In dance, the trope of the woman-as-bird is paradigmatic, and can be traced to the Romantic ideals of femininity and the staging of the female body, where winged or sprite-like creatures were typical. The most famous nineteenth century balletic roles to spring from this tradition are the vengeful Willis in *Giselle* (1842), the air spirit in *La Sylphide* (1836), and the white and black swans in *Swan Lake* (1877, 1895), all of which emphasized the perception of women as ethereal dancing bodies. Through their tantalizing flitting back and forth, these women seduced men and often led them to their doom.

Cuevas was not immune to the charms of the Romantic ideal woman, and the three ballet classics mentioned above were in the repertory of his troupe, either in excerpted or full form. For his Biarritz ball the company had also offered a particularly idyllic version of *Swan Lake* over the Chiberta Lake. In a more humorous vein, Cuevas also called his gang of Pekinese dogs "Les Sylphides" (Herisse)—which brings to mind both the Romantic ballet, and Michel Fokine's plot-less version for the Ballets Russes. To the press Cuevas also recounted an occasion on which he had scolded his ballerinas in the following manner: "I am damned with you! you are like the Victory of Samothrace—you are winged creatures without the head!" (qtd. in "Ballet Impresario"). Cuevas seems particularly pleased at his witty reference to the famous statue of Nike, the goddess of victory, whose (headless) remains show graceful motion as well as strength. Significantly, the common trope of dancers as winged beings becomes in this telling image that of dancers as winged bodies.

One of the most interesting original contributions by the Cuevas ballet company also engages with the Romantic ideal of woman. Premiered in Paris on 23 December 1952, the plot of the ballet *Piège de Lumière* (The Light Trap) revolves around a butterfly and the prisoner who chases her. The ballet production was solely created by men: the libretto was by prominent novelist Philippe Hériat; the music, by Jean-Michel Damase; the choreography, by the company's resident balletmaster John Taras; and the decoration, by French surrealist painter Félix Labisse. The woman as butterfly role had been most famously captured in *Papillon* (butterfly in French), a Romantic ballet choreographed by Marie Taglioni for her protégé Emma Livry. Created in 1860, it told the story of Farfalla (butterfly in Italian), an Emir's daughter who has been metamorphosed into a butterfly by a witch who is jealous of her beauty and youth. Farfalla is inevitably drawn to the light of a fire and burns her wings, but with the help of the Prince, they break the spell and get married. The young Emma Livry who had danced the part would tragically die the following year when her dress caught fire on a gas lamp, an incident that became part of the *Papillon* legend.

Cuevas's *Piège de Lumière* is certainly aware of the Romantic *Papillon*, but revises the surroundings of the butterfly in interesting ways. According to Rosella Hightower, for whom the role was especially created, the story was based on the true events of escaped prisoners from the camps of the penal colonies off the coast of French Guiana, who fled into the dangerous swamp areas of the interior of the island, and made a living by carefully catching and selling the majestic butterflies that lived there. In the ballet, there is a male and a female butterfly couple, and a love triangle ensues when the

prisoner falls for with the female butterfly. The costume for the female butterfly consisted of green tights, a mask, and a feathered collar that made her look more like a bird than a butterfly; devoid of skirt, only the faux cleavage of the leotard and the pointe shoes indicate that Rosella is a female butterfly. Indeed, Hightower's butterfly movements are angular and strong in the *pas de deux* between the butterfly and the convict (Hall); a picture of the three main characters of the ballet shows that both butterflies are rather androgynous-looking (see fig. 21). In Hightower's synopsis for *Piège*, the convict, delirious from fever caught in the swamp, follows the butterfly, only to die in the attempt. In Daguerre's conflicting account of the plot, the hunter lives, but the male butterfly sacrifices himself to save his beloved (121-2). The ballet thus conceives the female character as essentially fatal to the male character by framing the beauty of the butterfly in the dangerously diseased environment of the swamp. The metaphor of the diseased woman, i.e. the prostitute, is perhaps obvious, but the sickly environment itself can also be connected to the abject. Additionally, the prisoner himself is already an abject version of man, barely surviving on the edge of humanity.

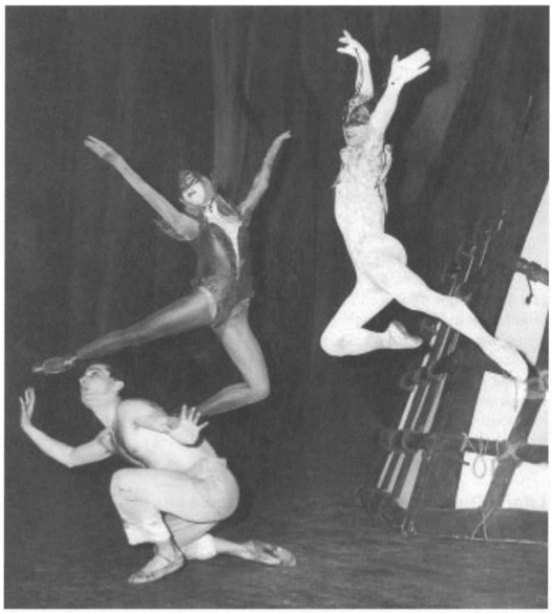

Fig. 21. Photograph of Rosella Hightower and Serge Golovine as Butterflies, and Vladimir Skouratoff as The Convict, in *Piège de Lumière*, Stoll Theatre, London, February 1954 (Crisp 7).

Cuevas's ballet *L'Aigrette* (The Heron), originally entitled *L'Oiseau blessée d'une flèche* (The Bird Wounded by an Arrow) was more emphatically predicated on this dichotomy between the beautiful and the abject. Indeed, beauty is explicitly significant in the ballet, since Bibesco's poetic outline conceives the character of a female heron, as a "Bird of All Beauty / which lives in complete freedom" ("L'Oiseau blessée d'une flèche").[316] Cuevas had asked Bibesco to write the libretto for a ballet based on Jean de La Fontaine's original fable, in turn taken from Aesop, neither of which considered the concept of beauty. La Fontaine's brief homonymous poem carried a pessimistic view of men as violent creatures: a bird, shot with a plumed arrow, remarks on the irony of having contributed to its own death. In the original poem, the bird could be conceived as male, if only because of the masculine gendered noun in French: *un oiseau*. In Aesop's

tale, the bird is an eagle—the noun in Greek, *ἀετός*, is also masculine. Even though La Fontaine's fable does not specify the type of bird, it allies it to the more masculine landscape of war, given that the moral of the poem is the paradoxical thought that "The work of half the human brothers / Is making arms against the others" (10).

In the balletic performance, however, the bird becomes female, and acquires the specific form of the white heron, in Bibesco's and Cuevas's conception. The heron has an important symbolic significance in art. Asian art frequently illustrated the white heron to represent good, light, and day, in contrast to the mischievous black crow. The heron also stood as "a symbol of delicacy and tact, because it is said to 'ever rise from the stream without stirring up the mud'" (Ball 248). Indeed, Cuevas repeatedly emphasizes the whiteness of the heron, which stands for purity and truthful beauty. In Egyptian mythology, the heron is sometimes considered to be a type of phoenix, since it was one of the water birds that "emerged in the first stages of creation," "out of the swamps of chaos" (Pinch 120). One of the most sacred Egyptian birds, the *benu* bird, that is considered to be the model for the phoenix, was originally said to be a heron. The *benu* bird could assist the spirits of the dead through the underworld, so that it became a symbol of birds that travel freely in different worlds (117-118).

The connection of the white heron to the golden phoenix is interesting, for in her libretto Bibesco also includes a reference to Michel Fokine's *The Firebird*, one of the most significant creations of the Ballets Russes to use the woman-as-bird trope—although in this ballet there is no romantic connection between bird and hero, and the Firebird remains a magical creature. Like in the famous Russian folktale on which *The*

Firebird is based, the heron in *The Bird Wounded by an Arrow* leaves a feather behind, which the entranced Hunter will use to make an arrow. The purity of the Heron in Cuevas's ballet thus contains both water and fire, symbols of purity and regeneration: water is often associated to the womb, as a space of birth, while the Firebird, a close representative of the Phoenix, which is implicitly invoked in the ballet, is associated to immortality through rebirth.

These symbolic associations are particularly fitting to Cuevas's consideration of the birth of this ballet. Cuevas had told Bibesco that he wanted the creation to be originally conceived and not derivative; a year before the premiere he wrote to her: "I don't want to link it to La Fontaine and I want it only from you" (28 Jan. 1952).[317] Although in the original La Fontaine fable there is no reference to beauty, and the death of the bird is futile, which underscores the gratuitous violence of war, the main concept in the ballet considers how beauty is destroyed when one tries to capture it. The association of Bibesco's bird with beauty also makes the symbol essentially feminine. As Philip Shaw argues, in philosophical considerations of art, beauty has historically been associated with the feminine, often set against the masculine notion of the sublime. For authors who study the lofty aspirations of the literary sublime, like Longinus and Edmund Burke, "the beautiful is light, fleeting, and charming and implicitly feminine" (Shaw 9).

Bibesco's libretto is written in verse, and like *Piège de Lumière,* it is set in the dangerous environment of a marsh, during springtime. When the Hunter sees the Heron that appears on stage, he is mesmerized by its beauty, and attempts to grasp it with his bare hands, but the bird flies away. The Hunter, who has now become delirious,

presumably once more from malaria contracted in the marsh, invokes the Genie of the Marshes to help him capture the bird. At this point, Bibesco conceives of an abstractly named "Dance of the Miasmas," which is accompanied by "Mosquito music."[318] Interestingly, nature will be dangerous to both the Hunter and the Heron. Guided by the evil Genie, the Fevers appear and help the Hunter to build a bow and (poisoned) arrow. Lured by the love cry imitated by the Genie, the Heron appears and the Hunter shoots it through the heart, thus losing its beauty forever. In Daguerre's poetic plot description for this ballet, the Heron is described alternatively as a "Virgin-Bird" and a "White Angel"[319] that first appears to the fisherman turned hunter in a dream (123). In this account of the plot—possibly part of a second choreographic version—, while attempting to catch the Heron in the end, "all the forces of decomposition rush to form a ring around the young hunter. / The powers of corruption jump on his body to tear it apart" (124).[320] This death is just illusory, however, for the hunter ultimately manages to shake off his fever-induced hallucinations (125).

For Bibesco and Cuevas, the tale was allegorical on several levels. First, since ballet portrays beauty through movement, absolute stillness in the body implied ugliness. Cuevas also conceived the permanent excitement of the city as essentially beautiful and equated calmness of spirit with death, as seen in the next section. The elusiveness of the Bird of All Beauty also ironically represented the difficulties that plagued the creation of this ballet, which was supposed to be Cuevas's artistic manifesto. From the very beginning, Cuevas had encountered problems in the development of the ballet: "I remained very worried about your phoenix wounded by an arrow. I am not afraid of fire

for him, but of the mediocrity of the artists of our time, and above all of the 'incomprehension' of Madame Rosselli" (22 Mar. 1950).[321] The bird, symbolic of the ballet piece, is here conceived as a (male) phoenix, beset by the incompetence and poor taste of Cuevas's collaborators. As these references indicate, it seems possible that Bibesco initially entertained the idea of making the bird of the ballet a phoenix. Cuevas would have appreciated the symbol of a bird rising from its ashes, as he had done when he had reinvented his career as a dance impresario when he was already 49 years old. Ultimately, one can guess that the vulnerability of beauty in art was best portrayed as a white female heron rather than a fiery masculine phoenix. Moreover, the resurrection of the phoenix would have given an optimistic ending to the ballet, whereas the heron's death, as portrayed by Bibesco's libretto, is essentially pessimistic: as it dies, the Heron becomes "nothing but a white stain / that becomes smaller in the widening shadows."[322] For Cuevas, true Beauty seemed to lie in agony, as an ironic counterpart to the ugliness and vulgarity of the miasmas.

In a letter to Bibesco Cuevas explicitly explains what the ballet represents: "In agreement with you I wanted the bird of all beauty to be the victim of the baseness of envy and the hatred that beings that have come out of the putridness, of crassness and of ugliness feel for perfection and refinement" (30 Dec. 1952).[323] Thus, fiction and reality seem to merge in Cuevas's thoughts. During the two years it took to stage, the ballet became a recurring dream of an ideal that would aim at refining and uplifting audiences around the world. However, as he told Bibesco, he was having trouble having his vision

respected, and every time he left the company, "Each person wants to interpret in their way: dancers, choreographers, composers, etc." (30 Dec. 1952).[324]

Cuevas was particularly upset at the mediocrity of artist and socialite Rina Rosselli, who was working on decoration and costumes, which can be appreciated in fig. 22. Prince George Chavchavadze, a Russian concert pianist, was in charge of the music; and, although he is not mentioned in letters, it seems that Cuevas must have regretted hiring the aristocrat, for he would later consider redoing the musical score (14 Aug. 1956). For the choreography, Cuevas chose Birger Bartholin, a Danish dancer who had been part of the Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo, before founding The Ballets de la Jeunesse in Paris ("Birger Bartholin"). The decision to hire Bartholin seems somewhat whimsical, and must have been influenced in part by the fact that Cuevas shared his last name. In Chile the Marquis's name was Jorge Cuevas Bartholin—the second last name was from his Danish mother. Birger Bartholin's ancestor, Caspar Bartholin, was a renowned anatomist from the seventeenth century, and apparently his whole line almost exclusively bore more or less famous philosophers, theologians and artists (Karild). Whether or not he was related to Birger, Cuevas would most certainly have been amused by the coincidence and perhaps have found it symbolically significant. Ultimately, Cuevas was dissatisfied with the results, and within a year was looking for an alternative choreography.

Fig. 22. Photograph of Rosella Hightower, Vladimir Skouratoff and Oleg Sabline after the performance of *L'Aigrette* at the Casino-Théâtre in Cannes, February 1953, by Serge Lido.

Cuevas's reaction of disgust towards the polluted environment of the heron is curiously repetitive. Indeed, he evokes the horrors of the marsh almost obsessively in several letters in almost exactly the same wording. From the Queen Mary ship—symbolically, writing from the water, an image of purity that is recurrently associated with the heron—Cuevas describes at length the darker forces that haunt the bird, and revealingly conceives himself as being in a similar predicament. His opening description pits "the hatred of ugliness and rot and baseness against beauty, pure, splendid and triumphant": "The diabolical game of the genie of the miasmas, aided by the putrefactive miasmas and the fatal fevers and all the emanations of rot that emerge from the base to destroy the bird of all beauty, taking as instrument the one who loves it[,] is a poetic transposition of what we see each day: opportunism, selfishness, materialism, against the

ideal" (7 Mar. 1952).[325] Cuevas's disgust is created by adjectives that pile on top of each other, in sentences that become murky themselves. The words that describe the dangers and horrors of the marsh surpass those that describe beauty. In one of his early letters to Bibesco on the subject, Cuevas explains that he wants his ballet to portray his notion of beauty and art: "If I ever have to quit, at least we will have wounded the rare bird for the enchantment of the audience who will remember having seen it die in beauty on stage" (4 Mar. 1950).[326] It is interesting to note, however, that beauty can only emerge in contrast to the repulsive.

From Madrid, two weeks before the premiere, Cuevas continues to ponder on the significance of the ballet, and explains to Bibesco how he conceives the bird's "apotheosis": "The heron that we see dead on the ground remains dead, but the symbol of the ideal, the unobtainable, the untouchable, we will continue to see triumphant[ly] immaculate in its whiteness[,] and blazing, flying over the baseness and the putridness[;] indestructible during a few seconds in the midst of the storm" (15 Jan. 1953).[327] In this narrative, the idea of beauty seems to be divorced from the body of the heron, and appears in its strongest form in death, against the filth of its context. Beauty in this agonizing—yet still living—bird remains in the appreciation of the audience, which has to imagine this death as beautiful. Cuevas seems particularly excited by the prospect of the death of the Heron, for only through her suffering can the apotheosis occur. Beauty is in this sense permanently in danger, and emerges paradoxically only in agony, and so is always short-lived.

In this same letter Cuevas compares himself to Teresa of Avila, with whom he claims to share the same sickness. Movingly, he tells Bibesco that at night he howls with pain, and describes his sufferings and medical treatments at length (15 Jan. 1953). The diseased miasmas that plague the Heron seem similar to the ones that plague him, both mentally and physically, and Cuevas delights in explaining both in great detail. The religious comparison also elevates his sufferings to stigmata; what remains is a curious obsession with the putrid side of disease, as an abject that both attracts and repels.

The curious affinity with Saint Teresa emerges in the repeated references to her sufferings in her autobiographical writings, an unbearable pain that she locates as spiritual, although it is an ache of which the body also partakes (ch. 29, sec. 13). Teresa makes use of bird imagery, an animal that resembles the human soul as it struggles to take flight; the saint suggests having confidence in one's own capacities, and emphasizes the need to aim high and to make an effort in the struggle to reach God (ch. 13, sec 1). In one of her visions, Teresa sees an angel with a flaming golden rod that he plunges repeatedly in her heart: "The pain was so great, that it made me moan[; I felt] such excessive tenderness in this great pain, that I could not desire it to stop" (ch. 29, sec. 13).[328] Bernini's famous sculpture depicting *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* captures this moment, as the saint lies prostrate, with veiled eyes and mouth open in a mixture of pleasure and rapture, as a smiling angel holds her cloak, ready to plunge an arrow in her. The invocation of pleasure in pain, and of the sublimation of death in beauty is strikingly similar to the image of the bird wounded by an arrow.

When the ballet finally premiered in Cannes on 27 February 1953, it did so under the briefer title of *L'Aigrette* (The Heron), presumably to conceal the denouement. A photograph sent to Bibesco shows Cuevas shortly before the opening, surrounded by his eager pack of Sylphides; the dedication reads: "Day of wake before the premiere of L'Aigrette" (27 Apr. 1953, fig. 23).

Fig. 23. Photograph attached to letter sent to Marthe Bibesco, written 27 April 1953: "A Marthe. Jour de veille avant première de *l'Aigrette*" (To Marthe, the day before the premiere of The Heron). 9 February 1953.

Cuevas remained unhappy about how the ballet turned out, however, and sought opportunities to refashion it. The piece modified its choreography within the first year: the ballet was re-choreographed by Victor Gsovsky for the opening at the Théâtre de l'Empire in Paris in December. Some years later he wrote to tell Marthe, "I have decided next year to do a new ballet with your plot of The Bird Wounded with a beautiful music and choreography by [Georges] Skibine. . . . We will need a new score and decoration"

(14 Aug. 1956). [329] A few months after that he wrote to say that the project had failed (9 Feb. 1957). As the ballet fell through, and the chance of finally achieving his ideal of art faded, Cuevas no longer conceived himself as a beautiful wounded bird, but rather saw himself as an "old featherless pigeon" (Letter to Bibesco, 25 Jul. 1955).

The Spleen of Paris: Mediocrity and the Ugly

For Cuevas, dance seemed to be a medium of attaining the outward beauty that he could not possess himself, and this made the Ballet's triumphs and failures even more deeply personal. During the war years, before the creation of the company, he pondered on the limits of his artistic aims: "Devoid of any other means of expression I feel mediocre and without beauty and old age distresses me because I advance in age with a heart that is too young, deprived of the exterior attraction to draw those similar to me!" (7 Sept. 1941).[330] In this light, the Ballet would offer him only intermittent solace: "I am unhappy with the Ballet, with mediocrity, with bad taste . . . with hypocrisy, with ugliness" (Letter to Bibesco, 30 Dec. 1952),[331] and then again, "The Ballet is a cross for me" (16 Nov. 1953).[332]

In fact, Cuevas's conservative views on dance meant that he was often unable to appreciate the new trends that were emerging in art. His concept of beauty was that of the European aristocracy of pre-World War I, an era of which there was only grotesque remnants in the guise of dusty ladies. To Bibesco he writes about having watched, "as a novelty," "the Japanese Ballet of Azuma Kabuki": "The dresses and the colors are out of this world—so beautiful—but the ballet itself is monotonous." Casting himself once

again as a struggling artist, he comments, "If the Rockefellers, instead of helping Balanchine and all the mediocre enterprises of certain poor artists who flatter them, would have the good will to look with indulgence at what I do in the family spirit, without rivalry… but it would be asking the impossible" (20 n.m. 1954). Balanchine did create two new choreographies for his company in 1948, but the collaboration was not meant to be of long-term fruition. The Marquis's concept of dance was essentially different from Diaghilev and his original Ballets Russes, in that he did not seek to break the mold, but rather yearned for a return to a glorious past of Imperial tradition, by presenting a finely wrought masterpiece that would appeal to the highest senses of the soul.

Cuevas had been fascinated by aesthetics and taste even before directing his ballet, as the following anecdote reveals. The famous dandy Robert de Montesquieu, who happened to be Marthe Bibesco's cousin, had written the following dedication to Cuevas in one of his books: "Young man, before your bad taste develops I will try to save you from that cancer of the spirit by having you meet people of an elite that perhaps you might never have the chance to approach" (qtd. in Cuevas, 30 Dec. 1954).[333] Throughout his life, Cuevas certainly had the opportunity to meet his fair share of exclusive society members, and a sense of traditional beauty had instilled itself in his artistic approach.

Cuevas's aesthetics are rather superficial, and never fully develop the concept of beauty, of which he spoke at length. "If I could, I would make a crusade to perpetuate beauty," he wrote to Marthe Bibesco in 1950, "You would have to teach youth to respect right, to love beauty, and to consider it a crime to make humanity uglier. . . . But modern

society destroys beautiful things, only recognizes the rights of the anonymous crowd—each individual will become an object, owned by the State, slaves of the crowd."[334] Pondering on the urban overcrowding of unhappy people, Cuevas believes that this makes for "the death of the spirit and the abasement of being to the lowest and most abject level" (22 Mar. 1950).[335] In this letter, Cuevas conceives the relationship between morality and beauty very much in the manner of the aestheticists that furthered the cause of "art for art's sake."

Cuevas's derision of modernity and mass entertainment is curious, on the one hand, because he deeply admired Paris as the greatest city in the world, and especially because he craved the excitement of the capital. In this sense, Cuevas seems to follow the tradition inspired by Baudelaire that contemporaries like Walter Benjamin picked up in his *Arcades Project*, in fragments such as the one that considers how "In Baudelaire, Paris as an emblem of antiquity contrasts with its masses as an emblem of modernity" (346). In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Benjamin seems conflicted about the notion of authenticity with regard to the work of art and how it is consumed by mass culture. Cuevas's notion of beauty comes off as essentially urban, patent in his desire to stage the company in a Parisian setting, the greatest European dance capital, above New York, which had offered him poor reception in his 1950 tour. In a letter to Bibesco he complains about the fact that Margaret does not like Paris, and diagnoses those who don't like the city as abnormal people, who lack an aesthetic compass (1954). Cuevas delighted in the reception of audiences to his ballet premieres, and was ecstatic at the warm reception received by his dancers. In this sense, his rejection

of mass entertainment is odd because the commercial side of his enterprise was also important to him and, despite the fact that it was the exclusive public of his premieres that made him the happiest, Cuevas was nonetheless keen to have mass audiences attend his show, even if his drive was to educate their taste.

Beauty for Cuevas seems also to be conceived closely to passion, as a motor for life and the arts. Indeed, in an article he confessed that temperamental outbursts vastly amused him, whether they were someone else's or his own ("Ballet Impresario"). As Hightower recalls, for the Marquis, "things had to bubble all the time. He could not stand a thing that was not bubbling, with things happening all the time around him." In his memoirs, dancer George Zoritch similarly recalls his years with the Marquis as mainly populated with the excitement of tours around the world. He recalls an energetic man at the head of the troupe, and predictably locates his passion in his exotic roots: "I recognized his temperamental personality which derived from his ancient Spanish lineage" (144). As can be gathered from his letters, Cuevas's passionate outbursts were consciously contrived. To Zosia he explained that "One is not bored when one ages pushed by passion, but when one becomes wise, which is my case, one goes out" (22 Mar. 1950).[336] Cuevas can hardly be described as having flared out in 1950, especially since the making of his grand ball still lay ahead of him. In fact, melodramatic gestures became a mode of social interaction that helped him to defy routine and the flattening effects of uniformity, ugliness and mediocrity. The following thank you note to his friend Zosia is typical of this mode of discourse: "The beautiful carnations arrived like a touch

of spring to be spread over the tombstone of my buried illusions" (9 Feb. 1942, in English in the original).

In the same way as Baudelaire posits an essential conflict between ideal and spleen, Cuevas's conception of Beauty cannot be understood except with reference to a vital dissatisfaction in his inability to achieve this artistic aim. In opposition to Beauty, Cuevas places ennui, a compound of ugliness, boredom, sadness, and mediocrity that often seemed to overwhelm him. This gloomy outlook on life was not exclusively born out of his various illnesses. To Zosia he wrote from Palm Beach, "Life is a series of sadnesses . . . that confuse themselves in a grey monotony that is very heavy to bear. . . [boredom] is the enemy of the soul. In hell boredom must reign as the supreme punishment for those who were uncharitable" (16 Jan. 1937).[337] The sentiment echoes Lord Henry Wotton's words in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which encapsulates his cynical moral code: "The only horrible thing in the world is ennui, Dorian. That is the one sin for which there is no forgiveness" (223). The Wildean reference seems particularly appropriate, since the aestheticist writer, like Cuevas, also delighted in fighting the pedestrian with imaginative embellishments. Indeed, Rosella Hightower remembers Cuevas's deep passion for fictionalizing the accounts of his life and, like Wilde, for amusing his audience in a gathering, often with self-deprecating humor: "[The Marquis] loved stories; he loved telling stories. . . Stories of himself, many times. But most of the humorous stories were at his own expense." Hightower remembered his eloquence and his capacity to attract audiences, whatever the venue, topic or interlocutor:

"any place he could walk into, no matter where it was, within five minutes, he was the center of attention. And it was the center of attention that he could hold."

Skibine renders homage to the moral integrity and deep humanity of Cuevas, and argued that this was a fatal flaw in his artistic work: "maybe [he was] not a great director, but [he was] a wonderful man. . . . He wouldn't desert you, which is not very good for a director. . . to me he was a human being of remarkable achievements, perhaps one of the warmest, kindest friends I ever enjoyed. . . . The Marquis also inspired the love of a son for his father in me." The sentiment is once again quite Wildean; Lord Henry would put forward the idea that only lesser artists are personally interesting: "The only artists I have ever known who are personally delightful are bad artists. Good artists exist simply in what they make, and consequently are perfectly uninteresting in what they are" (63). Cuevas's very humanity is what emerges in his letters; it is the frustration of a writer whose poetic flights of fancy become comically grotesque in their self-conscious exaggeration.

The comic often appears in his letters, even if the tone remains ambiguous, and the reader cannot know for certain whether Cuevas is being tongue-in-cheek. To Joaquín Edwards Bello's sister he offers insightful assessments on the vices of the Chilean colony in Paris that are delightfully humorous:

> Chileans, of whom I see very little, remain the same. Baby [Eugenia] Errázuriz furious at not finding a millionaire willing to expiate his sins by joining her in marriage. Inés Granier, like an arrogant Diuca bird, protests in the loneliness of her boudoir that the present generation does not

> recognize in her the reincarnation of Mme. Recamier. María Luisa Mac Clure is indignant that the French have not created a special law that allows them to elect [her son] Agustín [Edwards Mac Clure] as president of France. Oh well, each one frets and worries about a different concern and one is better off far away from the whirlpool of petty agitations.[338]

The note is ironic as well in how Cuevas seems to distance himself from this snobbish group of Chileans, even as he rubs elbows with European aristocratic female friends, and persistently offers them his own particular assortment of "petty agitations."

The Art of Dying and the Self in Pain

In his letters to Bibesco, Cuevas's complaints often acquire poetic qualities that must be considered with respect to the literary ambitions of his youth. "I am not in the habit of complaining," he writes to Marthe, "but in order for you to excuse me, I have to explain to you the reasons of my somber crepuscule enveloped by butterflies that precede the endless night" (29 Jul. 1958).[339] The apology is hardly sincere, for Cuevas's complaints were colorful, recurrent, and manifold.

One of the recurring grievances was the financial burden of the Ballet. Despite its higher than average budget, the company was not devoid of economic strain, and many of the letters that the Marquis sent to Bibesco dwell on its increasing losses. From his Ville des Delices (Villa of Delights) in Cannes he writes to Marthe, his "Dearest Muse": "It is horrible to be an old invalid and to have the imagination aflame. . . . I get depressed thinking of the material difficulties for achieving the fantasies I dream up in my

solitude." As an amusing afterthought, he adds in deadpan: "I owe it to myself to be a billionaire and instead I am a beggar" (14 Feb. 1955).[340] Despite being married to Margaret Rockefeller, he felt that his fortune was not enough to accomplish his grandiose dreams. As an article on his death pointed out, Cuevas was especially known for proclaiming the motif of "misery dressed in mink" (Herisse).[341] As Marie de Freedericksz-Kiriloff recalls, Cuevas actually acted out the part of the beggar, often wearing a frayed shirt, so that when people asked him for money, he could point to it and say "Look at the state I am in, I don't even have money to buy myself a shirt" (qtd. in *Le bal du siècle*).[342]

According to Calderón, this repeated financial complaint was an acting strategy that had been identified by friends such as Joaquín Edwards Bello, and that Cuevas started performing while in Chile, where he "played the role of abnegated poor in the Santiago operetta of the first decade of the century, masking the pain of not having been born in an aristocratic cradle" (9).[343] Edwards Bello argues that this austerity "left strong imprints that later serve as the engines to withdraw from the humiliating world and fly towards new heights" ("El marqués de Cuevas" 20).[344] Indeed, the author understands Cuevas's rise from rags to riches as that of a fairy tale of the "Ceniciento" or "Cinderfellow" (19), a motif that has already been discussed in the previous chapter. The financial ruin of the family was an early obsession, as evidenced in his novel *El amigo Jacques*, which dealt with the attempt of two siblings to emerge in society after their father dies and leaves them penniless.

Despite the lifelong pose of bemoaning his status as outsider, by the 1940s Cuevas had undeniably become part of the envied social elite to which he had aspired as a boy. In a contemporary article on Parisian snobs, Lorenzo Bocchi reflected on how society's language and references changed from season to season: "To demonstrate the quality of their relations, the 'snob' no longer lets falls in the conversation, as if carelessly, the name of the Marquis de Cuevas, for instance, but rather obtains assured success by saying, with the same indifference: 'Vigorio is in Cannes.' Vigorio is the name of the Marquis's parrot."[345]

In his letters Cuevas sometimes let on that he knew how to manipulate the weaknesses in others to his own advantage. Faced with being financially cut off by Rockefeller senior, he tells Zosia that he calmly signed a check with insufficient funds in Paris, and telegraphed the Family to indicate that he was in danger of going to prison, upon which he promptly received resources, a tactic of which his wife Margaret had approved (28 Jan. 1937). Company members perceived similar panic schemes used on the Marchesa; in need of money, Cuevas would suddenly fall ill and say to her "I'm dying!" and money would promptly arrive (Skibine). As his obituary noted, Cuevas liked to play the character of Volpone to his relatives (Dariel). The name of the main character in Ben Jonson's satire on greed and lust literally translates in Italian as sly fox. The wealthy Volpone pretends to be dying in order to fool three men who covet his money into sending him gifts. Volpone's servant Mosca (Fly in Italian) describes the cynical worldview that he shares with his master: "All the wise world is little else, in nature, /

But parasites, or sub-parasites" (3.1). Although Volpone is not alone in his immorality, the association with Cuevas remains unflattering.

Appealing to the compassion of his addressee often signified that Cuevas portrayed himself as being dangerously ill, if not directly on the verge of death. Even before the onset of old age and infirmity, Cuevas used the medium of the letter to inform his friends and acquaintances of his physical ailments. In an undated letter sent to Joaquín Edwards Bello's sister, he writes at length about his "nephritic attack" which has left him bed-ridden for two months. He complains about having greatly suffered, but also uses a self-consciously humorous tone to render the drama of the situation: "Seven doctors saw me and there were several summits. Happily it is all over with no other disagreeable consequence but the medical bills."[346] As was often the case, physical complaints came coupled with financial distress. On a later occasion, aware that only agony captures his wife's notice, he reveals to Bibesco that "Margaret left when the doctors told her that there was no longer any danger of death" (18 Jan. 1955).[347] The desire to capture the attention of his audience also notably motivated his refusal to comply with the request of lending the historical bed of Madame de Pompadour for a museum photograph; Cuevas had argued "that he couldn't sleep in any bed but Pompadour's" (Cassini, 19 Feb. 1954).

Many of Cuevas's letters in fact read as a medical update. Significantly, even when healthy Cuevas manages to consider his self negatively in terms of lack of sickness, as in the amusing opening sentences in his letter to Zosia, from Rome: "Margaret has the flu. I don't" (8 Jan. 1937).[348] Crucially, for Kristeva, "Suffering [is] the place of the subject. Where it emerges, where it is differentiated from chaos." Self is crystalized

through suffering, so that "Being [is] ill-being" (140), a fact that Cuevas illustrates in the way he constructs his subjectivity in letters.

Health reports were not restricted to close friends, a fact that seems to point to the sick body both as a neutral topic of conversation and as a way to create a bond with the other person, through pity and sympathy. In his letters to Felia Doubrovska, a Russian ballerina who acted as Ballet Mistress to the company, Cuevas's tone indicates a cordial familiarity; thanking Felia for her flowers, he explains that they offer a respite to the "weakness caused by penicillin" (3 May 1947);[349] in a later letter Cuevas shares the name of the vitamins he takes and suggests she and her husband take them too (1956).

In the passages quoted above, Cuevas discards gender identity in favor of the common denominator of suffering, passion, and death. Interestingly, Kristeva conceives the "theme of suffering-horror [as] the ultimate evidence of such states of abjection within a narrative representation"; it is a moment of crisis, when "narrative identity is unbearable, [and] the boundary between the subject and object is shaken" (141). For Covino,

> The alienation of pain (from the self) and the objectification of pain (as diagnosis) are psychotherapeutic counterparts for the sufferer seeking relief. Diagnostic objectification, the means by which the sufferer brings pain into the external, and potentially curative, world of cause and effect, is also the means by which she psychologically makes pain alien. (23)

In this light, Cuevas's cries of agony function as a way to make pain alien by having other people acknowledge it and thus objectify it. This objectification echoes Cuevas's

youthful description of the dragon, where he is both subject and object of the struggle. This mechanism also seems to work when Cuevas embellishes his sufferings, thus turning his pain into an object by placing it in the realm of the aesthetic.

To Zosia Cuevas reveals that his health problems might well be mental: "I don't feel well. But when am I feeling well? It is the spirit who is ill and not the body" (9 Mar. 1938). Appropriately, an article on Cuevas's costume ball described the host as "an insatiable man, savoring as a gourmet each joy of his existence and suffering, according to his doctor, of a sickness called 'intensity'" (Craven).[350] The miseries caused by illnesses often seem genuine, but it is hard to conceive of the degree of accuracy in his letters, especially when considering the extended tours of his ballet company and the number of parties he attended, as per press reports. In 1946, well before the onset of cancer, Cuevas wrote to Sergei Ismailoff about his life-threatening bout of pneumonia, which left him in a 15-day coma. Apparently, the doctors had sentenced him to death, and proclaimed his will to live as sole reason for his survival (27 Aug. 1946). If previous letters are to be considered as paradigmatic, however, the Marquis's will to live is hardly to be described as robust.

Closely connected to illness is the frequent lamentation of old age, which had been haunting Cuevas for many years. Aestheticists such as Wilde would equate beauty to youth and make aging a "tragedy" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 237). Wilde was obsessed with the topic and on his birthdays would dress in mourning clothes to grieve for the passing of another year (Redman 167). Similarly, Cuevas often dwelt on the irretrievability of time passing: "I feel the weight of the centuries. Perhaps I was dragged

into this world from one of these mummies in the Cairo museum that so impressed me. Perhaps I lived with Felix on the borders of the Nile. What might I have been? A dog, crocodile? Priest, courtesan? Magistrate, or black slave? (Letter to Kochanski, 20 Feb. 1937).[351] The complaint was a recurrent one: "I am getting old, Zoshinka, and I can't forgive myself. I am adrift" (24 Aug. 1941).[352] Interestingly, Cuevas conceives of the ugliness of old age as a moral sin that he has committed, bringing Wilde's aestheticist claims once more to mind.

Upon visiting 86-year-old Infanta Eulalia, a member of the Spanish royal family, Cuevas wrote to Bibesco: "What a beautiful statue! I had never found her pretty, but age has given her something impalpable, an elusive fineness, and the blue turquoise of her eyes were so brilliant that I was fascinated".[353] Bibesco herself notes on the envelope to this letter: "marvelous letter on the subject of the Infante,"[354] a comment that offers a glimpse as to how Bibesco might have received Cuevas's letters. The writer seems to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the anecdote as told by Cuevas, and otherwise remains silent on the subject of his health complaints. Evidently, Cuevas aimed at entertaining his addressee, but this eulogizing comment about the aristocracy works also as a way to soothe Cuevas's anxieties, and possibly Bibesco's own. For one, the Infanta is seen as being redeemed by old age; additionally, by rendering a written homage, he preserves Eulalia from the oblivion that was also threatening him. Although certainly younger than the Infanta, he was also starting to feel death hounding him, as he repeatedly states in his letters. Indeed, the decadence of his aristocratic friends violently confronts Cuevas with his own demise.

The relatable issue of mortality offered an element over which to bond with these older women whose erotic charm had worn off. What is at stake in this notion of mortality is not the Romantic notion of dying young, but the Decadent dandy's preoccupation with outliving one's beauty. Cuevas often pointed out to his interlocutor the way in which they were similar, and this was often in the flaws that he could see in himself. In this sense, the recipient of his letters acts as a mirror. To Zosia he writes that, "Despite my age and experiences, I have learnt nothing from life, and that is my great error. It is also yours!" (17 Sept. n.y.).[355] At bottom, he shared with his reader the realization that he was becoming irrelevant, and that the younger generation would not hear his voice. In an interview for French television, Cuevas shows off his black Pekinese, Monsieur, and explains that the dog is getting old and feels jealous of the young Boubou—the camera pans to a white Pekinese lying contentedly on the carpet—: "[Monsieur] is afraid of youth. He knows that youth is cruel, indifferent, and cold" (qtd. in *Le Bal du siècle*).[356] The Marquis's tone shows no trace of irony in his assertion, but straightforwardly displaces his own views onto his pet, who he regards as the most loyal of his entourage. The concern echoes Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the eternally young Dorian Gray is presented as increasingly cold and indifferent.

In fact, as Cuevas grew older his disillusionment in life became more directly linked to a sense of general bitterness about the betrayal of his friends. In a letter to Bibesco he goes off on a deeply pessimistic tirade on how he has always known that his society friends could not be trusted: "I have always gone forward in life with my eyes open and I knew deep down the truth and that in the balance I have never had the weight

to count for my friends who were fascinated with the great ones of the world, and it was only out of politeness that I have pretended to believe in them." There is no overt trigger for the sour comment, although one can guess that he felt he was losing his social attractiveness. Drawing once again from his pool of financial metaphors, Cuevas offers an analogy between the suffering created by a selfish friendship to "capital placed in a bad investment . . . [where] one falls into debt to save the sums [invested]." The earnestness of his passion ends rather abruptly in this letter. At the end of the page, Cuevas indicates succinctly in a tiny script: "I don't have any more paper left" (29 Nov. 1957).[357]

In another letter where he proclaims Marthe as "[his] only friend,"[358] he dedicates a paragraph to considering the loyalty of his favorite dogs. Photographer Robert Doisneau captured the Marquis next to the open door of his car, out of which peer the legion of Pekinese that never left his side (see fig. 24). It was clear that his dogs were a priority: in Paris Cuevas awaited the arrival of his wife, and in a letter explains to Bibesco that he could not go to England to receive her because one of his Pekinese dogs was getting old: "Boubou's heart is tired . . . I would not like him to notice my absence when the supreme moment arrives for him" (22 Jun. 1958).[359]

Fig. 24. Photograph taken by Robert Doisneau of Cuevas and his dogs.

Cuevas's thoughts were often morbid, and he had been trumpeting his near-death experiences for several decades. In 1950 he had written from London to tell Bibesco that he had been very ill from unknown causes: "three doctors disagree. . . . Great alarm around me. But I remain very calm because I think that one must feel death approaching, and I don't fear it because I don't feel it coming" (4 Feb. 1950).[360] In the same letters he tells the story of the appointment of Death at Ispahan:

> Do you remember the story of the Shah who is strolling among his roses and is approached by one of the most handsome and favorite of the

> handsome young men of his court who tells him: Sire, lend me the lightest and swiftest of your horses to get to my house in Ispahan.
>
> Why my son, asks the Shah.
>
> Because, Sire, I have just found death who has frightened me with a menacing look.
>
> The Shah, attempting to calm him down, signed an order for his squire to give his young friend one of his saddles.
>
> When the young man left, the Shah continued his lonely promenade, and, very saddened after this incident, was surprised to see death coming, and when she approached him he seized the moment to tell her: Why did you threaten my young page, was it to scare him?
>
> Sire, answers the implacable one: I did not want to frighten him or threaten him. I had received orders to take him tonight at Ispahan and I looked at him in surprise to find him so far away.[361]

Although Somerset Maugham had famously retold this tale in 1933, which in turn had inspired John O'Hara's novel *Appointment in Samarra* the following year, the original source can be traced to the Babylonian Talmud (Friedman). Cuevas's retelling changes the name of the city, while the main characters are not a Baghdad merchant and his servant, but the Shah and one of his male entourage, in a homoerotic reimagining of the story. Interestingly, the redundant style of the initial sentence, which emphasizes *beaux* (beautiful or handsome) twice, shows the improvised nature of Cuevas's writing. There do not seem to be any revisions made to the letter, either for punctuation or grammar

structure, and the story appears to be one that Cuevas thinks about often. In fact, the visit of Death as an anthropomorphic creature is recurrent. A few months later, from the site of his New York tour, Cuevas wrote to Marthe that he no longer had the strength "to escape the implacable mind of the dark seraphims of destiny" (22 Apr. 1950).[362] On another occasion he complains that his time is passed in waiting: "I spend my days waiting, for Margaret de Cuevas, Orphée [his butler], or death. You see my darling that as a programme mine is full" (1954).[363] The Orpheus character might very well have been a reference to Cocteau's surrealist revision of the myth, a hallucinatory exploration of the boundaries between life and death, and a meditation on the eros/thanatos relationship, as Orphée falls in love with death. Cuevas partakes in this contradictory relationship by conceiving his butler, who guards the entrance to his apartment, as a mythological musician who welcomes visitors into another realm.

As seen in the previous chapter, performing death was a common game with Cuevas, and the subject apparently also permeated his decorating choices. For dancer Agnes de Mille Cuevas's bedroom had "the air of a crypt made cozy with superstition" (124). In this sense, Cuevas's realm appears as another version of Cocteau's underworld. The static quality of the room also recalls the suffocating mansion to which Des Esseintes retreats in his misanthropic fit. That vanity had certainly to do with this obsession with death can be perceived by a morbid joke he had made in 1955, when he had announced his demise to see who would mourn him (Herisse). A year before his death he recounted the following meeting: "I saw death all in black enter my bedroom . . . I told her, 'Good

night, death' and she answered 'Good night, Marquis'. But I frightened her and she flew away" (qtd. in Dariel).[364]

Reports of narrow brushes with death appear in the press throughout the years, lending an aura of charm to Cuevas. When the troupe was in London, the Marquis had dropped by for a surprise visit during his holidays. Apparently, Cuevas "was booked to return to France aboard the ill-fated Comet Airliner that crashed off the isle of Elba. Instead he returned by Pan American from Rome" ("Marquis's Ballet in London"). In October of that same year, he was struck by a taxi while walking along Rue de l'Université in Paris, an accident in which he fractured his right leg and received several head injuries ("De Cuevas, Ballet Producer" 19). The press mentions that Cuevas was suffering from a "lung ailment" as early as 1955 (Cassini, 24 June, 8), and two years later the Marquis was no longer accepting invitations to attend parties, supervising rehearsals from his chamber (see fig. 25), and remaining much of his time presumably in Madame de Pompadour's bed.

Fig. 25. Still from newsreel for *British Pathé* showing Cuevas surrounded by his star dancer Colette Machand and other ballerinas from his company ("Parisian Life").

A Quixotic Duel

In 1958 Cuevas got up from bed to participate in a particularly picturesque conflict that stemmed once more from his passionate nature and perhaps from a desire for publicity, which enacted a playful meeting with death. Next to the costume party in Biarritz, the other high profile anecdote for which Cuevas is remembered is this *epée* duel with choreographer Serge Lifar. Lifar, unhappy with the liberties taken with his ballet *Black and White*, entered into a dispute with Cuevas, which ended with Lifar, 52, challenging Cuevas, 73, to a duel. The affair can be read as yet another ironic intervention in post-Romantic posing, which takes up the familiar tropes of honor and masculinity but offers a parodic twist to their significance.

There are conflicting stories about what prompted the duel. The Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas had previously staged Lifar's *Suite en blanc* (Suite in White) under the title *Noir et Blanc* (Black and White), a piece that had been absorbed into the repertory when Cuevas took over the Ballet de Monte Carlo (Crisp 9). To open the 1958 season at the Champs-Elysées Theatre in Paris the company had wanted to show this choreography, but the work was also in repertoire at the Paris Opéra, where Lifar was now Director. Some versions argue that Cuevas had not asked for permission to perform it in Paris; an alternate version establishes that Lifar was upset over the extent of the alterations done to his choreography. Half an hour before the beginning of the performance, Cuevas went before his audience and explained: "I am ignoring the interdiction [to present this forbidden ballet] in your honor. I am American and my company is American and I believed that France was free. I was mistaken. It is not the

fault of France, but of one Frenchman" ("Serge Lifar Slaps Marquis de Cuevas"). Whatever the case, the day of the opening, a confrontation erupted between Lifar and Marquis backstage at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. Lifar threw his handkerchief at the Marquis' feet. De Cuevas picked it up and flung it at Lifar's face, which some media reported as a "slap." It was initially speculated that the case would go to court ("Serge Lifar Slaps Marquis de Cuevas"), but the resolution of the conflict was much more colorful.

A certain tension had existed between Lifar and Cuevas, dating back to when the choreographer had left the Monte Carlo Ballet and been replaced by Bronislava Nijinska ("Lifar Out as Head of Ballet Monte Carlo in Tiff with De Cuevas"). The men remained on friendly terms, however, as shown by a photograph taken backstage at a previous Paris season, where Lifar's hand and chin rests on Cuevas's shoulder, as the latter greets Rosella Hightower ("The De Cuevas Ballet" 37). In truth, Lifar had a reputation for having a conflicting personality, and had also challenged choreographer Léonide Massine to a duel in 1938, when the latter had failed to comply with his request to cut a rival dancer's variation from a ballet. The confrontation had ended rather less spectacularly when Massine responded, "Go take an aspirin, Serge" (qtd. in L. Norton 43).

Ultimately, both Cuevas and Lifar took advantage of the event, and were photographed taking fencing lessons ("Ballet Foes Sharpening Up for Epée Duel"). Although duels were manifestly forbidden in France, and the event was proclaimed to be a secret, about one hundred local villagers and photographers were present for the duel, which took place on the estate of Dr. Chales Levasseur, in the Village of Blaru, fifty

miles west of Paris on 30 March 1958. Newspapers rightfully treated the whole as a staged spectacle, and reviewed the actors, costumes, visual effects, and script. Dueling attires were closely examined (Cuevas wore a checked scarf, yellow shirt, red tie and sky-blue overcoat; Lifar, a subdued navy blue suit and overcoat), as where the entrances (Cuevas in a silver Bentley limousine; Lifar in a flashy Goldini racing car) (Valery). Lifar's seconds were two principal dancers from the Opéra, while Cuevas's seconds were the manager of the Théâtre des Champs Elysées and owner of the grounds, Dr. Charles Levasseur, and Jean-Marie Le Pen, the extreme right wing politician, whose link to Cuevas remains obscure (see fig. 26).[365]

Fig. 26. Cuevas and Lifar during the duel. Behind Cuevas, to the left, Jean-Marie Le Pen, one of his witnesses ("Serge Lifar").

The duel itself was likened to a choreographic endeavor. Lifar seemingly danced in front of his adversary, while the Marquis "remained more or less stationary" (Blair). The effect was contradictory, given how dance and vitality were connected in Cuevas's mind. The *New York Herald Tribune* remarked, in turn, that, "The duel looked something like a ballet written by Mr. Lifar and staged by the seventy-three-year-old Marquis"

("Marquis vs. Balletmaster"). Seconds had agreed on rounds with four-minute rests, instead of the usual two, because the Marquis's heart was beating too fast. "In the third 'round' the Marquis forced M. Lifar back by simply advancing with his sword held out straight in front of him" (Blair). In the fourth round, as Lifar raised his epée to do a "theatrical flourish," the "Marquis had seized his moment" and grazed Lifar's arm (Crisp 10). As one article put it, given the men's fatigue, "it was not clear whether skill or accident brought the Marquis' blade into contact with M. Lifar's arm" (Blair). Upon the sight of blood, Lifar had apparently cried, "Blood has showed! Honor is saved!" (qtd. in Blair).

Cuevas's triumph was surprising, and Lifar would declare that he was "astonished to find such a strong foe in front of [him]," adding, "I was deeply moved too, at seeing my Marquis thrusting his epee at me" ("Marquis vs. Balletmaster"). The Marquis, in turn, reportedly wept, saying, "It is like piercing my own son" (qtd. in Crisp 10). The *New York Times* ironically described the event as "the most delicate encounter in the history of French dueling" (Blair).

Thus, the ten-day feud was resolved, and Cuevas's season continued with *Black and White* in its repertory (Crisp 10). Interviewed a few hours before the duel, Cuevas had announced that he had been working much of the night on a new ballet to be called "The Duel," adding that, "Lifar, naturally, will be the choreographer" (qtd. in Blair).

Once more, like for his extravagant ball, Cuevas was making headlines not for his artistic accomplishments but for his outlandish antics. From Cuba, Chilean ambassador Emilio Edwards Bello wrote to his brother Joaquín that, "undoubtedly, they [Lifar and

Cuevas] have reached the paroxysm of ridicule" (3 Apr. 1958).[366] In another letter Emilio attaches some clippings from *The Washington Post* for his brother to "see how this has been a world scandal" (10 Apr. 1958).[367]

In his private notebook, Cuevas had conceived of heroism as resignation, which was also the heroism of old age: "Constant patience is heroism in permanence" (qtd. in Daguerre 55).[368] As has been seen by his early defeatist attitude as a child, however, this notion of resignation was not solely predicated on old age, but became a sweeping worldview. Indeed, the only time Cuevas literally took up arms was when he was already too old to be held to the standard of dragon-slaying hero, when even holding a weapon took on an aura of miraculous masculinity. Reports like the one sent by Emilio Edwards show that Cuevas's duel had acquired legendary proportions, and its parodic impulse queered the concept of heroism, honor, and masculinity.

Duels had historically been the privilege of aristocratic men. As McNamara argues, "To duel was to accept that both parties were—and could be—possessed of honor, and honor was, self-evidently to those involved, premised upon the superiority of the upper classes" (McNamara 47). Thus, the duel between Lifar and Cuevas appeared to mock these traditions. Lifar came from a wealthy bourgeois family in the Ukraine, whereas Cuevas's aristocratic background remained dubious. If, like McNamara argues, the duel was a way to test "the boundaries of aristocratic community" (47), then Lifar and Cuevas seemed to show that these aristocratic boundaries were permeable and perhaps non-existent. Illustrative of this is how, after the duel was over, journalists took up arms and engaged in mock duels themselves, as seen in news reel of the event (Shlager7).

Cuevas offers a glimpse as to what his notion of honor might have entailed in the following epigrammatic reflection: "The pursuit of an ideal creates heroes" (qtd. in Daguerre 48).[369] Further thoughts on the importance of treading a path beset with difficulties, also give a sense of how Cuevas considered his own life essentially heroic: "Easy life makes us puerile. It is in the ruthlessness of battle that the soul is satisfied and our being can rejoice" (qtd. in Daguerre 51).[370] In this duel over the rights of the ballet, Cuevas had played the hero in pursuit of an ideal, but had come off as rather ridiculous one in the eyes of the world. In a letter to Bibesco the following year he portrayed himself as a decaying hero: "Your Cid crumbles like an ancient stone thrown by the hurricane against an arid soil, and discarded" (18 May 1959).[371] The Castilian medieval epic poem of *The Cid* tells the story of the exile of a knight, who is unjustly accused of betraying his king, and fights in the crusades to regain his honor. After returning from Geneva, where Cuevas accepted a gold plaque for best ballet ensemble, he wrote to Bibesco on the hollowness of accolades: "I was born for all else but honor. Or perhaps my conception of honor differs from that of humanity in general." The statement can be attributed to false modesty, but it also contains traces of self-recrimination that seem to hint at Cuevas's usual concern with his mediocrity—the Ballet here acting as an extension of his accomplishments. On another occasion of glory he had similarly written to Marthe: "the triumph of the troupe everywhere it passes is a balm for the wounds. . . . I was acclaimed at the great inauguration of d'Annecy. I had to speak… and afterwards, the confrontation with oneself when the candles are put out, what emptiness!" (18 Jul. 1955).[372]

By imagining himself as a hero, and covering himself with the praise of the Ballet, Cuevas attempted to stave off the increasing suspicion that death was at his door, even as his bed-ridden immobility admitted to the nearness of death. The wound he had opened in his adversary uncannily exposed instead the wound that had opened in his own body.

The Open Wound

A few months before, Cuevas had begun his letter by announcing to Bibesco: "I am finished! I have gangrene in my lung. I am condemned and if I were not so ancient, I would have the top part of my right lung amputated, but I would not resist the operation and thus have to live with the constant menace."[373] The lung ailment, possibly cancer, that had been reported in the press two years before now seemed to have grown irreversibly. Cuevas's initial statement of shock turns into a lengthy description of how this wound is treated: "The most disagreeable is that without the use of streptomycin one reeks. I knew how to create a ventilation tube for my lung through the mouth and the stench pleased me. A foretaste of death. I did not know myself and did not know that I could be pleased with rot" (8 Dec. 1957).[374] Kristeva's abject, which had been hinted at in the balletic form of the deadly miasmas of the swamps and marshes, appears here in full-fledged form. Cuevas is both horrified and fascinated by this reeking open wound, and inhales its stench almost with joy.

It is Cuevas's own body that is eating him from the inside out, and taking control over his clean and polished self. A few years later he seems struck by the violence

wrought upon his body: "spontaneous fractures have broken my ribs . . . a cervical arthritis holds my right arm and my hand victim to the paralyzed nerves that revolt" (18 May 1959).[375] The famous portrait painted by Salvador Dalí in 1942 shows Cuevas resting his strange-looking hand over his arm, as if anticipating this nervous paralysis. Dalí's *Portrait of Marquis George de Cuevas* was created when the painter was visiting Cuevas in his Palm Beach residence (see fig. 27). Apparently, Cuevas was part of The Zodiac Group, a circle of 12 patrons who supported Dalí; in return, Dalí stayed at their homes and painted their portraits (Sjostrom). Cuevas's hands are shown to be "disproportionately large and sinewy," which Dalí explained by the fact that "Cuevas is stronger than people think he is." Instead, Cuevas light-heartedly remarked that they seemed to him to be "the hand of a murderer" (qtd. in Braggiotti). The murdering hand seen by Cuevas is instead symbolic of the arthritic hand of which he would complain later, and perhaps also show how, in the rhetoric of cancer, the disease is caused by the patient himself, as if the body were murdering itself (Sontag 47).

Fig. 27. *Portrait of Marquis George de Cuevas* by Salvador Dalí. 1942 oil on canvas. Private collection.

According to curator Jerry Dobrick, the painting, which shows the master in top form, offers some of his recurring motifs, such as that of a figure in a desert landscape, and a staircase leading nowhere (Sjostrom). Cuevas's portrait shows him standing next to a cypress tree, which the director had chosen as his favorite. Dalí had sentenced that the tree was a particularly appropriate choice, since it represents "The impulse to the infinite." Nearby, this illusory infinity becomes ambiguous, given the crouching figure in the background, which for Dalí represented a corpse of Cuevas's youth mourning the passing of time. The image curiously summons Whitman's poem "O living always—always dying!" in which, in ambiguously joyful lines, the poet extols "those corpses of [himself]," which allow him to continue to live; in Kristeva's conception, it is "the

jettisoned object" (2). In this case, it is as though Cuevas were, like Whitman, "disengage[ing]" himself of those corpses of his youth, or shedding (younger) skin.

The painting by Dalí seems to be quoting Arnold Böcklin's popular *Isola dei Morti* (The Isle of the Dead, see fig. 28), which shows a mysterious island surrounded by water, with a structure carved into its stone boulders, encircling a group of cypress trees. The cypress is a classical symbol of mourning, recounted in Ovid's myth of Kyparissos, who was transformed into a cypress by Apollo, for his inconsolable grief over accidentally shooting his favorite stag, curiously reinforcing the death by arrow motif. Ovid also associates the story to the grief of Orpheus, who narrates the tale of Kyparissos, and compares it to his own sadness at having lost Eurydice. The cypress thus became a symbol "associated with grief, mourning and the Underworld, but also with transition and transformation" (Rhind 195). The evergreen quality of its branches, as well as its prevalence in graveyards thus makes the tree particularly appropriate as an image to match the bird's malleable, yet enduring qualities, as seen in the Heron, and the Phoenix.

Fig. 28. *Isola dei Morti* by Arnold Böcklin. "Basel" version, 1880.

The encounter with the abject is particularly present in the letters of Cuevas's final years, which often acquire a violence that threatens to overpower the writer's placid resignation. Upset by how the Soviets have sent Laika the dog to die in space, Cuevas ponders on the stupidity of both sides in the Cold War:

> [I am] curious to know whether in this duel to the death between East and West, America, after moral and material suffering, will become cultivated. I doubt it. One would need to destroy everything, kill everyone starting with the Rockefellers and then re-people that vast continent with all the new poor people in Europe. I would not have the time to start the massacre. A pity! (11 Nov. [1957])[376]

This violent description seems to emerge as a point where the subject loses itself in desire, in *want*—which for Kristeva is inseparable from aggression (39). In this light, "the most destructive aggressivity suddenly shows its abominable, sickly side, within an infernal jouissance" (153). The fragility on display here is perhaps not the thought of premeditated crime, but rather the crumbling of Cuevas's own image of elegance and vivacious restraint. Cuevas immediately apologizes for the brutal image he has conceived, and suggests that penicillin, "makes [him] aggressive." A biography on the Rockefeller women points to the onset of senility, and argues that "George's strange behavior during these final years suggests he had lost full control of his mental faculties and was vulnerable to others' manipulation" (Stasz 304). Cuevas seems to regain lucidity at the end of the letter, however, excusing his words as silly delusions. Thus, although senility momentarily blurs the boundaries of self, as the haze of anger lifts, the self rejects

the violent image in order to continue to subsist.

Cuevas's final ballet, *Sleeping Beauty,* where death is represented as sleep, offered a last attempt to combat the abject loss of self, through the aesthetic image of death as other. Cuevas conceived this production as "his testament" (Bibesco), even if at the time of his creation, he was far too sick to participate actively. Towards the end of the decade, the precious style of the company seemed slightly outdated, and the achievements of the Royal Ballet, the arrival of the New York City Ballet founded by George Balanchine, and the Moscow Bolshoi Ballet distracted audiences from Cuevas's company (Crisp 7). The fashion of the times was changing, and the sumptuous *Sleeping Beauty* was to be the Ballet's final grandiose performance.

The Sleeping Beauty: Cuevas's Meeting with Death

The Cuevas Ballet had staged divertissements from Marius Petipa's choreography of *Sleeping Beauty* in an adaptation by John Taras for its American debut in 1950. Ten years later, the troupe would broach the full-length three-act Tchaikovsky ballet, an ambitious project that was to be Cuevas's last production. The extravagant *Sleeping Beauty* lasted three and a half hours, and cost about 200 thousand dollars; to produce it Cuevas had to sell his apartment at Quai Voltaire (Herisse).

The choreography was in charge of the demanding Bronislava Nijinska, who had been very significant in the history of the company. Nijinska had rehearsed the ballet for one full year, and travelled on tours to mount a choreography that mostly preserved the original steps by Petipa, but added sections of her own creation. Raymundo (de) Larraín

designed the expensive costumes that included gold brocade and Dior confection. Larraín was a Chilean who came from a prominent family, and who had become Cuevas's protégé in Paris. Hugh Vickers argues that "he was in fact a Chilean gigolo, and one of Cuevas's boyfriends" (qtd. in Kavanagh 125), although Cuevas's daughter Elizabeth, commented that Larraín was not her father's "type" (Telephone Interview). Often introduced as his "nephew," Larraín was a polarizing figure, who upon Cuevas's death would court and marry Cuevas's widow, Margaret, his senior by many years, and, upon her demise, would get involved with her children in a messy lawsuit over her legacy. His growing influence within the Ballet during Cuevas's final years was seen with distrust by some of the older collaborators, and his administration remained controversial.

Towards the end of the rehearsal process of *Sleeping Beauty*, the dancers realized that the choreography conflicted with the costumes designed by Larraín, which did not allow them to move freely. A heated argument led to Nijinksa asking her name to be removed from the program. The Marquis, in despair, asked Robert Helpmann from the Royal Ballet in London to restage the work. *Sleeping Beauty* premiered on 27 October 1960 in Monte Carlo and opened to generally good reviews. According to George Zoritch, the choreographic results were not very interesting, but "the ballet costumes became the talk of the town" (154-5). The young, newly arrived Rudolf Nureyev—on tour with the Kirov Ballet—saw Cuevas's last production, and would be critical of "the elaborate designs [, which he found] distracting" (Kavanagh 125). Figure 29 shows the costumes of the protagonists; especially noteworthy is the camp attire for Carabosse, complete with a bone-framed skirt and a crown of feathers.

Fig. 29. *Sleeping Beauty* photograph showing Carabosse (Olga Abadache), Prince Aurora (Rosella Hightower) and Prince Florimund (Nicolas Poiajenko) (Agence de Presse Bernard).

Intermittently feverish and mostly bed-ridden, Cuevas depended for his information on the people who came to visit him and on the letters he received. He did attend some rehearsals, and at one had exclaimed, while lying almost immobile from his sofa, "It is I who direct the company. I will do so till the end. If necessary, I shall die in the *coulisses*'" (Rode). In an interview given before the premiere, Cuevas looked sickly and much older. He spoke in an infirm voice to deny rumors that he had resigned to the company. To this he added, defiantly, in a frail voice: "I do not intend to die. I fight to remain among you."[377] Liane Daydé, the young female dancer who is next to him, kisses the marquis on the cheek and tells him that she and her partner will give him all of their youth ("La danseuse étoile").

Cuevas was very sick when he attended the premiere of the ballet at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées; he watched the performance lying on a stretcher from the royal box,

and was warmly received by friends like Serge Lifar (see fig. 30). In Chile *El Mercurio* newspaper reported that a doctor and three nurses wearing Dior hats were permanently at his side, as if fighting death with decorative beauty. "This is the last ballet I will see in my life. . . . After this ballet, I can look at my life and say that it wasn't a waste of time,"[378] he was quoted as saying, with tears in his eyes (qtd. in "Gran Éxito": 1, 20). After the performance, he appeared in a wheel chair on stage to give an emotional goodbye to his public (*Le Bal du siècle*).

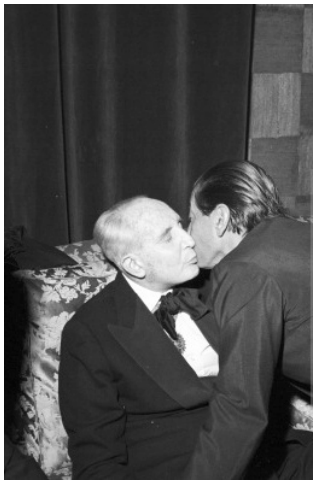

Fig. 30. Detail of photograph of George de Cuevas and Serge Lifar embracing at the premiere of *Sleeping Beauty* (Le Teiller).

The day before he died Cuevas received the silver medal of the city of Paris, which made him an honorary citizen. His son John had spent the past month with him, and recalls that his father "read poems that he had written and talked of his dancers. Of his triumphs. Of his mother as someone who was mysterious and whom he adored, like a Goddess. He told the story of his life, but a life that was not exactly imagined, but somewhat fantastic" (qtd. in *Le bal du siècle*).[379] Cuevas died in his villa in Cannes on 22

February 1961, according to his son, from prostate cancer (*Le Bal du siècle*). His last words were "My dears,"[380] understood to mean his ballet dancers (Dariel).

Cuevas did not live to see the great Rudolf Nureyev defect to the West and join his company briefly in June of that year. Under Raymundo Larraín and Margaret Strong's direction, the troupe was known briefly as the International Ballet de la Marquise de Cuevas, and gave its last performance in Athens in June 1962. The Marquise de Cuevas had a far less animated spirit and her perfunctory attention to the company soon dissipated the energy surrounding the enterprise. Tracing Cuevas's career is tracing the swan song of a fervent creator of "high" aristocratic culture, an aesthetic that was held by one man with a vision that was uniquely outrageous, but who held in his hands the last chapter to several of the Ballets Russes's dancers, choreographers, and works.

At the time of his death, George and Margaret were separated, and although she was on her way to see him, she did not arrive in time. Sordid stories concerning his leaving her had circulated for years, and "these became more sensational when a male protégé sued Cuevas's estate after his death" (Stasz 304). Instead, Marthe Bibesco wrote a lyrical piece for the newspaper entitled "Georges de Cuevas: Purveyor of Dreams," in which she describes her friend as a man who "had the blood of Don Quixote and the Little Mermaid of Andersen."[381] The invocation renders Cuevas as both a knight-errant who pursues illusory ideals, and a legend himself, notably feminine. In Bibesco's description Cuevas escapes death, because he becomes a fictional character. Perhaps remembering Cuevas's multiple imagined encounters with death, Bibesco tells readers that "His death, which he lived through so many times with the courage of this hidalgo . .

. ended in apotheosis with Sleeping Beauty. Death awakened by the kiss of love, had the final word."[382] In this description, Cuevas, like the wounded Bird of All Beauty, finds his apotheosis only in death. Thus, the final ballet created by the company under its founding director appears to symbolically seal the transition of Cuevas into a legend.

Salvador Dalí had a particularly unconventional way of dealing with Cuevas's death. When asked in an interview if he had any "personal corpses," Dalí responded that he liked to fantasize about having murdered the friends who died. The eccentric daydream afforded a thrilling effect:

> For example, when the Marquis de Cuevas died, I said to myself: "It's I who killed him." Since at bottom, I'm quite a Jesuit, I know that what I say isn't true; but for a whole day or a quarter of an hour, I have the pleasure of thinking: "I'm the culprit." This gives me powerful feelings of guilt. Ultimately, my reason tells me I'm not responsible, and I fall asleep on a soft featherbed with the most sanctimonious satisfaction in the world. (qtd. in Bosquet 20)

Dalí's fantasy seems to invoke the allure of the abject that revels in subverting boundaries. The Baudelairean fascination with the criminal, which appears in Poe's writings, seems to reemerge in Dalí's aberrant confession. The painter's response thrills with its defiance of common morality or natural human emotion, for there is no trace of grief in his reaction. Playing, however briefly, on the edge of the boundaries that organize subjectivity, Dalí's perverse *jouissance* illustrates yet again how abjection allows the self to insert itself once more in the symbolic order.

Conclusion

Curtain Call:

The Legacy of the Marquis de Cuevas

The death of the Marquis de Cuevas in 1961 marked the end of one era but also set up the beginning of another. The Belle Époque, with its leisurely way of life and rigidly coded social classes, flickered for a while longer in an extraordinary figure who recreated part of its glamorous side. As dancer Rosella Hightower argued, "the Marquis believed in a world which was finished and he was the last vestige of that world."

Cuevas's company employed many of the dancers and choreographers who had worked under Diaghilev and his Ballet Russes, thus serving as an epilogue and testament to the potential renewal that ballet could achieve by collaborating with great artists from other fields. Given Cuevas's rather conventional sense of formal aesthetics, this tradition was somewhat exhausted in his lifetime. However, Cuevas's company also offered early haven to a man who would revolutionize the world of dance: hailing once more from Russia, the arrival of the dazzling Rudolf Nureyev infused new strength into ballet. Nureyev, on tour with the Kirov company, was looking to defect, but could not join the Paris Opéra, given its status as the official French company, which would have seriously strained the political relationship between the two countries. Cuevas's American company of international dancers offered a politically more neutral space. Indeed, Raymundo Larraín, who was now in charge of the company, desperately needed the publicity and financial draw of a major star after the death of its founder, and gladly took

in Nureyev to head his *Sleeping Beauty* (Kavanagh 142). The New York Public Library has a brief video footage of Nureyev dancing a variation of this ballet. The excerpt has no sound and is of rather poor quality, but Nureyev's spectacular leaps and lithe dancing can still be appreciated. The best testament to the audience's ecstatic reception can be seen in the fact that Nureyev has to repeat his variation (*The Sleeping Beauty*). Nureyev's use of postures considered essentially feminine, like turnout of hips, and his daringly sensuous physical expression, would also give the male dancer a more visible and influential presence (Kavanagh 185); moreover, Nureyev would later experiment with modern dance and incorporate other styles to the classical ballet stage (399). Thus, Cuevas's shadow was cast over a new generation of dancers and dance audiences. As has been explored in these chapters, Cuevas's life and work was more than a case of simple nostalgic throwback, but functioned instead as a bridge from the Belle Époque to the modern era.

For Chileans, Cuevas's death meant the end of a slightly ridiculous figure that had denied his origins, and the emergence of a character viewed with nostalgia, as it crystallized into a legend. From London, Sergio Monte wrote to his friend Joaquín Edwards Bello:

> This morning . . . I learnt of the death of Cuevitas from the newspapers. . . You and I are the only ones who can appreciate in all its magnificence the final balletic apotheosis that was the life of the Marquis, because we attended the first acts so many years ago now. I have remembered so many things and thought of you too and of the Santiago of our youth, when we were all marquises…"[383]

The final sentence recalls the wistful refrain in "We Were All Going to Be Queens,"[384] by Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, in which the childhood game of four young friends is met with a harsher reality that crushes their dreams. Mistral had gained widespread admiration by Chilean readers only after she was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1945; given this respected position, she might well have been in Monte's mind as he wrote to novelist Edwards Bello. As the letter suggests, only Cuevas continued playing the role of marquis as an adult, taking the fantasy to its ultimate conclusion.

With this close examination of the Marquis, I have hoped to elucidate in more general terms the experience of Latin Americans in intercultural scenarios during the first half of the twentieth century. The Marquis queered his identity, covering his national and ethnic roots by adopting extravagant methods of subverting expectations in order to achieve acceptance by the wealthy international set and attain the guise of the worldly successful man.

Cuevas's desire to move beyond the constrictions of Chilean society to make his fortune in Paris is shown to have been typical of the snobbish Latin American aspirations of its upper classes to be accepted as peers by the European aristocracy. In this light, Cuevas represents the archetype of the Chilean *siútico*, at least initially. Cuevas does eventually escape this limited role, however, by exploiting his foreignness and by successfully conning his way into an aristocratic European milieu. By acquiring a Spanish peerage, and then later an American citizenship, he further obscured his social background, making it difficult to pin him down, and allowing him to permanently shift his national allegiances.

By founding a dance company that bore the name of the aristocratic peerage he had presumably given up, Cuevas completed his transformation into a personal spectacle, using the troupe as an extension of his persona. In this sense, Cuevas bridges once again the tension between the archaic and the modern, in which the former is surrendered and yet retained. Thus, Cuevas can be seen as playing both the role of the dandy that creates a work of art out of himself, and a Latin American *flâneur*, who walks the city in an attempt at configuring himself within it; in other words, at making the city his own. Cuevas adopts these opposing roles of dandy and *flâneur* as part of a self-conscious strategy to distract others from perceiving him as a threat, and accepting him within their intimate social circles, even if as mere entertainment.

The ultimate version of Cuevas's quest for visibility and self-promotion was the costume ball he gave in Biarritz in 1953. The eighteenth-century pastoral party offered guests of all social backgrounds the chance to play true aristocrats. The anxiety that surrounded the event can be attributed to the destabilizing power of the *carnivalesque* that underpins masquerades and costume balls, which challenges established boundaries of citizenship, gender, and social class. Cuevas himself was only partly accepted within the Café Society, and by hosting this ambitious form of entertainment he was seen as overstepping his allotted social position. The fact that the Cuevas company also performed a ballet for the event underlined the fluid trespassing of boundaries between spectator and spectacle, between self and other. By drawing attention to the constructed boundaries of identity in the Café Society to which he partially belonged, Cuevas made viewers nervous about the notion of how identity is self-fashioned. In this way he invited

his viewers to experience the same troubling of identity with which he himself lived daily. Additionally, the anxiety surrounding the costume ball responded to the tensions of the Cold War climate, actualized by the widespread strike in France at the time, and the fear that communists might gain popularity in a climate of social discord. Cuevas's atavistic impulse seemed intent on reviving a regime of luxury that had ended in a revolution that the world did not want to relive.

Cuevas's letters shed light on the rhetorical devices used to create not only a public, but also a private persona. Cuevas's fictionalized self emerges as essentially queer, since he consciously inhabits the traditionally female role of epistolary writer. In his correspondence regarding the creation of the ballet *L'Aigrette* (The Heron), Cuevas reveals his aestheticized artistic ideals, in the recurrent balletic trope of the woman-as-bird. The letters show how fiction permeates the creation of the Cuevas persona, and how his aesthetic apotheosis ultimately allows him to overcome the abject encounter with death.

Essentially, these chapters have hoped to focus on how Cuevas challenged the boundaries of self, and to illuminate the strategies that a foreigner used to survive and position himself in a hostile environment.

Further Projections

There are several topics that deserve further study, but also require further research that I was unable to carry out at this time. The most interesting is, in my opinion, an examination of some of the key balletic works that made the company famous, namely

Dalí's *Mad Tristan*, which is briefly mentioned in Chapter 4; Edward Caton's *Sebastian*; and Rosella Hightower's *Salome*, a trio that would serve as an interesting exploration of the concept of masculinity in dance, given the ways that they challenge the role of the male dancer, and tackle the issue of gender and sexuality. Although first Nijinsky, and then Nureyev are traditionally seen as the two most important twentieth century figures that pushed the boundaries of what male dancers could do on stage, these ballets might provide added insight into the ways that dance responded to the construction of masculinity at this time.

Mad Tristan (1944), perhaps the first surrealist ballet, includes two Isoldes, one idealized, sphinx-like, and one man-eating nightmare. Francisco Moncion, who took on the role of Tristan, recounts the "climactic *pas de deux*" danced to Wagner's *Liebestod*: "[the couple] would race towards [prop] dandelions, and strip them, and suddenly out of this would gush real dandelion seeds, a tremendous orgasm which was blown out into the audience. So at the next ballet the audience was still fanning away dandelion seeds, out of their hair and out of their breath." This erotically suggestive choreography seems to have broken the fourth wall to involve the audience in its love triangle. In this light, it might be significant that the ballet received mixed reviews, and also, as Moncion recalls, that not all of the dancers felt comfortable with playing the highly sexualized roles.

Sebastian, also premiered in 1944, was created by Edward Caton, a Russian émigré who was especially well known as a dance teacher. According to composer Gian-Carlo Menotti, the creation of the ballet was difficult, given the choreographer's conflicting personality and almost crippling "inferiority complex." Thus, "His brilliant

choreography [remained] fragmented" when, in a fit of depression, Caton ran away. Except for the anecdote that recounts its troubled creation, there is little information on a ballet that seems to have been the first to tackle a figure often considered as a gay cultural icon. Although the choreography for the ballet was criticized, the musical score received praise, and the work was re-choreographed to great success by John Butler and then Agnes de Mille (Hixon 4).

Hightower's *Salomé* (1955) portrays yet another version of the legend that constituted the epitome of the *fin de siècle* femme fatale. Salomé's sexual power lies both in her androgynous figure and in her perverse, child-like caprice. Hightower's only choreographic incursion also remains a mysterious work in the Cuevas canon.

Finally, there is the question of Raymundo (de) Larraín, another controversial figure that could be further explored. Larraín seems to have carried out Cuevas's legacy on several fronts: posing as an aristocrat, he also flourished as a socialite, and developed his artistic talent especially in the area of design. Most literally, perhaps, he married the same woman. Larraín also looked for a Maecenas, and seduced his friend Jacqueline de Ribes into funding an expensive version of *Cinderella* shortly after Cuevas's death (Coudert 149). In Chile, the Pinochet regime intelligence unit (DINA), which held files on everyone it considered potentially dangerous, had labeled Larraín as a homosexual (Martorell).

Final Curtain

At the height of his fame, Cuevas was immediately recognizable. In fact, he had

once received a letter sent from a woman in Texas who expressed her admiration for the ballet. On the envelope she had written only “Marquis de Cuevas. France” (Daguerre 162). Cuevas’s fame was such that an elegant fabric pattern was even baptized with his name (see fig. 31). The light blue silk and linen fabric of floral design was created in Belgium by Clarence House textiles (Laurence), possibly as a posthumous honor to the Marquis, a homage whose context I have attempted to recuperate in this dissertation.

Figure 31. “Marquis de Cuevas” blue woven floral fabric sample, on sale on Ebay.

After finishing this section of writing, I still remain fascinated by Jorge Cuevas, and by the process of transformation that turned him into the Marquis George de Cuevas. I certainly hope to find video footage or at least reviews of some of the ballets on which I want to continue to work. I remain entranced by his charming voice, by his sense of spectacle, by his humor, and by the reports of his kindness.

Cuevas wrote plaintively to his friend Sophie Kochanski, "Silence is worse than everything and resembles death" (14 Apr. 1937).[385] In Chapter 4, stillness had been Cuevas's greatest fear, and one he associated ultimately to death; in this light, the silence invoked in his letter represents social quietness, and perhaps a performance of death. Indeed, Cuevas' voice has remained essentially silent since his demise, and articles that mention him nowadays only recall the same anecdotes of his colorful life, overlooking his contribution to dance. I know that there are still hundreds of letters written by Cuevas that I have not read yet, lying dormant in various archives and perhaps also in dusty attics around the world. In this sense, my dissertation remains a partially successful attempt at rescuing Cuevas's voice, to make sense of a character that can be considered, in his ambiguous relationship to his native country, a perverse representative of the Chilean "national soul" (Villegas 51).[386] This project in Comparative Literature aims at preserving and continuing Cuevas's journey as a multilingual, transnational figure, or, as one article eloquently described him, as an "itinerant ambassador of Terpsichore" (Craven).[387]

Notes

[1] "Je suis content pour mes artistes que j'ai formé et que je considère comme des enfant qui m'appartiendraient, ou comme des idées que j'aurais énoncées et que les personnes a qui je les aurais communiquées les auraient trouvé brillantes." All translations offered in this dissertation are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[2] It is common in South American discourse to want to aspire to the category of "real countries" (países de verdad) and to denounce underdeveloped aspects of the country, especially administrative bureaucracy, public infrastructure flaws, and political corruption as that which makes us as part of "fake countries" (países de mentira).

[3] "'complejo de París'. . . desde Rusia a la Argentina. . . . Luz de París, que quema y acaba a los débiles, por millones, como mariposas; que ilumina y dirige a los Fuertes, a su obra."

[4] "Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, / Luxe, calme et volupté." Translation by William Aggeler.

[5] "Aimer et mourir / Au pays qui te ressemble!"

[6] "Songe à la douceur / D'aller là-bas . . ."

[7] "un cambio profundo del clima espiritual . . . una reacción contra el clima espiritual conformado por el positivismo filosófico, el materialismo científico y vital, y el espíritu realista burgués . . . encaminada al cultivo de los más altos valores del espíritu", que cae a veces en un "escepticismo angustioso."

[8] "éramos un pueblo militar, sobrio, ordenado, muy viril, con poca sensibilidad, sin refinamiento alguno, de un tono parejo y plano visible a los ojos menos penetrantes. Harto nos lo dijeron para que finjamos ignorarlo: 'pueblo de historiadores y juristas . . . la Beocia de América.'"

[9] "la primera potencia del Pacífico sur."

[10] "los prusianos de América del Sur."

[11] "los ingleses sudamericanos."

[12] "su poderosa superioridad espiritual, su vida austera y tranquila, su orgullo por el linaje y la importancia otorgada al apellido—pierden peso ante los nuevos valores . . . que se concentran en la ostentación de la riqueza como criterio de valoración individual y social."

[13] Ranked below the Iberian *peninsulares*—settlers who came directly from Spain—the *criollos* were of Spanish descent, but born in the colonies. After the Independence, Chilean *criollos* became the leading class, and those that bore Basque surnames were usually held in the highest regard, and were frequently members of the local aristocracy. Celebrated Chilean genealogist, Luis Thayer Ojeda, studied the ethnic castes within Chilean society in his book *Orígenes de Chile: elementos étnicos, apellidos, familias*. For further discussion of Basques in Chile, see *Cuatrocientos años de presencia vasca en Chile* by Julene Salazar González. Given the ambiguity of the English equivalent of *creole*, I will retain the Spanish word in this chapter.

[14] Celebrated Chilean genealogist Luis Thayer Ojeda studied the ethnic castes within Chilean society in his book *Orígenes de Chile: elementos étnicos, apellidos, familias*. For further discussion of Basques in Chile, see *Cuatrocientos años de presencia vasca en Chile* by Julene Salazar González. Given the ambiguity of the English equivalent of *creole*, I will retain the Spanish word in this chapter.

[15] "Lo europeo, y en especial lo francés, comenzó a dominar fuertemente en el acontecer santiaguino de los grupos aristocráticos, siguiendo la tendencia de romper con la mentalidad de 'pueblo chico' . . . [promoviéndose] nuevos ideales como el lujo, la ostentación, los viajes y el ocio, la intensa vida social y una adquisición material desmesurada de todo cuanto proveyera del exterior."

[16] "el 'afrancesamiento' es coetáneo de la emancipación. Sin embargo, los días finiseculares lo acentúan, junto con volverlo más frívolo y frágil."

[17] The struggle for independence in the American colonies certainly lent them a spiritual allegiance to revolutionary France. In fact, several of the coat of arms employed by the fledgling countries bore the iconic red Phrygian cap, namely, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Paraguay. Chile uses the color combination of the French flag instead.

[18] To avoid confusion, perhaps it would be useful to clarify that Andrés Bello, founding father of the Civil Code for the Republic of Chile—which served as a model for the rest of Latin America—, was the uncle of writer Joaquín Edwards Bello. The latter, in turn, was the uncle of writer Jorge Edwards. The fact that the same last names in different combinations crop up repeatedly within this study serves to show that Chilean aristocracy was tightly knit, with its members often intermarrying. The Edwards, a powerful family that has produced important diplomats, politicians and entrepreneurs, and founded the leading newspapers in the country, in fact came from a single British immigrant, John Edwards, who arrived to Chile sometime in the early nineteenth century (cf. Pilleux Cepeda, "Genealogía de la familia Edwards").

[19] "L'être qui ne vient pas souvent à Paris ne sera jamais complètement élégant."

[20] "los franceses inspiraban horror como símbolo de incredulidad."

[21] A direct descendant of Andrés Bello, Inés Echeverría became the first female academic, and taught in the Department of Philosophy and Humanities at the traditional Universidad de Chile. Married to Joaquín Larraín Alcalde, her husband's family was related to Raymundo Larraín Valdés, who later became a protégé of the Marquis de Cuevas in Paris.

[22] My translation.

[23] "así no se arrinconaría en una lengua periférica."

[24] For Jorge Edwards, writers who travelled abroad were often frustrated. He quotes a Chilean author who said that his epitaph should read: "He wanted to be a writer, but he became a Chilean writer." In fact, Edwards adds, "Most of these writers went through a curious evolution in their lives. Ultimately they were forced to adapt and resign themselves to being Chilean writers, and, for the most part, they returned, rather like elephants, to die at home" (qtd. in Gass 6). Edwards probably has his uncle Joaquín

Edwards Bello uppermost in his mind in this regard. Jorge Edwards himself also lived in France, and was recently completed his term as the Chilean ambassador in Paris, 2010-2014.

[25] "Pertenecía a un círculo de muchachos ricos, elegantes, buenos mozos, de gran familia, que habían vivido mucho en París y hacían volver los ojos por la calle a las muchachas."

[26] "Se comentaban sus crudezas sexuales, unas alusiones a su familia más íntima, la amargura que destilaba contra su clase, contra la gente, contra todo."

[27] "siempre estaba confesando esa tragedia de expatriado en su tierra, de solitario desconfiado entre la multitud."

[28] "todos los primeros textos narrativos de Joaquín Edwards Bello son autorretratos parciales, aparentes biografías: si se escarba un poco, si se descartan detalles, son, en verdad, autobiografías más o menos alteradas. Podríamos añadir: confesiones disimuladas."

[29] The information on Cuevas's life in Chile can be construed from Edwards Bello's novel and Jorge Edwards's biography of his uncle. The only biography of the marquis, Gérard Mannoni's *Le marquis de Cuevas*, sheds no light on his life in Chile, aside from a few facts on his father's occupation, probably gathered from the online genealogy of the family, created by Mauricio Pilleux Cepeda (cf. "Genealogía de la familia Cuevas").

[30] "una anécdota más que un ser humano"

[31] "un joven si no modesto, pobretón, pero de un trato refinado y culto que encantaba a mi abuela por su buen francés para contar chismes de salón y de tan buena voluntad que se prestaba a limpiar los vidrios de esas ventanas tan altas a las que no alcanzaban los brazos rechonchos de la Rosalía."

[32] "lo publicó en edición escasa, de lujo."

[33] "un texto breve, poético, un homenaje vibrante y secreto, páginas de tono confesional, íntimo, al estilo de Pierre Loti."

[34] "galicismos visibles."

[35] "A mi distinguido amigo, el inteligente escritor, Sr. Joaquín Edwards Bello."

[36] "Joaquín, a quien Cuevas desde sus años de Chile llamaba Jacques, con una especie de complicidad delatora, en clave afrancesada y privada."

[37] "Inventor de la lengua francesa."

[38] "¡Adiós, Chile que odio, ni mis huesitos te dejaré!"

[39] An unverified account on the Spanish Wikipedia page for the Marquis states that Jorge Cuevas was named Secretary of the British Legation in London in 1913, thanks to his connection to the current president, who was his cousin-in-law. In his genealogy of the Cuevas family, Pilleux Cepeda only mentions that Cuevas was Secretary to the British Legation, but includes no date ("Genealogía de la familia Cuevas"). A note in *El Mercurio* newspaper states that in 1910 Cuevas was Secretary to the Minister of (Foreign) Relations, Agustín Edwards Mac-Clure ("De hace medio siglo: El Mercurio del 17 de mayo de 1910"). Edwards was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary in London that

same year. It is fair to assume that Cuevas was on friendly terms with Mac-Clure and could conceivably have been appointed Secretary to the British Legation. Around this time, too Jorge's brother, Enrique Cuevas, was Chilean Secretary of Swedish Affairs, a post that was also stationed in London, in the British Legation. No further information has been found at this time to confirm Jorge Cuevas's appointment in London in 1913. In his memoires Fernando Balmaceda del Río cites a letter written by Cuevas from Chile as late as 1915 (319).

[40] "Desde el momento en que pisé esta ciudad me ha invadido un malestar indescriptible. . . . no es una enfermedad porque ningún síntoma externo la traduce, ni lo acompaña dolor alguno, y mi cuerpo rebosa de vida. Tengo como una plétora de fuerza disponible que no encuentro cómo gastar."

[41] "Europa era . . . París."

[42] The Real Academia Española defines a *rastacueros* as someone who is deceitful, uncultivated, rich and pretentious.

[43] "Je suis Brésilien, j'ai de l'or, / Et j'arrive de Rio-Janeire / Plus riche aujourd'hui que naguère, / Paris, je te reviens encore! / Deux fois je suis venu déjà, / J'avais de l'or dans ma valise, / Des diamants à ma chemise, / Combien a duré tout cela?"

[44] "degeneración de su raza."

[45] "una casa que parece posada."

[46] "una enfermedad llamada parisitis y conviene recordar su crisis."

[47] "Somos hijos de europeos, por eso llevamos el virus de la expatriación. Sólo el indio se aferra a su América."

[48] "Todo el que viene volverá, si puede. Es . . . 'el mal de París'. . . . un mal universal: el que ha vivido aquí suspira por volver; el que no ha vivido, por vivir."

[49] "París fué la obsesión de su infancia, un Tesoro de aventuras ornadas de sobrenombres de literatura decadente y de zarzuela: 'el cerebro del mundo', . . . 'ciudad luminaria donde van a morir cegadas las mariposillas"

[50] "¡Pobre, pero en París! ¡Estoy en París! ¡En París! Usted es muy niño para darse cuenta de esto todavía. ¡Estoy en la cima del mundo!"

[51] "Preferible para mi ecuanimidad habría sido que no conociera París."

[52] For more detailed information regarding French immigration data in Chile, see Enrique Fernández Domingo's "La emigración francesa en Chile, 1875-1914: entre integración social y mantenimiento de la especificidad" (2006).

[53] "Yo vivo entre gente que ni conoce mi pasado ni mi raza, ni me exige otra cosa que una cara simpática y alegre. Si les dijera de dónde soy, creerían que es una broma. Aquí nadie sabe si Chile está en Asia o en el Paraguay. Nadie posee esa cosa absurda que se llama memoria. Hago vida de playa eterna. Soy una ficción y no una horrible realidad."

[54] "No se le conoce. ¿Es grave eso?"

[55] "extranjero ocioso."

[56] "La Guerra subrayaba terriblemente a los extranjeros."

[57] At the outbreak of World War I, Chilean Minister Plenipotentiary in London, Agustín Edwards Mac-Clure—founder of the important newspaper *El Mercurio*—provided assistance to Chileans throughout Europe (see Couyoumdjian and Muñoz's discussion of "Chileans in Europe during World War I" (2002). The list of passengers who requested assistance for travelling either within Europe or back to Chile include Enrique Cuevas, Jorge's brother, who worked at the Legation with the minister; Alberto Blest Gana, who was in Madrid at the time; and two of Joaquín Edwards Bello's sisters, Olga and María, who seem to have been in Paris (see Annex to the same article).

[58] "Para un sudamericano . . . que se habituó a mirar Europa como un modelo de sabiduría y sesudez, esa guerra era algo monstruoso. ¿Dónde estaban la cultura, la *sagesse*, el orden?"

[59] "[Esa fue la señal de la] invasión del comedor. Los convidados desertaron los salones y se lanzaron con hambrienta solicitud sobre las viandas."

[60] "Yo no llevaba ningún invento nuevo, ni dinero para especular. No llevaba más que una imaginación interior de intensa vida nueva. Un frío ¿cómo le va? . . . Es una tenaza de hierro que trae de los cabellos al nivel, a la monotonía sin color de la vida vulgar."

[61] "[recordó su infancia perdida] en una bruma de aburrimiento y lluvias."

[62] "Pasé allá [en Viña] un invierno y daba alaridos de tedio como Safo en la roca."

[63] "Pensé en arrojarme al Pacífico."

[64] "¡ay del que se sale del marco de la pobreza, la vulgaridad o el anonimato! El chileno persigue implacablemente a otro chileno que pretenda descarriarse, es decir, que intente abandoner el molde de la vulgaridad monótona"

[65] "esclavas del *chic*."

[66] "como una muñeca de lujo . . . [de] juventud artificial."

[67] "la divisa de todo joven *chic*: '¡Corta y buena!'"

[68] "la más fuerte y sana expresión de belleza femenina, de virginidad, de recato y educación casera."

[69] "la salvaguardia del hogar."

[70] "Yo quiero que en adelante seas chileno, bien chileno: yo también voy a volverme más chilena."

[71] "sus plantas delicadas no habían hollado la mandrágora fatal."

[72] "qué intuición tienen para adaptarse á todos los medios y dar la nota discreta sin llamar la atención como otras americanas por sus toilettes vistosas y ademanes exagerados."

[73] "Qué hermosas son sus compatriotas, Uds. deben estar muy orgullosos de su raza."

[74] "a los que París abre sus brazos de cortesana indolente."

[75] "Eres una cortesana. Te amo despreciándote como se adora a ciertas mujeres que nos seducen con el sortilegio de su belleza sensual . . . , ¡oh pérfida y voluptuosa Babilonia!"

[76] "Su ser, adormecido en la atmósfera soporífera del hogar materno, linfatizado por la indigesta aridez de los escritos que maquinalmente copaiba, sintió la penetrante mordedura de las tentaciones como un golpe de galvanismo."

[77] "sus modestas virtudes de mozo sencillo y honrado, arrastradas por la turbia corriente de la vida de la gran ciudad, había ido a perderse . . . en el obscuro lodazal de los desfallecimientos de conciencia."

[78] "una atracción diabólica para el vicio internacional."

[79] "Los rostros estaban secos, ávidos, histéricos; los ojos febriles, las mandíbulas dolorosas, como de soldados después de un combate."

[80] "La defectuosa pronunciación de los nombres extranjeros hacía visible esa revoltura humana."

[81] "Se hablan todas las lenguas."

[82] "la transformación del alma hispanoamericana al calor reverberante del horno parisiense."

[83] "los hombres embriagados en este infierno de París, con más microbios de infección viciosa que todos los demás pueblos de Francia reunidos."

[84] "flores del mal."

[85] "¡Abajo el español!, lengua de 'rastás'; aquí no se habla sino en francés."

[86] "Las Larrea hablaban el español de manera grotesca, rodando las erres como egues; mezclaban expresiones ridículas."

[87] "después de algún tiempo — simples espectadores de la vida francesa — dejamos de ser americanos sin alcanzar a ser europeos."

[88] "Muy lucido entierro . . . Esto prueba que nos consideran gente *chic.*"

[89] "Yo quiero tener una posición indiscutible. Ya estoy harta de saludos desdeñosos, de miradas de grandes damas y de grandes señores que pasan sobre mi cabeza sin verme, de sonrisas protectoras dispensadas como un favor cuando me hago presentar. No quiero que me traten como intrusa."

[90] "con el ruido incesante de un enjambre de abejas en derredor de una colmena."

[91] "Canalejas llegaba a figurarse que su desaparición de la escena parisiense sería una mengua para el buen nombre de su patria."

[92] "Los trasplantados . . . eran . . . lo más cerca de ese 'ideal' que la aristocracia chilena tenía a mano."

[93] "la existencia de otra sociedad refinada y exclusiva, de la que la cotidiana crónica comenta los saraos, los casamientos, los entierros, las alegrías y los duelos."

[94] "entreabrir algunas puertas de salones *chics.*"

[95] "la Estación parecía un gran salon en el que se hubieran dado cita todas las damas de la aristocracia."

[96] "salones de la vieja aristocracia."

[97] "tan morenas."

[98] "no vacilaban en añadir a su plebeyo nombre la partícula nobiliaria que los transforamaba en *Monsieur et Madame* de Canalejas."

[99] "La autenticidad . . . no tenía o tenía poca importancia: lo importante, para el *rastá*, era que su hija pudiera ser llamada princesa, o condesa o duquesa."

[100] "reivindicamos títulos de España cuando podemos, o los compramos o inventamos si fueron patanes nuestros abuelos."

[101] Jorge Cuevas in fact became Marquis by rehabilitating the Spanish title of Piedra Blanca de Guana that had been granted to one of his ancestors.

[102] "una especie de carta de naturalización en el gran mundo *chic* del supremo gran tono."

[103] "¡ . . . al lado de los grandes títulos de la nobleza de Francia!"

[104] "buscaba refugio en un hotelito decente donde no llegaran rastacueros."

[105] "hablando de familias y apellidos como sólo los chilenos saben hablar, con una especie de agradecimiento y orgullo de los antepasados."

[106] "En Chile se pasan hablando de aristocracia, y lo único que hay es una burguesía tremenda."

[107] "vienen de turista."

[108] "nuestros poetas vienen buscando modelos para calcar, nuestros políticos a la caza de leyes y conceptos, los bobos a sacar escudos heráldicos."

[109] "se guían por imitación."

[110] "espíritu de imitación y emulación."

[111] "Muy *chic,* muy *chic.*"

[112] All the italics in quotes by Homi K. Bhabha are contained in the original text.

[113] "el código social francés no [a la gente de tono] permite mezclarse ni contraer alianzas de familia con los tenderos o industriales franceses, porque es es 'encanallarse'"

[114] "principado microscópico."

[115] "'rastá' de otra especie."

[116] "Decididamente . . . nos estamos encanallando."

[117] "Ya no podemos hablar de nuestro mundo, querida."

[118] "así hay compensación."

[119] "Es sabido que París vive de los extranjeros."

[120] "París, centro de la locura, / foco del surmenage, / donde hago buenamente / mi papel de sauvage."

[121] The Nicaraguan poet, founder of *modernismo* lived intermittently in Paris. He also had close ties to Chile, since he lived in Valparaíso for a few years early on in his career.

[122] "Así como los polacos son condes y los italianos príncipes, los chilenos son diplomáticos."

[123] "Jorge Cuevas no pudo producirse fuera de Santiago de Chile entre los años 1900 y 1910, en un pequeño grupo social donde imperaba un snobismo originalísimo. Santiago era una ciudad apartada de las maldiciones del mundo supercivilizado, en su nido de montañas. El grupo social de mi referencia era reducido, elegante y mas difícil en sus internos manejos que el gran mundo en Europa o en New York."

[124] "un adulador sistemático de los poderosos. De ilustración superficial, recitaba piropos sacados de libros franceses."

[125] "ancianas aristocráticas."

[126] "Las adulaba como un mago sugestionándolas suavemente, bailando en un pie ante ellas, . . . echándoles piropos de una falsedad . . . aterradora como en los discursos electorales. Todas las damas sucesivamente tenían cutis de camelia, se parecían a la Pompadour y eran sus mejillas una mezcla de leche y pétalos de rosa. . . . No dominaba el francés todavía y recitaba versos de Rostand con acento abominable. En cierta ocasión cruzó la vereda para preguntarme cómo se pronunciaba *nuages*, nubes en francés."

[127] "En veinte años a mí no me invitó jamás al castillo."

[128] "Las hago vibrar como violines, recordándole sus treinta años. En el fondo, las adoro de verdad; siento el reflejo de su goce en mi persona. Les agrada, me aman, y yo termino por amarlas en mí."

[129] "ce sont elles [les vielles femmes] qui font la réputation des jeunes."

[130] "la eterna comedia social, en que generalmente, triunfa el que sabe fingir mejor."

[131] "La irrupción de Dueñitas era el mentís a todas sus teorías sociales."

[132] "Dueñas no era sólo amigo de esas personas, sino algo más: era indispensable, y su amistad fascinante era disputada como un favor."

[133] "tanta gente de su país que antes nunca lo habían tomado en cuenta."

[134] "un personaje mitológico."

[135] "Sueños de Artista."

[136] "una mujer rubia, de olímpica belleza, diáfana como un rayo de luna y de la que yo no supiera nada de su vida, sino que me amaba, y que ningún detalle prosaico de la existencia viniera á desvanecer mis ilusiones."

[137] "Yo soy insaciable de amor, pero de un amor que no lo use ni lo empequeñezca el roce constance de las prosaicas vulgaridades de la vida corriente."

[138] "Dans les 'Contes d'Hoffmann,' une poupée aux apparences de femme, et qui pouvait chanter et danser, avait seduit le poète qui a souffert de sa froideur comme si elle avait été de chair. Tout est dans l'imagination, et là où on voit que du fange, d'autres trouvent des fleurs."

[139] Chileans in fact seem to have been greatly represented in Parisian society of the first half of the twentieth century. The book *Café Society*, which portrays fifty of the most popular and socially ubiquitous figures of Paris between 1920 and 1960, includes three Chileans: the Marquis de Cuevas; his protégé, Raymundo Larraín; and Arturo López-Wilshaw, a millionaire and art patron. In fact, within the section of "South Americans," two of the three representatives are Chilean. These characters will be considered in the following chapter.

[140] "El Triunfador Exiliado."

[141] "Nosotros, los trasplantados de Hispanoamérica, no tenemos otra función en este organismo de la vida parisiense que la de gastar plata…, y divertirnos, si podemos. Somos los seres sin patria. Hemos salido de nuestro país demasiado jóvenes para amarlo,

y nos hemos criado en éste como extranjeros, sin penetrarlo. Somos la espuma de esta gran corriente uqe se ilumina con el brillo de la fiesta parisiense, y se va desvaneciendo como los globulillos de esa espuma, sin dejar rastro de su paso. Los trasplantados suceden a los trasplantados, sin formar parte de la vida francesa en su labor de progreso, sin asociarse a ella más que en su disipación y en sus fiestas. Inútiles aquí e inútiles para su patria, que miran con desdén, ¿dónde quiere usted que vaya un trasplantado a encontrar ocupación en este mundo que no lo toma en serio y lo mira sólo como un contribuyente traído a su riqueza? Nuestro padres, al dejar su país para venir a educarnos a Europea con el ánimo de quedarse, las más veces, en estos mundos, nos condenan al ocio perpetuo, nos inutilizan para la vida de Hispanoamérica"

[142] "con desconfianza, . . . casi como a extranjeros."

[143] "ya nunca en su vida podría vivir en Santiago a gusto."

[144] "la vida social de Chile carece de ficción; nos conocemos demasiado."

[145] "Vivía en la tiranía de la etiqueta."

[146] "[C]'est la force de l'originalité anglaise, s'imprimant sur la vanité humaine . . . qui produit ce qu'on appelle le Dandysme."

[147] "N'est-il pas curieux de retrouver l'original du dandy sous Henri III."

[148] "le Dandysme n'est pas l'art brutal de mettre une cravate."

[149] "C'est le plaisir d'étonner et la satisfaction orgueilleuse de ne jamais être étonné."

[150] "un goût immodéré de la toilette et de l'élégance matérielle. Ces choses ne sont pour le parfait dandy qu'un symbole de la supériorité aristocratique de son esprit."

[151] "implique une quintessence de caractère et une intelligence subtile de tout le mécanisme moral de ce monde."

[152] "Quizás la relación más estrecha de Brummell con Oscar Wilde haya sido pensar su vida en permanente construcción escénica."

[153] "La rigidez de sus maneras deja ver su carácter de técnica de resistencia al poder. Él debe ser innatural para recuperar la naturalidad de la sociedad desnaturalizada. Cuando no se somete a las reglas existentes, es "artificioso'."

[154] "Tout Dandy est un *oseur*, mais un oseur qui a du tact, qui s'arrête à temps."

[155] "le besoin ardent de se faire une originalité, contenu dans les limites extérieures des convenances."

[156] "Le dandysme, qui est une institution en dehors des lois, a des lois rigoureuses auxquelles sont strictement soumis tous ses sujets."

[157] "entre l'originalité et l'excentricité le fameux point d'intersection de Pascal."

[158] "Pour être bien mis, il ne faut pas être remarqué."

[159] "Aussi, à ses yeux, épris avant tout de *distinction*, la perfection de la toilette consiste-t-elle dans la simplicité absolue, qui est en effet la meilleure manière de se distinguer."

[160] "c'est moins la simplicité du luxe qu'un luxe de simplicité."

[161] "En 1822 le fashionable devait offrir au premier coup d'œil un homme malheureux et malade; il devait avoir quelque chose de négligé dans sa personne, les

ongles longs, la barbe non pas entière, non pas rasée, mais grandie un moment par surprise, par oubli, pendant les préoccupations du désespoir; mèche de cheveux au vent, regard profond, sublime, égaré et fatal; lèvres contractées en dédain de l'espèce humaine; coeur ennuyé, byronien, noyé dans le dégoût et le mystère de l'être.

Aujourd'hui ce n'est plus cela: le *dandy* doit avoir un air conquérant, léger, insolent; il doit soigner sa toilette, porter des moustaches ou une barbe taillée en rond comme la fraise de la reine Elisabeth, ou comme le disque radieux du soleil; il décèle la fière indépendance de son caractère en gardant son chapeau sur la tête, en se roulant sur les sofas, en allongeant ses bottes au nez des ladies assises en admiration sur des chaises devant lui; il monte à cheval avec une canne qu'il porte comme un cierge, indifférent au cheval qui est entre ses jambes par hasard. Il faut que sa santé soit parfaite, et son âme toujours au comble de cinq ou six félicités."

[162] "le nom de Dandy n'était pas encore à la mode, et les despotes de l'élégance s'appelaient *Bucks* ou *Macaronies.*"

[163] "Il était l'autocrate de l'opinion."

[164] "n'a pas d'autre occupation que de courir à la piste du bonheur; . . . qui n'a pas d'autre profession que l'élégance."

[165] "satisfaire leurs passions, de sentir et de penser."

[166] Barbey d'Aurevilly toys with the idea of including the fashionable Count Alfred d'Orsay as a dandy, but ultimately excludes him, because he put too much thought into his sculptures ("Les marbres laissés par d'Orsay ont de la pensée").

[167] "On est vaniteux, on veut l'approbation des autres; mouvement charmant du cœur humain que l'on a trop calomnié. C'est toute l'explication peut-être des affectations du Dandysm."

[168] "muchacho imberbe que se mete a galantear, aparentando ser hombre hecho."

[169] "Hombre joven que se compone mucho y sigue rigurosamente la moda."

[170] "El león debe contar siquiera siete amantes. ¿Qué menos? Una para cada día de la semana."

[171] "El verdadero *dandy* no es empleado, militar, contratista, banquero, ni abogado; no es mas que dandy pura y simplemente, y así debería constar en el padron del alcalde del barrio."

[172] "Asi, á cada palabra española une otra que aprendió en sus viajes, ó que leyó en algún libro, no siendo estraño que cometa algunas incorrecciones, tales como:

—Hoy hace un calor *desolant*.

—La Marquesa está bonita como una *pepiniére*.

—El Conde de C... ha muerto de *migraine.*"

[173] "qu'est-ce que le *flâneur*, sinon l'observateur en action, l'observateur dans son expression la plus élevée et la plus éminemment utile?"

[174] "L'homme s'élève au-dessus de tous les autres animaux uniquement parce qu'il sait flâner."

[175] "Mais c'est surtout la littérature qui possède l'élite de la flânerie . . . littérateurs *parce que flâneurs.*"

[176] "Sa passion et sa profession, c'est d'*épouser la foule*. Pour le parfait *flâneur*, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant, dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini. Etre hors de chez soi, et pourtant se sentir partout chez soi; voir le monde, être au centre du monde et rester caché au monde."

[177] "sainte prostitution de l'âme."

[178] "El *flâneur* es el lector del *libro ciudad.*"

[179] "interpretar la ciudad desde el encuadre metafórico del *bazar de novedades,* por tomar conciencia del cambio histórico, frente a la estabilidad de las estructuras sociales previas (percibe la 'aceleración' de los acontecimientos y de los procesos sociales); por asumir la ciudad como teatro, como espectáculo . . . ; y por desplegar un sentimiento de empatía hacia el 'otro' ciudadano, en ocasiones 'marginal'."

[180] "la *retórica del paseo.*"

[181] "Connaissez-vous un signe plus approprié à son idée, un mot plus exclusivement français pour exprimer une personnification toute française? Le *flâneur*!"

[182] "badaud étranger."

[183] "le *touriste* n'est autre qu'un *flâneur* en voyage."

[184] "Y así, casi sin sentirlo, llego a creer, al cabo de algún tiempo, que no soy un extranjero, ni casi un forastero, y que formo parte de la población en la cual me encuentro."

[185] "Le touriste, c'est le mouvement perpétuel si longtemps rêvé par les poursuiveurs d'énigmes, c'est le juif errant avec un habit convenable et ses cinq sous multipliés."

[186] "*épouser la foule.*"

[187] "El marqués de Cuevas, chileno, es, sobre todo, parisiense."

[188] "Yo actúo en dos Parises. El París en que yo no me siento ni soy turista. En el que me da la sensación de haber estado toda mi vida. En el que como, duermo, camino, tomo café, miro, etc. En el que no me pongo corbata, el que me conozco de arriba abajo, en el que los precios son los más baratos, los personajes los más ridículos, los más interesantes. Este París es del Sena para acá, o sea, rue Bonaparte, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Saint-Michel, Raspail, etc. El otro París es del Sena para allá, o sea, hacia l'Opera, la Madelaine. Aquí yo soy turista ciento por ciento. Tengo que ponerme corbata, tengo que andar con cuidado, porque un restaurante puede significar el presupuesto de un mes, una corbata el de quince días, y una boite, la cárcel, porque no tendría con qué pagarla."

[189] "Cuevas no tiene explicación ni medida en la vida cotidiana o en la realidad nuestra"

[190] Santayana represented Margaret's father, while Agustín Edwards MacClure, Chilean Minister Plenipotentiary in London, where Cuevas's brother worked as Secretary, acted as "parrain" (godfather, witness) (3 August 1927). MacClure was part of the wealthy political oligarchy in Chilean society, and within his business ventures included the founding of the largest local newspaper, *El Mercurio*; no doubt his support was calculated to link him to one of the most powerful families in the world.

[191] In this respect, Santayana writes regarding Cuevas's activities: "It would be inaccurate to say he was feeding his wife and children by keeping a gambling house, but that is the direction of this last extraordinary expedient. Complicated as the situation is, his letter rather makes me feel that I should like to go to San Remo and see the establishment at work" (3 November 1934).

[192] "La famille d'Amerique nous rends la vie difficile. Le grand pere est trop vieux. L'oncle trop dur, et moi trop etranger pour l'Amerique."

[193] "Dans la vie comme en art, il était l'ennemi de la routine et de la médiocrité"

[194] "Je ne suis pas un être d'habitudes . . . les plus grands ennemis de lâmes sont la tristesse et l'ennui. . . . C'est mieux de souffrir que de s'ennuyer."

[195] "J'ai besoin d'un directeur Artistique que comprenne mon idéal. Je ne veux de Balanchine que prétend faire ce que je n'aime pas, c'est a dire 'An American Ballet.' Mon idée c'est de conserver la tradition Russe. Et sur cela créer aussi de nouveaux Ballets."

[196] "S'il crée une ouvre d'art, ce sera . . . au service d'une beauté éphémère et périssable."

[197] "C'est à Paris, ce haut lieu de l'art, que l'on boit dans les fontaines du raffinement, de l'élégance, de l'enthousiasme et de la beauté"

[198] The excellent documentary *Ballet Russes* (2005) recounts the famous name change of Lilian Alicia Marks into Alicia Markova, and also interviews Mark Platt, who became Mark Platoff.

[199] The Count would later become publicist to such operatic luminaries as Renata Tebaldi and Franco Corelli.

[200] "N'ayant pas des moyens d'expression je me sens médiocre et sans beauté."

[201] "dans une loge grillée de l'Opéra ou des Italiens. . . . ces héros de la mode, ces grands hommes qui font autorité en matière de nœd de cravate, de talons de bottes et de coupe de cheveux" nommaient dandys, incroyables, muscadins ou gant-jaunes."

[202] Legs and feet were given particular consideration by balletomanes. In Grandville's "Apocalypse du Ballet" a disembodied foot turns into a pair of legs that either becomes or is dancing next to a ballerina. Legs are the focus of Pushkin's celebrated passage of *Eugene Onegin* (Canto I, XX), which praises the grace and beauty of dancer Avdotia Istomina who

> Touching the floor with one foot, slowly
> Is by the other turned around,
> A sudden bound, a sudden flight,
> Like down from the lips of Aeolus . . . (11)

Noting this focus on the feet of the ballerina, Schmidt observes that Pushkin seemed obsessed with women's feet, which he drew on the margins of his notebooks, and cites cantos in *Onegin* that seems to reveal a fetishistic fixation on them. Nabokov referred to the following passage as the "famous pedal digression" (qtd. in Schmidt 5):

> I love their little feet; in all
> Of Russia you will scarce discover

Three pairs of well-formed female feet.
Oh! I for long could not forget
Two little feet… Bechilled and gloomy
I constantly recall them, and
In dream they agitate my heart. (ch. 1, XXX; 15)

[203] These voyeurs, as will be seen in Chapter 4, were often rich patrons who could ask sexual favours from the dancers backstage.

[204] "Le Rat . . . connaît si bien l'influence que la lorgnette peut exercer sur son avenir, qu'il cherche toujours à se mettre le plus possible en evidence."

[205] "le jeune Rat . . . se met à trottiner le long des trottoirs, en se laissant peu effaroucher par les oeillades des *flâneurs*."

[206] "est capable de se mettre à sa poursuite comme un vulgaire gendarme."

[207] For Cuvardic the *flâneur* would develop his perspective only from the second point of view, not the third (18).

[208] "L'Excentricité, cet autre fruit du terroir anglais, le produit [l'imprévu] aussi, mais d'une autre manière, d'une façon effrénée, sauvage, aveugle."

[209] He died there in 1874 and seems to have been buried locally. The French music journal *Le Ménestrel* records his passing, noting that he was one of the best piano teachers in Paris, and adding that he taught his daughter Teresa, a renowned pianist herself (320).

[210] "Nuestros deberes para con el público están todos refundidos en el respeto a la sociedad y a la opinión. Respetando la sociedad nos apartamos de todo acto que pueda profanar sus fueros . . . o llamar la atención general de un modo escandaloso; respetando la opinión, nos adaptamos a los usos y prácticas sociales del país en que vivimos, armonizamos con las modas reinantes, ajustamos nuestra conducta moral al espíritu de verdad y de justicia que existe siempre en el criterio público, el cual nos sirve como de faro en medio de los escollos de que está sembrado el mar de las pasiones, y nos aprovechamos, en suma, de todas las ventajas que ofrece el hábito de contemporizar con las convenciones sociales, de que la opinión es el árbitro supremo."

[211] "je suis si compliqué et imaginatif, au point de m'inventer des sentiments, et de donner aux autres l'impression d'être très sentimentales, quand en vérité je ne suis qu'un sceptique désabusé qui ne croit a rien ni a personne et qui se pose en victime de la vie. Mais, si on ne se forme pas des complications cérébrales, l'existence est monotone."

[212] Cuevas appears in the documentary "Le Bal du siècle" speaking in a markedly foreign-sounding French. A preview of the video is available for public viewing.

[213] "la política del nombre en el dandismo es crucial por la constante reinvención, y se expresa como una pose o andamiaje que transforma a sus portadores en viva contradicción con sus formas de aparecer o representarse."

[214] For Silvia Molloy, the pseudonym might also point to his conflicted relationship with his friend Fernando Santiván, and would constitute "his first homoerotic fiction: a fiction that covers his loss, the impossibility of union with the object of love"

(271) (su primera ficción homoerótica: una ficción que cifra la pérdida, la imposiblidad de unión con el objeto amado).

[215] "Cuevas, como la poesía moderna, se salta todas las explicaciones. Es una poesía modernísima en carne y hueso. . . . su marquesado es parte de la obra maestra de su transformación. El marquesado existió. Se trata de un título para americanos comprado en España y revalidado por Cuevas. Tenemos mayores derechos a dicho título centenares de chilenos, entre ellos los Argandoña, de la Serena. ¿Lo ambicionamos? No. De ninguna manera. Nosotros lo echaríamos a perder. Está en buenas manos. Está en las mejores manos del mundo."

[216] "On a pensé que c'était une attitude mondaine, une sorte de jeu théâtral destiné à se faire passer pour excentrique et amuser la galerie et les journalistes. En fait, mes parents adoraient tous deux les animaux et ces pékinois étaient un véritable lien entre eux deux."

[217] Anecdote related by Peter J. Johnson, a historian at the Rockefeller Archive Center, and friend of David Rockefeller.

[218] All his letters to Bibesco are in French, except for this one.

[219] "un dandismo más latinoamericano, errático, fugaz, de pose y paródico."

[220] Sontag understands Camp as "Dandyism in the age of mass culture."

[221] "Mais, hélas! la marée montante de la démocratie, qui envahit tout et qui nivelle tout, noie jour à jour ces derniers représentants de l'orgueil humain et verse des flots d'oubli sur les traces de ces prodigieux mirmidons."

[222] "tous participent du même caractère d'opposition et de révolte . . . de ce besoin . . . de combattre et de détruire la trivialité."

[223] "A toi, par pudeur je t'a dit que je ne m'intéressais pas a Felix. Mas il faut que je te disse la vérité je pense a luis constamment, et je voudrais tant l'arracher aux dangers que le guettent et veiller sur luis. Je voudrais l'aider, le soigner, le guider vers le port de salut et ne l'abandonner jamais. Felix c'est mon Hamlet plein de poésie et de contradictions; dangereux dans sa faiblesse et attendrissant dans son charme égoïste d'enfant."

[224] "on peut s'amuser a broder et s'inventer des romans."

[225] "Cela m'a fait plaisir de voir toute l'aristocratie d'Europe dans la salle . . . C'était une soirée parfaite de perfection, d'élégance, de snobisme, de fausseté, de frivolité, et d'apparence de bonheur parfait."

[226] "[El] cinismo y el descaro en la defensa extraordinariamente inteligente de su derecho a la diferencia, hicieron de Novo, el Óscar Wilde mexicano."

[227] "[El escritor] hace de la apariencia de dandy su método publicitario y convierte el uso de la polvera en público y la ronda de accesorios vívidamente a su obra. Para ser reconocido, Novo combina opulencia idiomática y banalidad y —al no permitírsele conjuntar el sexo y el erotismo— se afilia a la imagen del mundo como totalidad estética."

[228] "En su puesta en escena reinventa nuevas formas de aparecer y desaparecer a la vez. Es llamativo cómo la 'afectación dandi' puede desplazarse a posibles estrategias

públicas de exhibición o a la vez ser un refugio estetizado de lugares a contrapelo del poder, como será el tráfico de alteridades sexuales en suspenso. Hay una tensión y una fuga en el protocolo dandi. Por definición el dandi se apartará de las etiquetas conociéndolas muy bien, olfato que cultiva para esquivar socialmente a quienes lo dejan anclado en un lugar reconocible."

[229] "Le masque donne à voir une réalité forgée par soi et seulement cela, une réalité étudiée avec soin, façonnée, maquillée, artificielle, une réalité qui est le produit d'une volonté agissante et l'expression d'un culte de la forme."

[230] "Chile era la valla, el obstáculo, aquello que le impedía ser."

[231] "Yo me la saqué [la colonia] como quien se quita una camiseta sucia."

[232] "L'expression . . . évoque un monde cosmopolite, superficiel, snob, parfois vénéneux, souvent dépravé, qui finit par se dégrader dans ce que Loelia Westminster appelait la 'Nescafé Society', ultime étape dans la décadence du goût avant la vulgaire jetset d'aujourd'hui."

[233] "la véritable innovation introduite par la Café Society réside dans l'apparition des Sud-Américains parmi les gens qui donnent le ton."

[234] "Le Marquis de Cuevas est l'un des personnages les plus atypiques et les plus typés de la Café Society."

[235] "Margaret comme tu es démodée."

[236] "un monde qui restera comme un dernier sursaut de Grand Siècle, rapidement submergé par l'ordre bourgeois et la société de consommation."

[237] "Les fêtes et les bals furent . . . l'incarnation de la Café Society."

[238] "Les donneurs de bal entendent créer une œuvre d'art totale, mettant en scène la Café Society."

[239] "Se mettre en scène a toujours plu à l'aristocratie."

[240] "ils consacrent leur fortune à un art de vivre qui fut celui d'une aristocratie française, la quelle soit n'en a plus les moyens, soit préfère, vu l'air du temps, se faire plus discret."

[241] "rendre hommage et de participer au phénomène de la création."

[242] "Un baile de disfraces es la apoteosis explicable del chileno que vivió en disfraces, modas y en lo suntuario."

[243] "Será el mismo, el que conocimos, pequeño, moreno, sin cobre, y siempre al acecho de algo?"

[244] "Este marqués, como vemos, es creación personal, esto es, un ser original, hecho por sí mismo."

[245] "la indumentaria adquirió la peligrosa cualidad de seconder y/o transformer la identidad del usuario, ya no era possible a primera vista conocer la procedencia social de los desconocidos en la ciudad"

[246] "Baile de fantasia como una continuación . . . de esta mascarada"

[247] "Una vez que se propague la moda Harem y cuando ya la mujer se haya apropiado plenamente el uso del pantalón, van á ocurrir conflictos como éste: nadie sabrá

si los que van ahí son doña Dominga Rebusnante con su hijo Manuel ó don Domingo Idem con su hijita Manuela."

[248] "Por aquellos tiempos Cuevas ya tenía fama de hombre refinado, artista incipiente y contábase que en las selectas veladas ofrecidas por don Agustín Edwards Mac-Clure y su esposa en su casa-quinta . . . todo era dirigido por él con exquisito gusto."

[249] "Luis XIV y Luis XV tenían allí toda su Corte con sus marquesas de cabellos empolvados y lunares artificiales, desprendidas al azar de los cuadros mas encantadores de Felipe de Champaña y de Wateau."

[250] "esos *parvenus* de la Revolución francesa."

[251] "En una sociedad de ordinario algo apática como la nuestra, en que los temas de conversación no son mui abundantes, en que apénas ocurre algo sensacional cada año, un baile de fantasia es un gran alivio social: proporciona asunto para que hablen todos, aun los ménos favorecidos con el don de la elocuencia."

[252] "Ante todo, el baile del 28 de Julio es una espléndida revelacion del buen gusto de la sociedad de Santiago."

[253] "cosmopilitismo delirante."

[254] "consacre l'apogée du phénomène."

[255] "pour fêter un monde qui ne sait pas qu'il est ne train de mourir."

[256] "homme sans visage."

[257] "complété par celui des formes et des couleurs."

[258] "Le goût se fait connaître par des signes extérieurs."

[259] "si l'honnêteté est une manière d'être homme, ou femme, elle se fait connaître par l'aisance, un je ne sais quoi d'intelligence, charme, qui distingue l'homme et la femme du rang et de l'Etat."

[260] "il balance entre l'essor et la marche . . . ce n'est pas que déjà il danse, mais l'un de ses bras étendu et l'autre avec ampleur déployant l'aile lyrique . . . Il est en position de départ et d'entrée, il écoute, il attend le moment juste, il le cherche dans nos yeux, de la pointe frémissante de ses doigts, à l'extrémité de ce bras étendu il compte, et l'autre bras volatil avec l'ample cape se prépare à seconder le jarret. Moitié faon et moitié oiseau, moitié sensibilité et moitié discours, moitié aplomb et moitié déjà la détente!"

[261] "l'alliance de cette singularité et du talent d'imitation . . . Il se doit d'être insaisissable comme Protée, en prenant toutes les formes."

[262] "L'inauthenticité et la variation perpétuelle sont les clefs de voûte de cet art du paraître: l'homme à succès, en ne livrant aux autres que des simulacres, peut être lui-même spectateur de leurs erreurs et de leurs travers et s'assurer ainsi une position dominante."

[263] "Je n'imite personne."

[264] "C'était un catalyseur de talents, à l'image de Diaghilev."

[265] "Il rêvait un peu d'être un deuxième Diaguilev."

[266] "el spectacular paso hacia atrás en la historia de nuestra vieja sociedad."

[267] "Mi casa es un centro español, y mi servidumbre española. Cuando Cárdenas estaba de embajador en Norteamérica e iba Nueva York, mi casa era sucursal de la

Embajada. . . . Desde el primer momento estuve al lado del Caudillo, a quien dediqué mi esfuerzo y mi entusiasmo, con el acendrado españolismo de siempre que fluye en mis venas."

[268] "Le triomphe du Ballet a la première de Monte Carlo . . . a été impressionnante. Cela m'a fait plaisir de voir toute l'aristocratie d'Europe dans la salle: . . . La Larroche Foucauld, d'Harcourt, et Gramont. Tous les Castesá. Ma chere vielle Madame Bittancourt. Enfin Lady Mildforkhave, . . . les Ambassadeurs de passage et tous les hommes en habit, et le femmes en grande toilette, on dirait que jamais il y avait eu de guerre. "

[269] "une grande cape noir avec un intérieur en soie rouge et il jouait cette cape. C'était un acteur.

[270] "sa vie était comme une pièce de théâtre."

[271] "il était un spectacle en lui-même."

[272] "public de merde comment vous n'applaudissez pas des merveilles pareilles."

[273] "Je me dois à la France."

[274] "n'étaient pas déguisés, mais costumés."

[275] "He visto pasar velozmente bellezas inexpresables, que una vez quietas y fijas han perdido su encantadora celestía. La movilidad es eterna como el tiempo; lo estático es una especie de muerte. . . . lo hermoso llega a lo sublime en el rasgo infinito de la idea."

[276] "el *flâneur* será el sujeto que perciba la modernidad, experiencia de lo transitorio, lo fugaz, lo fugitive."

[277] "C'était plutôt un spectacle qu'un bal."

[278] "le Marquis est incapable de dire non."

[279] "Pendant une nuit entière, des fantômes vêtus de soie, de satin et de velours par la haute couture parisienne, hantèrent les abords d'un lac, puis tous s'évanouirent dans la brume du petit matin."

[280] "une société où la recherche effrénée du plaisir aboutit à une espèce de danse macabre, dont le rythme s'accélère jusqu'à ce que les danseurs s'effondrent et cèdent leur place à d'autres."

[281] "l'homosexualité joue un rôle majeur."

[282] "Le Marquis de Cuevas a sauvé Biarritz."

[283] "Si je ne trouve pas de temps pour mourir, je le trouve moins pour écrire." Cuevas for the most part disregards accents in French, and makes many spelling mistakes. Spelling in the transcriptions has been amended, except where the word is not recognisably French.

[284] "lettres rondes comme les roues d'un carrosse et qui semblent reposer sur de hauts essieux."

[285] "Quand j'étais a l'école, je m'avais composé un 'moto' que j'écrivais sur la premiers page blanche de mes livres : A Dracone liber te ipsum. La traduction littérale c'est: Du Dragon délivre toi—toi même. Je n'ai jamais réussi, et enfant, déjà je savais que je serais toujours vaincu."

[286] "Pour les âmes délicates tout est nostalgie, regret, tristesse douce et résignée . . . Je peux parler déjà de la vie comme quelqu'un qui a vécu intensément et qui s'est apaisé. Je me rappelle et je m'effraye de tout ce que c'est passé comme si je lisais l'histoire de Tristan, de Mélisande, de Carmen ou de Werther! Il y a l'écho de toute souffrance en nous et cela nous unit!"

[287] "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle / Que nul ne peut apprivoiser."

[288] "c'est une de nos grandes misères: nous ne sommes pas mêmes capables d'être longtemps malheureux."

[289] "je n'avais plus envie de mourir depuis que j'étais réellement malheureux."

[290] "je suis si compliqué et imaginatif, au point de m'inventer des sentiments, et de donner aux autres l'impression d'être très sentimentales, quand en vérité je ne suis qu'un sceptique désabusé qui ne croit a rien ni a personne et qui se pose en victime de la vie. Mais, si on ne se forme pas des complications cérébrales, l'existence est monotone. . . . Je vis tout a fait dans la réalité et si je m'amuse a faire le fou, cela n'est qu'une pose voulu. Je sais chérie, que la vie ne sera jamais comme nous la souhaitons. Nous avons trop d'imagination et nous voulons aussi des choses absolues, quand malheureusement il faut se contenter de 'l'a peu près'."

[291] "Soyons optimistes. La vieillesse n'accable que ceux qui sont nés pessimistes et craintifs et qui ont un plaisir maladif à se plaindre de tout"

[292] "On n'aime pas inspirer la pitié, elle est trop proche du mépris."

[293] "J'ai été très occupé a m'empêcher de mourir. . . . J'ai passé Noel et nouvel an dans le coma. Je me suis mis a travailler dans le livre que Putnam me réclame."

[294] "el que se comunica por carta con su amigo, disfruta las ventajas del monólogo, y elude aquellas interrupciones que fragmentan la conversación ordinaria; evita los esguinces y desviaciones a que en esta orilla constantemente el diálogo alterno."

[295] "en robe de mandarin en disgrâce . . . Je me suis laissé photographier et interroger et après je suis remonté pour venir vous écrire."

[296] "A veces, decirle a alguien algo en secreto nos saca un gran peso de encima, el hecho de comunicarnos con un ser amado hace el dolor más llevadero, pero la gente que sufre en silencio y se concentra en sí misma, bebe el cáliz de la amargura hasta sus heces."

[297] These spelling mistakes have been corrected in the footnotes, for the sake of clarity.

[298] "Les êtres élus comme vous savent se libérer par la pensée. La vie s'enrichit et donne l'occasion de s'exprimer dans le langage des dieux. Pauvres de nous qui étouffons dans la confusion sans savoir nous définir avec clarté."

[299] "champs d'action . . . je ne peux faire que mon travail modeste de persévérance, de patience et de volonté, de résignation et de force de caractère et de renoncement."

[300] "Marthe, l'unique, Ma Muse et mon miroir!"

[301] "petite martyre Sainte Sophie. Je te vénère."

[302] “Zosia écris moi, mais écris longuement. / Fais une écriture moins élégante mais plus réduite pour que tu puisses écrire beaucoup de lignes sur une page, et remplis plusieurs.”

[303] “Ton vieux Christophe.”

[304] “el favorito de las viejas.”

[305] “Je lui ai donné un peu d’illusion d’être encore jeune, et cela lui a fait du bien.”

[306] “Je pense beaucoup a toi, a ton angoisse, a ta faiblesse.”

[307] “petite orpheline, comme moi!”

[308] “Je suis mystique, mais a la façon des Satyres. Et tout ça se passe au cerveau et je peux vivre en ascète.”

[309] “Oscar Wilde disait qu’on résiste a tout sauf a la tentation. Et bien moi j’ai trouvé le moyen, je reste au lit. Ah, oui, je suis très ascétique.”

[310] “J’ai des moments d’angoisse insurmontables, les jours sont trop longs. Je ne peux pas lire, je dors mal, et des pensées cuisantes comme des épines arrachées a un Buisson ardent me torturent le cerveau et le cœur! Quoi faire Toi tu m’aides tellement quand tu es avec moi. Mais si ta présence me manqué, je succombe! Peut être dans un semaine j’irai pour quelques jours a New York. Je ne peux pas continuer ainsi parce que c’est trop cruel. Je n’ai rien a faire. La gaité des êtres autour de moi, l’inconscience de tous a qui je cache mon malaise, me blesse malgré moi. Il n’y a de pire souffrance que celle qu’on n’avoue pas.”

[311] “J’espère que tu es bien accompagné et que tu n’as pas des nuits solitaires que nous rendent enclins à la neurasthénie. . . . Paris sublime. Les Ballets gentils, mais cela ne peut pas se comparer a ce que nous avons fait ensemble.”

[312] “Comment va ta santé?”

[313] “Quand vous viendrez nous écouterons la musique pour attirer l’oiseau . . . la flèche vous l’avez adressé droit a mon cœur.”

[314] “le Phoenix blessé a l’aile puisque voyageuse comme Mercure, vous avez des ailes aussi aux pieds.”

[315] “Yuri, ton cœur bat comme celui d’un oiseau.”

[316] “Un oiseau blanc de toute beauté . . . / Qui vit en toute liberté.”

[317] “Je ne veux pas le lier à La Fontaine et je le veux seulement de vous.”

[318] “Danse de Miasmes. Danse accompagné de musique des Moustiques.”

[319] “Vierge-Oiseau,” “Ange Blanc.”

[320] “toutes les forces de la décomposition se ruent dans une ronde effrénée autour du jeune chasseur. / Les puissances de la corruption se jettent sur son corps pour le déchirer.”

[321] “je suis resté très préoccupé de votre phénix blessé d’une flèche. Ce n’est pas du feu, que je crains pour lui, mais de la médiocrité des artistes de notre époque et surtout de la ‘incompréhension’ de Madame Rosselli.”

[322] “L’Aigrette n’est plus qu’un tache blanche / qui diminue dans l’ombre qui grandit.”

[323] "D'accord avec vous je voulais que l'oiseau de toute beauté soit la victime de la bassesse de l'envie et de la haine que les êtres issues de la pourriture, de la crasse et de la laideur sentent pour la perfection et le raffinement."

[324] "Chacun veut interpréter a sa façon: danseurs, chorégraphes, compositeurs, etc."

[325] "D'accord avec vous je voulais que l'oiseau de toute beauté soit la victime de la bassesse de l'envie et de la haine de la laideur et la pourriture et de la bassesse contre la beauté pure splendide et triomphante. La russe diabolique du génie des marais, aidé des miasmes putrefactes (sic) et des fièvres mortelles et de toutes les émanations de pourriture qui sortent de la base pour détruire l'oiseau de toute beauté, prenant comme instrument celui qui l'aime est une transposition poétique de ce qu'on voit chaque jour: l'opportunisme, l'égoïsme, le matérialisme, contre l'idéal."

[326] "Si un jour je dois y renoncer, au moins on aura blessé l'oiseau rare pour l'enchantement du publique que s'y souviendra de l'avoir vu mourir en beauté sur la scène!"

[327] "L'aigrette qu'on voit morte par terre, reste morte, mais le symbole de l'idéal, de l'inobtenible (sic), de l'intouchable, nous le verrons triomphant immaculé de blancheur et éclatant, planer sur la bassesse et la pourriture, indestructible pendant quelques secondes à travers un orage."

[328] "Era tan grande el dolor, que me hacía dar aquellos quejidos, y tan excesiva la suavidad que me pone este grandísimo dolor, que no hay que desear que se quite."

[329] "J'ai décidé l'année prochaine de faire un nouveau ballet avec votre argument de L'Oiseau Blessé avec une belle musique et un chorégraphie de Skibine. . . . Il faut une partition neuve et des décors."

[330] "N'ayant pas des moyens d'expression Je me sens médiocre et sans beauté et la vieillesse m'effraye parce que j'avance en âge avec un cœur trop jeune privé d'attraction extérieure pour attirer mes semblables!"

[331] "Je suis dégouté du Ballet, de la médiocrité, du mauvais gout, de la pédanterie juive, de la mauvaise foi, de l'hypocrisie, de la laideur."

[332] "Le Ballet pour moi c'est une croix."

[333] "Jeune homme, avant que votre mauvais goût se développe, j'essayerai de vous sauver de ce cancer de l'esprit en vous faisant connaitre de personnes d'une élite que peut être vous n'aurez jamais l'occasion d'approcher."

[334] "Si je pouvais, je ferais une croisade pour perpétuer la beauté. On devrait enseigner aux jeun a respecter le droit, a aimer la beauté, et a considérer comme un crime d'avilir l'humanité. . . . Mais la société moderne détruit les belles chose, ne reconnait des droits qu'a la masse anonyme chaque individu deviendra une chose, propriété de l'Etat, esclaves de la masse."

[335] "la mort de l'esprit et l'abaissement de l'être au niveau le plus bas et le plus abjecte."

[336] "On ne s'ennuie pas quand on agit poussé par la passion, mais quand on rentre dans la sagesse, comme c'est mon cas, on s'éteint."

[337] "La vie est une série de tristesses que se confondent dans une monotonie grise très lourde a supporter . . . l'ennuie . . . est le pire ennemi de l'âme. Dans l'enfer doit régner l'ennuie comme la suprême punition pour ceux qui n'ont pas été charitables"

[338] Los chilenos que, veo muy poco, siguen igual. Baby Errazuriz furiosa de no encontrar el hombre millonario dispuesto a expiar sus faltas uniéndose a ella en matrimonio. Inés Granier, como diuca soberbia, protesta en la soledad de su boudoir que, la generación presente no reconozca en ella la reencarnación de Mme. Recamier. María Luisa Mac Clure indignada de que los franceses no hagan una ley especial que les permita elegir a Agustín presidente de Francia. En fin, cada uno se agita y se amarga por alguna preocupación diferente y se está mejor lejos del torbellino de ajitaciones mezquinas.

[339] "Je n'ai pas l'habitude de me plaindre mais pour que vous m'excusez, il faut que je vous explique les raisons de mon crépuscule sombre entouré de papillons précurseur de la nuit sans fin."

[340] "C'est horrible d'être vieux, invalide et l'imagination en feu . . . Comme je me déprime pensant aux difficultés matérielles de réaliser des féeries desquelles je rêve dans la solitude . . . Je me devrais a moi même d'être milliardaire et je ne suis qu'un mendiant."

[341] "La misère en vison."

[342] "Il avait une chemise en mauvais état et quand on lui demandait de l argent il disait regarde, l'état ou je suis, je n ai même pas pour m acheter une chemise."

[343] "jugaba el papel de pobre no deprimido en la opereta santiaguina de la primera década del siglo, enmascarando su dolor de no haber nacido en cuna aristocrática."

[344] "dejan huellas fuertes, que más tarde sirven de motores para despegarse del mundo humillante y volar a las alturas."

[345] "Para demostrar la calidad de sus relaciones, el 'snob' ya no deja caer en su conversación, como al descuido, el nombre del Marqués de Cuevas, por ejemplo, sino que obtiene éxito seguro diciendo con la misma indiferencia: "Vigorio se encuentra en Cannes". Vigorio es el nombre del loro del Marqués."

[346] Siete médicos me vieron y hubo varias juntas. Felizmente ya pasó sin dejar mas resultado desagradable que las cuentas de los médicos.

[347] "Margaret est partie quand les médecins lui ont dit que il n'y avait plus danger de mort."

[348] "Margaret a la grippe. Moi pas."

[349] "l'affaiblissement cause par la pénicilline."

[350] "homme insatiable, savourant en gourmet chaque joie de son existence et souffrant, selon son médecin, d'une maladie nommée 'intensité.'"

[351] "Je sens le poids des siècles. Peut être que j'ai été tiré de nouveau dans ce monde d'une des momies du musée du Caire que m'ont tan impressionné. Peut être que j'ai vécu avec Felix aux bords du Nil. Mais qu'est ce que j'ai bien pu être? Chien, crocodile ? Prêtre, courtisane ? Magistrat, ou esclave noir?"

[352] "Je vieillis, Zoshinka, et je ne me le pardonne pas. Je suis a la dérive."

[353] “Quelle belle statue! Je ne l’avais jamais trouvé jolie, mais l’âge lui a donné quelque chose d’impalpable, une finesse esquive et la lumière bleu turquoise de se yeux était si brillante que j’étais fasciné.”

[354] “merveilleuse lettre au sujet de l’Infante.”

[355] “Malgré mon âge et mes expériences, je n’ai rien appris de la vie, et voilà ma grande erreur. Aussi la tienne!”

[356] “Il a peur de la jeunesse. Il sait que la jeunesse est cruelle, indifférente et froide.”

[357] “les êtres sont esclaves de leurs passions, de leur idéal ou de leur snobisme . . . J’ai toujours avancé dans la vie les yeux ouverts et je savais a fond la vérité et que dans la balance je n’ai jamais eu de poids pour compter pour mes amis qui étaient épris des grands de la terre, et c’était uniquement pour être poli que j’ai toujours prétendu y croire.. . . la souffrance que donnent l’égoïsme des êtres aimés, vaut ou c’est l’équivalent du capital placé dans une mauvaise affaire et on s’embourbe et on s’en dette pour sauver les sommes [illegible]. . . Je n’ai plus de papier.”

[358] “ma seule amie.”

[359] “Boubou a le cœur fatigué et c’est impossible pour moi aller en Angleterre. Je ne voudrais pas qu’il remarque mon absence quand le suprême moment arrivera pour lui.”

[360] “trois docteurs en désaccord. . . . Grande alarme au tour de moi. Mais je restais très tranquille parce que je pense qu’on doit sentir venir la mort si elle s’approche, et moi je ne la crains pas parce que je ne la sens pas venir.”

[361] “Vous rappelez vous de l’histoire du Shah qui se promenait parmi ses rosiers et voit venir un des plus beaux et le préféré de tous les beaux garçons de sa suite qui lui dit: Sire, prêtez moi le plus léger et le plus véloce de vos chevaux pour atteindre aujourd’hui même ma maison d’Ispahan.

“Pourquoi mon fils, questionne le Shah.

“Parce que, Sire, je viens de rencontrer la mort qui m’a effrayé d’un regard menaçant.

“Le Shah essayant de le tranquilliser signe un ordre pour que son écuyer donne a son jeune amie la meilleure de ses montures.

“Quand le jeune homme était parti, le Shah continua sa promenade solitaire, et très triste après cet incident, se surprend de voir venir la mort a sa rencontre, et quand elle approchait il profita pour lui dire: Pourquoi as tu menacé mon jeune page, c’était pour lui faire peur?

Sire réponds, l’implacable: Je n’ai pas voulu lui faire peur ni le menacer. J’avais reçu l’ordre de le prendre ce soir a Ispahan et je l’ai regardé, surprise, de le voir si loin.”

[362] “pour échapper a la mente implacable des séraphins obscurs de la destinée.”

[363] “Je passe mes journées a attendre, Margaret de Cuevas, Orphée ou la mort. Vous voyez chérie que comme programme c’est rempli.”

[364] "j'ai vu la mort tout en noir entrer dans ma chambre . . . Je luis ai dit 'Bonsoir la mort' et elle m'a répondu 'Bonsoir Marquis.' Mais je lui ai fait peur et elle s'est envolée."

[365] Cuevas's friend, José Luis de Vilallonga claims that he overheard that Cuevas had given money to Le Pen to found his extreme political movement (95). However, Vilallonga's account of the duel is inaccurate and full of imaginative recreations; he even makes himself the second witness to Cuevas, so that his testimony cannot be taken very seriously.

[366] "no hay duda de que han llegado el paroxismo del ridículo."

[367] "veas como esto ha sido un escándalo mundial."

[368] "La patience constante, c'est l'héroïsme en permanence."

[369] "La poursuite d'un idéal fait des héros."

[370] "La vie facile nous rend puérils. C'est dans l'acharnement de la lute que l'âme se trempe et que l'être exulte."

[371] "Votre Cid s'effrite comme une pierre antique projetée par l'ouragan contre un sol aride et desséché."

[372] "le triomphe de la troupe partout où elle passe est un baume pour les blessures. . . . On m'a acclamé a la grande inauguration d'Annecy. J'a dû parler... et après, la confrontation avec soi même quand on a éteint les bougies, quel vide!"

[373] "Je suis fichu! Je viens de faire la gangrène au poumon. Je sui condamné et si je n'étais pas si ancien on m'aurait amputé le sommet du poumon droit, mais je ne résisterais pas l'opération et je dois vivre avec la menace constante."

[374] "Le plus désagréable c'est que sans l'emploie de la streptomycine on est puant. Je savais comment créer un tube de ventilation de mon poumon a la bouche et la puanteur me plaisait. Un avant gout de la mort. Je ne me connaissais pas et je ne savais pas que je pouvais me complaire dans la pourriture."

[375] "des fractures spontanées ont brisé mes côtes. . . Une arthrose cervicale me tient le bras droit et la main victimes des nerfs coincés qui se révoltent."

[376] "curiosité pour savoir si dans ce duel a mort de l'Orient et de l'Occident, l'Amérique après des souffrances morales et matérielles deviendra-t-elle cultivée. J'en doute. Il faudrait tout détruire, tuer tout le monde commençant par les Rockefellers et ensuite repeupler ce vaste continent par tous les nouveaux pauvres de l'Europe. Je n'aurai pas le temps de commencer le massacre. Dommage! La pénicilline me détraque le système nerveux et me rende agressif. Peut-être que tout ce que je vous dis vous choquera comme de grosses bêtises."

[377] "Je ne pense pas mourir. Je lutte pour rester parmi vous."

[378] "Este es el último ballet que veré en mi vida. . . . Después de este ballet, puedo contemplar mi vida y decir que no fue tiempo perdido."

[379] "Il nous lisait des poésies qu'il avait écrit et parlait de ses danseurs. . . . De ses triomphes. . . . Il parlait de sa mère comme quelqu'un de mystérieuse, qu'il adorait, comme un espèce de déesse. Il racontait l'histoire de sa vie, mais une vie pas exactement imaginé mais un peu fantaisiste."

[380] "Mes chéris."

[381] "'Georges de Cuevas: Pourvoyeur de Rêves' . . . il avait du sang de Don Quichotte et de la Petite Sirène d'Andersen"

[382] "Sa mort, qu'il a vécue tant de fois avec le courage de cet hidalgo . . . finit en apothéose avec La Belle au Bois dormant. La mort réveillée par le baiser de l'amour, a eu le dernier mot."

[383] "esta mañana . . . por los diarios supe de la muerte de Cuevitas. . . . Tú y yo somos de los pocos que podemos apreciar en toda su magnificencia la apoteosis final del ballet que fue la vida del Marqués, porque asistimos a los primeros actos hace ya tantos años. Me he acordado de tantas cosas y he pensado también en ti y en el Santiago de nuestra juventud, cuando todos éramos marqueses…."

[384] "Todas íbamos a ser reinas."

[385] "Le silence est pire que tout et ressemble à la mort."

[386] "alma nacional."

[387] "ambassadeur itinérant de Terpsichore."

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