

FROM PUBLICITY TO INTIMACY:  
THE POSTER IN FIN-DE-SIÈCLE PARIS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Understood by people of all ages, loved by the masses, the poster speaks to the universal spirit: it has come to satisfy new aspirations and this love of beauty which the education of taste spreads and develops without interruption. On the outside and in the home it has replaced the paintings which used to be visible at the doorstep of palaces, under the vaults of cloisters and churches; it is the roving, ephemeral picture that an era, infatuated with vulgarization and eager for change, called for. Its art has neither less meaning nor less prestige than the art of the fresco; only those who are imbued with the qualifications required of any ornamental enterprise are successful.

---Roger Marx, preface to  
*Masters of the Poster*, 1897

This quotation, by the highly influential historian, art critic, and poster enthusiast, Roger Marx (1859-1913), serves as an indication of the high status and popularity that characterized the color lithographic poster in 1890s Paris. The first poster emerged in the streets of Paris in the early nineteenth century mainly in the form of a small, black and white advertisement filled with large amounts of text and minimal artistic imagery. However, as the end of the century approached, the poster underwent a transformation and revitalization as a result of the various improvements made to the technologies which produced lithographs and their more sophisticated counterpart—the color lithograph. The pioneering work of the French poster artist Jules Chéret in the field of color lithography was also a major contribution in elevating the poster from a purely functional advertisement to an art form that could be admired in the same way as a painting or sculpture. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the poster's expansion from an exterior, public phenomenon to an interior and private art form in 1890s Paris. This examination of the poster's expansion begins at mid-century during the Second Empire when Haussmannization modernized the appearance and structure of the old, medieval

city of Paris. This was also the time in which Jules Chéret's colorful poster designs began decorating and refreshing the gray, monotonous buildings that lined the large boulevards of the city. Thus, with its emergence in Haussmannized Paris, the color lithographic poster maintained a function as an advertisement for various entertainment venues and also became a type of exterior art in the newly standardized urban environment. Eventually posters became so popular and sought after by Parisians that many were ripped down as soon as they were pasted on street hoardings or billboards. Joan Halperin notes that the French anarchist writer and art critic Félix Fénéon (1861-1944) "invited his readers to look at art in the streets. There instead of 'dirty linen in gold frames' he found a kind of real-life art, colored posters."<sup>1</sup> Fénéon himself declared:

It's an outdoor exhibition, all year long and wherever you go...they don't pretend to be precious stuff; they'll be torn down in a little while and others will be put up, and so on: they don't give a damn! That's great!—and that's art, by God, and the best kind, mixed in with life, art without any bluffing or boasting and within easy reach of ordinary guys.<sup>2</sup>

While the rise of consumerism and the decadent spirit that pervaded this period's culture kept the poster an important form of public advertisement in fin-de-siècle Paris, the poster also developed into an aesthetic feature of the Parisian's private and interior world. In the following chapters, I seek to explain how the poster's incorporation within the interior realm not only coincides with, but is a direct result of, the cultural shift that occurred in French society beginning in the 1880s and continuing into the 1890s. This cultural shift centered on one's immersion within a private and intimate domestic space. I will also address how the Parisian's involvement in the external world of the cafés, public parks, and spaces of spectacle and leisure that served as the subject matter for

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Halperin, *Félix Fénéon: Aesthete & Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 261.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

many of the Impressionist paintings in the 1860s and 1870s, was mostly abandoned in the last two decades of the century in exchange for more intimate and quiet depictions of life. This social evolution, which generated a change in art, parallels the poster's public-to-intimate shift occurring in the last two decades of the century. The subject matter that dominated painting during the late nineteenth century projected a sense of enclosure and presented the viewer with an environment that appeared to be concealed from the troubles of modern existence afflicting the outside world. Although the subject matter depicted in posters remains tied to the public world of entertainment, the fact that advertisements were brought into an intimate and private space is compelling and significant for this thesis' overall argument.

In addition to the increased number of scenes of interior life in art during the 1880s and 1890s, there was also, fittingly, a renewed interest in the decorative arts. This interest culminated in the 1890s and in the early years of the twentieth century with the Art Nouveau style of interior furnishings. As the late nineteenth-century writer and art critic Edmond de Goncourt wrote, "Such a person's real existence was no longer exterior as it was in the eighteenth century, but was defined by the inner spaces of his house, which he endeavored to make agreeable, pleasant, and amusing to the eye."<sup>3</sup> Goncourt's statement, while likely pertaining more to the rise of and necessity for the decorative arts in late nineteenth-century society, also appropriately connects to the poster's dual function as a public announcement and interior decoration.

In conjunction with my discussion of the poster's shift from a public to an intimate space, I argue that two forms of interiorization are detected in the poster designs

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 120.

of Jules Chéret. The first form of interiorization is the physical, literal placement of the posters and lithographs on the walls of the interior of homes and places of popular entertainment, such as the famous Chat Noir cabaret in the northern area of Paris known as Montmartre. I examine this in greater detail in chapter four. The color lithographic posters that were printed and actually hung on the streets as advertisements were unlikely to end up hanging in a Parisian apartment. Nevertheless, it is certain that several printers by the 1890s had begun issuing sets of limited edition prints that were bought by art collectors. Four panels by Jules Chéret executed in 1891 *La Pantomime*, *La Comédie*, *La Danse*, and *La Musique* (figs. 1-4) which hung in frames in the interior of the Chat Noir cabaret, were termed “decorative panels” or *panneaux décoratifs* due to the absence of text, as well as their non-commercial purpose. These decorative panels were deliberately created for use in an interior setting. However, the majority of posters, prior to being used as a privatized form of wall art, first acquired popularity on the streets and were then made into smaller copies that could either be preserved in a portfolio or framed and admired like a painting in the home. One example where this method was utilized is Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s famous poster *Moulin Rouge, La Goulue* (fig. 5). After its arrival on the street, it became highly sought after by the public. One of the challenges art collectors faced in trying to collect the actual posters destined for the street was their extremely large size—an issue which I discuss more thoroughly in a later chapter.

The second form of interiorization this thesis discusses involves an examination of the style and subject matter in Chéret’s four panels in the Chat Noir. This form of interiorization conveys a psychological interiority. My analysis examines how posters were increasingly, during the fin-de-siècle, composed of types of imagery and visual

elements evocative of a mental interiorization that reflected French society's fixation on the private world. The idea that posters evolved from their use as commercial advertisements to being placed within the interior of homes and other establishments as decoration in the 1890s and, moreover, that they contained a style and subject matter suggestive of a certain psychological complexity, addresses a widespread cultural interest occurring at this particular moment in French society. This cultural interest, as earlier suggested, concerned one's retreat into the interior world, which manifested itself in the fields of art, literature, and psychology. This retreat dealt not only with one's physical withdrawal from society, but, rather, a retreat into the mind. One art historian effectively summarizes the important connections that existed between art, literature, and psychology in the fin-de-siècle:

By 1890, a preoccupation with interiority was commonplace. Artists, playwrights, and theatrical designers experimented with media and forms that would give shape to the ineffable workings of the self; physicians and neurologists wondered about its anatomical structure and tried to pinpoint its external manifestations; novelists and philosophers speculated on the collapse of boundaries between the self and the world. They also explored the perils and seductions of the exaggerated need for containment that had surfaced within the culture....<sup>4</sup>

One of the dominant artistic movements in fin-de-siècle Paris was Symbolism. The Symbolist artists, who were largely defined by their interest in various mental states, visions, and dreams, held the belief that art could communicate on a deep psychological level with the viewer. Thus, rather than depicting life in realistic terms, the Symbolists focused on using artistic elements in a manner that enhanced sensation and feeling. The psychological studies of this period, specifically those undertaken by the eminent French

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Sidlauskas, *Body, Place, and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 93.

neurologist and teacher to Sigmund Freud, Jean-Martin Charcot, of nervous conditions such as hysteria and neurasthenia were of particular concern and interest to the Symbolists. Hysteria and neurasthenia were conditions thought to be caused by the overstimulation of a newly modernized world on the individual, and spurred such writings as Joris-Karl Huysmans' famous 1884 novel, *A Rebours (Against Nature)*. Debora Silverman confirms the effects of psychology on literature prompted by Charcot's theories in the 1880s: "The clinical states of neurasthenia and degeneration were transposed into literary form by such writers as Edmond de Goncourt, Paul Bourget, J.-K. Huysmans, and Emile Zola, who attributed the qualities of individual degeneration to the nation as a whole."<sup>5</sup>

Another area of art that began receiving an increased amount of attention by artists, due to society's physical and mental interiorization, was decorative art and interior decoration. The notion that art could and should become a part of one's everyday life was both appealing to the mindset of the period and constituted a parallel to the poster's exterior-to-interior expansion. Analogous to the Symbolist principle that art should convey an inner reality versus what appears on the surface, the decoration of one's interior space involved manipulating color and design in such a way as to elicit psychological stimulation. Huysmans experiments with this concept in *A Rebours*, as does Goncourt in his 1881 book, *La Maison d'un artiste*, where each of the main characters, in the case of Goncourt's book the author himself, confines himself in the artistic environment of the home's interior, thus isolating himself from the disturbances of urban life. A recent exhibition catalogue notes that Huysmans' main character, Des

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<sup>5</sup> Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 80.

Esseintes, “decides to ‘immerse himself in the peaceful silence of his house.’ He finds refuge from the turbulent life of the city and makes inventive use of interior spaces constructed for their psychological impact as a substitute for experiences of the outside world.”<sup>6</sup> During the fin-de-siècle, with interior spaces being composed and decorated in order to evoke deep psychological states, it is not implausible to assume also that the posters and color lithographs placed within domestic interiors were intended and designed with this purpose in mind. In other words, poster designers in fin-de-siècle Paris became progressively more attuned to the need to create designs that would speak to a society that had turned inward.

Chapter one of this thesis provides a brief history and definition of the poster. It includes a discussion of the technical process of lithography and its historical development in the nineteenth century. In addition, I examine Chéret’s fundamental role in revitalizing this art form through the improvements he made in color lithography, which spurred the popularization of this medium in Paris during the decades following Haussmannization. Chapter two discusses the urban renewal project of Haussmannization in Paris during the 1850s and 1860s, and the aesthetic and social changes that occurred as a result. In examining Haussmannization, it is my intention to establish a cultural context in which Chéret’s new and colorful poster designs first emerged. This will expose the poster as a predominantly exterior, public form of advertisement and will also illustrate how the consumerism and aesthetic bleakness of the newly transformed city fostered the poster’s success. Chapter three deals with the private sphere and includes an analysis of interiorization both in a physical and psychological

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<sup>6</sup> Hardy S. George, “The Sacred and Profane: An Exploration of Interiors in Fin-de-Siècle Art,” in *Paris 1900* (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma City Museum of Art, 2007), 25.

sense. It also attempts to provide an explanation of why Parisian society began to gravitate away from public life and spectacle toward the intimate and private world as the end of the century approached. Chapter four explores the artistic and cabaret culture that characterized Montmartre. This chapter also contains a detailed analysis of the famous Chat Noir cabaret, which provides the setting for the discussion of Chéret's four decorative panels of 1891. The remaining chapter on Chéret consists of an analysis of the four decorative panels which includes a discussion of how the two forms of interiorization are exhibited in this series. This thesis concludes with a brief look at how the interiorization of French society significantly affected the style and subject matter of the poster designs of the French avant-garde artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE POSTER

A poster, in its most rudimentary form, is a large paper announcement that contains a pictorial element and is displayed on a wall or billboard to the general public.<sup>1</sup> Its distinction from other types of advertising ranges from design, color, composition, pictorial content, to size, reproducibility, and its prominent placement in the street. These factors combine to form the poster's purpose, which is to "draw attention to whatever an advertiser is trying to promote and to impress some message on the passer-by."<sup>2</sup> As stated earlier, the Parisian poster of the 1890s, became hugely popular not only for the purposes of advertising, but as a collector's item that would either be used as decoration in someone's home or preserved in a portfolio.<sup>3</sup> In understanding how this popularization of the poster evolved, it is necessary first to explain the key historical events. These include the invention and advancement of the techniques of lithography and the revolutionary work of the poster artist Jules Chéret, who is credited with elevating the poster's status from mere commercial reproduction to true art form.

The invention of the lithographic process is one of the key events that led to the evolution of the poster from a purely exterior, public visual phenomenon to an interiorized, private form of wall art. The process was invented in 1798 by the Austrian actor and playwright Alois Senefelder, while searching for a way to reproduce the text of

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<sup>1</sup> Harold F. Hutchison, *The Poster: An Illustrated History from 1860* (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Phillip Dennis Cate and Sinclair Hamilton Hitchings, *The Color Revolution: Color Lithography in France 1890-1900* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1978), 12, 19.

his plays. In its simplest definition, lithography is a printing process that relies on the use of stone and the interactions of chemicals to create an image. It consists of an artist or lithographer drawing an image with a greasy crayon or pencil directly onto the surface of a large stone, typically limestone, which is then coated in water and rolled with ink.<sup>4</sup> This technique allows the areas of the stone without water to absorb the ink, thus creating the image that the paper will later be pressed on, while the water filled areas of the stone reject the greasiness of the ink.<sup>5</sup> As opposed to other forms of printmaking, such as an etching or engraving, the lithograph allows the artist to retain the greatest amount of freedom in terms of expressivity.<sup>6</sup> This increased artistic control is a result of the printing of the lithograph on a flat surface, as well as the direct use of the crayon on the stone by the artist, thus enabling him or her to apply the desired amount of pressure to achieve various artistic effects.<sup>7</sup> The disadvantages associated with the use of lithography in its early developmental phase were the weight of the stones and the inefficiency of the printing equipment. For an artist who chose to produce a multi-color lithograph, which required each color in the design to have a separate stone, the work constituted an even greater amount of difficulty. While lithography in its early phase was sufficient for producing a small number of reproductions from one stone, it clearly lacked the ability to operate efficiently on a commercial level of printing.

While improvements in the speed and precision of the lithographic process, and printing technologies in general, continued well into the 1860s in France, there were also advancements being made in color lithography. Although the process of producing a

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<sup>4</sup> Maurice Rickards, *The Rise and Fall of the Poster* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Amy Katherine Kazee, "Jules Chéret; The Father of Color Lithography: A Study of Chéret's Posters Considering His Role as an Advertiser and Artist" (M.A. Thesis, University of Louisville, 1998), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

color lithograph is very similar to that which produces a black and white one, it diverges in its requirement for a separate stone to be used for each color, as well as separate printings for each color in the image. The process of creating color lithographs throughout the nineteenth century remained highly laborious and ineffective due to the lack of an accurate system of color registration.<sup>8</sup> Since the time of lithography's invention, printers attempted to perfect the use of color in printing one impression. As earlier noted, lithographs, prior to the introduction of Chéret's colorful poster designs in the 1870s, were generally small, black and white with large amounts of text and served the purpose of book advertisements to be placed in shop windows.<sup>9</sup> If color was utilized in a lithograph before Chéret's achievements in posters, it was typically limited to red, black, and blue—highlighting the main composition rather than functioning as a significant visual element to the design.<sup>10</sup>

Phillip Dennis Cate argues, in regard to the progress made in color lithography in the early nineteenth-century, that two main factors deterred artists from utilizing color lithography. The first factor involves the difficulty of incorporating color into a design scheme by an artist due to “technical complexities” related to this branch of lithography.<sup>11</sup> The second factor concerns “its reputation as a medium unsuitable for original art production.”<sup>12</sup> In response to this second factor, color lithographs produced early in the century were of poor quality, which therefore tainted and degraded this form

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<sup>8</sup> Cate and Hitchings, *The Color Revolution*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Robert J. Goldwater, “L’Affiche Moderne’: A Revival of Poster Art after 1880,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 22 (1942), 175.

<sup>10</sup> Cate and Hitchings, *The Color Revolution*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

of art production for many decades to follow. It cannot be overstated how revolutionary Chéret's color posters were in changing the negative perception of this medium.

The first documented color poster by Chéret appeared in 1858 as an advertisement for Jacques Offenbach's opera, *Orphée aux enfers*. However, it was not until 1866 with the opening of his printing shop in Paris and 1869, with his color poster design for *Le Petit Faust* (fig. 6), that Chéret's work truly began appearing to the public. David Sweetman, the writer of a recent popular history on the fin-de-siècle, states that Chéret's influence reached Parisian streets in 1867, with his poster for the play *La Biche au Bois* (fig. 7). Sweetman claims the image, "utterly altered city life, making an art gallery of the street, adding color and imagery to dull walls, turning the world inside out."<sup>13</sup>

Maurice Rickards, in his history of posters, effectively summarizes the significance of Chéret in the renewed interest in color posters in the late 1860s:

Setting up a lithographic mass-production plant in Paris, he [Chéret] became the world's first full-time poster artist. He developed his own techniques and exploited the improved productivity of the new machines. He reduced the number of colour runs per poster and he brought production costs down to commercially acceptable levels. If there is a single point in history when the poster may be said to have 'arrived', this was it. From this time on the poster was fully accepted as an instrument of public contact, a familiar item of the everyday scene. His country took Chéret to its heart; with him they took the poster.<sup>14</sup>

The three-color process developed by Chéret in 1869 for *Le Petit Faust* was utilized in his designs throughout the 1870s and early 1880s. By the late 1880s, this process had evolved even further to include five to seven various colors. The defining quality of Chéret's color process for creating lithographic posters, as identified by the nineteenth

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<sup>13</sup> David Sweetman, *Explosive Acts: Toulouse-Toulouse-Lautrec, Oscar Wilde, Félix Fénéon, and the Art and Anarchy of the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 253.

<sup>14</sup> Rickards, 16.

century writer, Henry Beraldi, involved the creation of a “graduated background.”<sup>15</sup> In achieving this effect, which consisted of overlapping colors in the poster’s design, Chéret used three color impressions that were superimposed one over the other.<sup>16</sup> Most scholars agree that Chéret, who spent the majority of his career in Paris, likely absorbed some of his talent and skills as an artist and lithographer while studying and working in England.<sup>17</sup> Bradford Collins, in his comprehensive dissertation on the life and work of Chéret, as well as on the poster’s development in France, notes that the machinery for producing color lithographs was far more advanced in England than in France around mid-century, which greatly affected an eager student like Chéret.<sup>18</sup>

Chéret’s technical achievements in the field of color lithography were further supplemented by his efforts to legitimize poster design as an art, which had formerly been regarded as a means of reproducing images—not creating original designs. Collins notes that according to the academically established hierarchy of arts, the popular arts, which consisted of caricature and the various arts for mass consumption, had always resided at the lowest level.<sup>19</sup> At least three elements contributed to the poster’s new status as a respectable means of artistic expression. The first of these is the unique approach that Chéret took in working with this medium. For example, rather than having someone transfer the design onto the stone, he was adamant about being directly involved in the production of his posters. In relation to this is the second element, which concerns Chéret’s artistic techniques for creating his unique poster style. While the main purpose

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<sup>15</sup> Cate and Hitchings, *The Color Revolution*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Beraldi, *Les Graveurs du XIX siècle; guide de l’amateur d’estampes modernes*, Vol. 1 (Paris: L. Conquet, 1885-1892), as quoted in Cate and Hitchings, *The Color Revolution*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Bradford R. Collins, “Jules Chéret and the Nineteenth Century French Poster” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1980), 58.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Bradford R. Collins, “The Poster as Art; Jules Chéret and the Struggle for the Equality of the Arts in Late Nineteenth-Century France,” *Design Issues* 2 (Spring 1985), 41.

behind his vast *oeuvre* was advertising, there was never a moment in which Chéret did not act the part of the artist and experiment with various background textures and color combinations. John Barnicoat states, “It is not that his designs are masterpieces of the art of advertising, but that his posters, over a thousand of them, are magnificent works of art.”<sup>20</sup> Chéret created further legitimization of the poster by incorporating a design style reminiscent of the ideals and tastes of eighteenth-century Rococo paintings by artists such as Jean-Antoine Watteau and François Boucher. While it is uncertain whether or not Chéret’s adoption of this particular style was intentionally meant to increase the poster’s ability to be recognized for its true art potential, it nonetheless evoked this idea to the spectator.

The third element fostering the poster and lithograph gaining recognition involves cultural context. The success of Chéret and poster production is partly a result of the consumer atmosphere that abounded in Paris during the time many of his posters began appearing in the street. Collins comments, “Chéret enjoyed a good entrance: economic and artistic conditions in Second Empire France (1852-1870) favored a talented, ambitious poster designer. By the late 1850s, when Chéret’s career began, the lithographic poster was established as the main promotional device for the rapidly expanding French economy.”<sup>21</sup> Marcus Verhagen, an authority on the poster in fin-de-siècle Paris, furthermore states, “The poster emerged in tandem with the burgeoning entertainment industry . . . it was both a manifestation of the emergence of mass culture

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<sup>20</sup> John Barnicoat, *A Concise History of Posters* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Collins, “The Poster as Art; Jules Chéret and the Struggle for the Equality of the Arts in Late Nineteenth-Century France,” 41.

in France and a catalyst in the development of other mass cultural forms.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is apparent that the poster’s initial success and continued evolution from exterior to interior art form relied heavily on an expanding consumer culture that dominated the Parisian scene in the last half of the nineteenth century.

By the 1880s and 1890s, the color lithographic poster had reached its pinnacle as an exterior visual phenomenon in the city of Paris. Increasingly, art critics and the Parisian public began considering the poster not only as an ephemeral outside advertisement, but also as an art object worthy of being collected and preserved to grace the walls of the interior, intimate world of the apartment. The art historian Robert Goldwater points to the “commercial developments of the eighties as the foundation of the artistic successes of the nineties and the renewed interest in work of smaller format and more intimate expression. And then, in retroactive fashion, the commercial poster is itself regarded as a work of art, and is pulled in limited editions *avant la lettre* for the connoisseur and collector.”<sup>23</sup> The “*avant la lettre*” posters Goldwater refers to were actual street posters that were pulled by the printer before the text was added—hence the literal translation of the French as “before the letter or text.” The limited number and omission of text suggest that these posters were intended for collectors to decorate interior spaces. Furthermore, posters were in such great demand by the 1890s that “people started to remove them from the walls and take them home, some following the bill-posters around town in order to get the strips down before the paste dried.”<sup>24</sup> While posters had at one time existed mainly as utilitarian objects, during the 1890s, they had

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<sup>22</sup> Marcus Verhagen, “The Poster in Fin-de-Siècle Paris: ‘That Mobile and Degenerate Art,’” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 107-108.

<sup>23</sup> Goldwater, “L’Affiche Moderne,” 182.

<sup>24</sup> Sweetman, 257.

truly expanded into a new aesthetic form. Gabriel Weisberg claims, “By 1900, the range of posters was diverse, and the availability of these images made it clear that artists had found an effective way to reach the masses while also satisfying the needs of their patrons. Art and consumerism were significantly united at this moment in history.”<sup>25</sup>

Some of the events which occurred during the 1880s and into the 1890s serve as testaments to the enthusiasm that engulfed the art of poster making and collecting. For instance, in 1881 a law passed by the French government concerning freedom of the press permitted printed materials to be less censored, which spawned a mass of printed publications.<sup>26</sup> This law also allowed more flexibility in terms of where posters could be placed within the city, and fined anyone who was caught removing or destroying posters that had been pasted on hoardings or other city surfaces.<sup>27</sup> In 1884, the first exhibition of posters in France occurred in Paris, which included the work of Chéret, as well as others. Other significant events relating to the rise of the poster include two publications on its history and artists—Ernest Maindron’s *Les Affiches Illustrees* and Henri Beraldi’s *Les Graveurs du XIXe siècle*—both appearing in 1886.<sup>28</sup> Phillip Dennis Cate argues that these two publications “brought to the fore the immensity and brilliance of Chéret’s career and, with that, the broader recognition of the color lithographic poster as a developing art form in France.”<sup>29</sup> In 1890 at a banquet presided over by Edmond de Goncourt, Chéret had received the Legion d’Honneur for his innovative work in color

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<sup>25</sup> Gabriel P. Weisberg, “The Print Culture of Paris 1900,” in *Paris 1900* (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma City Museum of Art, 2007), 90.

<sup>26</sup> Cate and Hitchings, *The Color Revolution*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

lithography.<sup>30</sup> This banquet claimed that he was “the first painter of the Parisian wall, the inventor of art in the poster.”<sup>31</sup>

As this chapter demonstrates, the improvements in lithography and Chéret’s revolutionary work in this field established the poster and color lithographs, in general, as valid forms of art during this period. The following chapter presents an analysis of Haussmannized Paris, which is the public, urban sphere for the emergence of Chéret’s colorful and joyous poster designs. This analysis provides an essential component of my argument as it situates the poster in a specific spatial and cultural context that is key in understanding its interiorization.

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<sup>30</sup> Verhagen, “The Poster in Fin-de-Siècle Paris,” 103.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In examining the poster's expansion from an exterior public advertisement to an interior decorative art form in 1890s Paris, it is essential to understand the cultural context in which this revitalized art form first emerged in the late 1860s. The colorful posters of Jules Chéret first appeared to the public during the end of the Second Empire in Paris. The city had, since the early 1850s, undergone extensive reconstruction. This urban reconstruction of the old medieval Paris into a new and streamlined modern city is known as Haussmannization.<sup>1</sup> This term derives from Baron Georges Haussmann, who served as prefect of the Seine under Napoleon III, and who was primarily responsible for the city's new appearance and reorganization.<sup>2</sup> Sharon Marcus states, "Haussmann and Napoleon III aimed to improve hygiene, facilitate traffic circulation, and prevent workers from building the barricades used so effectively in older, narrow streets during the 1848 revolution."<sup>3</sup> These urban changes brought about by Haussmann and Napoleon III instituted a new view of Paris as a major world capital and permitted greater political control in a city that had been marked by revolutions since the eighteenth century.

Haussmannization resulted in an altered Paris both aesthetically and socially. In terms of the aesthetic changes, the Parisian street and the buildings lining it became homogenized through the set use of construction materials such as freestone, as well as regulations that determined the appearance of all building façades. The interiors of

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 100.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 135.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

apartments in Haussmannized Paris also possessed set specifications, which consisted of five stories each laid out according to the same floor plan. With the aims of better air and traffic flow through the city's center, Haussmann set about demolishing the irregularities of old Paris for an urban space of wide, open boulevards and consistent building design. The main thoroughfares were strategically mapped on a series of axes in order to link key points of the city. For example, establishments associated with power—economically and politically—such as the Prefecture of Police and the Hôtel de Ville, were situated in their own distinct space at the end of the main boulevards in order to reinforce the “unity and power of the nation’s ruling institutions.”<sup>4</sup> The comments of nineteenth century writers convey a sense of the negativity and opposition felt in response to the drastic reconstructions that were occurring, “The city is becoming monotonous; all the *quartiers* look the same; everywhere the same big streets, straight, cold, bordered by immense edifices constructed after the same plan.”<sup>5</sup>

The aesthetic changes, which Haussmannization brought to Paris during the 1850s and 1860s, remain strongly tied to the social changes that were simultaneously occurring. With the rebuilding of the city's center, the large factories, and thus the working-class, were relocated to the fringes of Paris, which provided the spaces for other forms of commercial growth within the city's interior. Philip Nord effectively characterizes the social changes initiated by Haussmannization as a form of “embourgeoisement.”<sup>6</sup> He explains: “The Paris that emerged from the traumas of urban renewal was a city reborn: a business capital, a showpiece of Imperial grandeur, and a congenial playground for a

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<sup>4</sup> Nord, 104.

<sup>5</sup> Marius Vachon, *La Crise industrielle et artistique en France et en Europe* (Paris, 1886), as quoted in Nord, 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

rising bourgeoisie.”<sup>7</sup> This statement denotes the importance of Haussmannization in reconstructing a Paris around mid-century that increased the need and desire for street posters. The need derived from the growing commercialism and the desire from the repetitive, streamlined architecture; the posters, especially those designed by Chéret, added splashes of energy and color into a rather monochromatic urban landscape. Roger Marx—a fervent supporter of Chéret’s work, as well as an avid collector of posters and prints—describes the appearance of posters on the street,

To wrest the street from the gray and bleak monotony of buildings strung in long rows; to cast upon them the fireworks of color, the glow of joy; to convert the walls into “decorable” surfaces and let this open air museum reveal the character of a people and at the same time become the subconscious education of the public taste, such is Chéret’s task.<sup>8</sup>

As previously mentioned, while posters had existed prior to this time mainly as black and white advertisements, it was not until the advent of the colorful poster designs by Chéret that this medium began to garner fervent support by the public for its artistic capabilities. The social and aesthetic conditions in Paris at the end of the Second Empire were favorable for the revitalized poster’s unveiling. With the middle-class and mass consumerism dominating Parisian culture, the poster offered the means to promote the sale of new products, as well as to advertise for popular entertainment venues. Kristin Makholm claims, “When the reconstruction of Paris streets began in the 1850s under the guidance of Baron Haussmann and huge boulevards leveled intimate neighborhoods throughout Paris, the bold new color lithographic posters became a way to decorate these spacious but impersonal city corridors.”<sup>9</sup> Chéret’s posters were known as the “frescoes

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<sup>7</sup> Nord, 101.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Marx, “Preface,” *Masters of the Poster, 1896-1900* (New York: Images Graphiques, 1977), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Kristin Makholm, *Toulouse-Lautrec and the Pleasures of Paris* (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2000), 26.

of the streets” due to their incorporation of the eighteenth-century Rococo style, which was revived during the Second Empire.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly true in his adoption of the light shades of yellow, pink, and sky blue that recall the murals of this period. While it is likely that Chéret absorbed elements of the Rococo primarily as a personal stylistic choice, its popularity derived from the society of the time, which was dominated by increasing commerce, entertainment, and an atmosphere of frivolity. The color lithographic poster was already serving a decorative purpose to the outside world well before its introduction into interior spaces in the 1890s.

Further evidence of the poster’s emergence and continued presence in the city of Paris comes from J.-K. Huysmans, who was a major supporter of Chéret and the rise of the poster genre. In his Salon reviews of 1879 and 1880, as well as in his 1889 book *Certains*, he describes the appearance of, and exhilaration caused by, the presence of Chéret’s posters.<sup>11</sup> The 1880 Salon review contains Huysmans’s now popularized remark that “there is a thousand times more talent in the smallest of Chéret’s posters than in all of the paintings of the Salon.”<sup>12</sup> Huysmans suggests that the posters on the walls of the street should be hung all over the walls of the Salon rather than the paintings, as they are “representative of the corners of Parisian life, of the fluttering of the ballet, of the work of clowns, of the English pantomimes, of the interiors of the hippodrome.”<sup>13</sup> Nearly a decade later, Huysmans devotes a section of *Certains* to Chéret and his popular poster designs. In describing the city of Paris, Huysmans asserts, “in the old days, the streets

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<sup>10</sup> Bruce Davis, “The Art of Persuasion: Sources of Style and Content in Belle Époque Posters,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec and His Contemporaries: Posters of the Belle Époque* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985), 40.

<sup>11</sup> Collins, “Jules Chéret and the Nineteenth Century French Poster,” 159.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

were narrow and the homes large, now the streets are enormous and the rooms very small and deprived of air . . . all the intimate spaces have disappeared, the gardens are dead . . . .”<sup>14</sup> Huysmans clearly detests the modern Parisian environment and suggests that amid this urban gloom are the bright, joyful posters of Chéret filled with subjects of fantasy, which provide him with an escape—an outlet from the harshness of modern existence.<sup>15</sup>

The public sphere that this chapter addresses largely concerns the type of urban environment that was created by the aesthetic and social changes of Haussmannization in Paris in the 1850s and 1860s. The emergence of the poster during this time was centered on exteriority. Street advertisements appealed to a growing consumerist society and the bright and energetic designs of posters enlivened a mundane and sterile outside world and created a type of art show that could be appreciated by the Parisian public. In exploring the poster’s shift from publicity to intimacy, the following discussion focuses on the developing private mindset that dominated Parisian society in the 1880s and 1890s.

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<sup>14</sup> J.-K. Huysmans, *Certains* (Paris: Tresse & Stock, 1889), 51-52.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PRIVATE SPHERE

By the 1890s, the poster, which had been plastered all over the streets of Paris and absorbed by society since the late 1860s, had evolved into a domestic decorative entity that attained the status of art. Roger Marx attests to the interior shift that occurred in poster art during the last decade of the century, “the familiar tapestry of the wall, it finds in the house the security of a haven and the tribute of a daily admiration; it becomes the essence of the home’s ornament just as it had become the décor of the street.”<sup>1</sup> A painting from 1899 by the artist Edouard Dammouse of the interior of his brother’s pottery studio illustrates this point. On the wall hangs one of Chéret’s posters of a joyful *chêrette* dancing (fig. 8). The *chêrette*—discussed more thoroughly in the chapter on Chéret—was the blond-haired, happy female who graced the majority of Chéret’s posters. While this painting shows a Chéret poster in an artist’s studio rather than in the confines of a Parisian apartment, it nonetheless confirms the poster’s absorption into interior spaces be it the home, the cabaret, or the art studio. Further indicating the poster’s increasing importance and popularity in the interior was Marx’s hope that it “would not be long before the intimacy of our homes would also be covered and brightened up by the colors of happiness; and it would spell the end of dreary dwellings and out-of-date environments amidst which the days follow each other monotonously.”<sup>2</sup> These words unquestionably serve as a testament to the more inward-looking and private mindset that pervaded life in Paris during the 1890s. Nicholas Watkins asserts that in the

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Marx, “Preface,” *Masters of the Poster, 1896-1900* (New York: Images Graphiques, 1977), 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

Parisian society of the 1890s, “the interior became both a place of retreat and a laboratory in which to pursue a new decorative language.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the interest in returning to an interiorized existence was both a psychological coping mechanism for Parisians, as well as an important means of rekindling the Rococo revival. Watkins states in regard to the Rococo revival, “This defiantly nostalgic and romantic vision acted as a crucial catalyst in the redefinition of art as decoration.”<sup>4</sup> It is not surprising that Chéret’s style of poster design—the bouncing, gay, and pastel-toned *chérettes*—derived as it was from the figures and colors created by eighteenth-century Rococo artists such as Watteau and Boucher, found its way onto the walls of the interiors of Parisian apartments.

Chéret’s vast *oeuvre*—at least one thousand posters—can be largely defined by its Rococo tendencies of frivolity in subject matter and style. Rococo art is characterized by dream-like images filled with joy, grace, playfulness, and eroticism. A statement made by Chéret affirms these traits in his posters, “There are enough people depicting the sadness, pain, and betrayals of life. I know them, but do not wish to paint them. There are the joys—I have pink and blue pencils for them.”<sup>5</sup> Chéret’s philosophy expressed here alludes to the growing disenchantment that Parisians felt with the everchanging modernized world in which they lived. The works of art, such as posters, that surrounded them both in the interior and exterior realm provided solace and diversion.

In addressing the Parisian move to the interior realm in 1890s Paris, Debora Silverman claims “the interior was no longer a refuge from but a replacement for the

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Watkins, “The Genesis of a Decorative Aesthetic,” in *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Painting by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis, and Roussel, 1890-1930*, ed. Gloria Groom (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, The Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Arwas, *Belle Epoque: Posters & Graphics* (New York: Rizzoli, 1978), 41.

external world.”<sup>6</sup> The poster’s expansion from exterior to interior parallels this social attitude. The poster was no longer restricted to serving as exterior advertisement, but now occupied the interior and private world of Parisians to decorate the space and produce psychological stimulation.

The link that had formed between interior decoration and psychological interiority by the 1890s had its origins in the literature of the 1880s. Edmond de Goncourt’s *La Maison d’un artiste* (1881) and Huysmans’ *A Rebours* or *Against Nature* (1884), for instance, essentially focus on how decorative objects within an interior space can mentally stimulate and entrance. Interior spaces became extensions of themselves and they lived almost hermetically in isolated artistic environments to induce hypnotic-like states. As Silverman notes of the main character in Huysmans’ *Against Nature*, Des Esseintes: “The objects in those interiors were the vehicles for his synaesthesia and visual fantasies; his dependence on this continuous aesthetic stimulation consigned him to physical lassitude and nervous hypersensitivity.”<sup>7</sup> Goncourt supported the idea that the turn to the interior by late nineteenth century society resulted from a need to escape from the harshness of modern existence, which parallels Chéret’s justification for producing posters overflowing with merriment.<sup>8</sup> *La Maison d’un artiste* provides a detailed account of Goncourt’s experiences of being immersed and confined in the intimate interior environment of his house in Auteuil, which contained a vast array of collectibles and furnishings in the eighteenth-century Rococo style. While *La Maison d’un artiste* did not appear until 1881, the Goncourt brothers (Edmond and Jules) had, by 1869, begun installing their collection into the house at Auteuil due to their strong dissatisfaction with

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<sup>6</sup> Silverman, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Gluck, 120.

the social and aesthetic changes implemented by Baron Haussmann. Therefore, the Goncourts' connoisseurship in the art of the Rococo period centers on a form of escapism and disillusionment provoked by living in an evolving industrial society. Edmond de Goncourt had this to say, in 1860, about the changing urban landscape:

My Paris, the Paris where I grew up is disappearing. Social life is undergoing a vast evolution. I see women, children, households, and families in the cafes. The interior is dying. Life threatens to become public...I am a stranger to what is coming, to what is there, like these new boulevards, lacking in all curves, implacable axes of the straight line. It makes me think of some American Babylon of the future.<sup>9</sup>

Mary Gluck states that Goncourt considered an individual to be “defined by the inner spaces of his house, which he endeavored to make ‘agreeable, pleasant, and amusing to the eye’.”<sup>10</sup> In 1888, Goncourt remarks in his journal after visiting a friend’s newly decorated apartment in Paris that he desired to install two screens covered with posters by Chéret.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the effects of nostalgia and escapism from contemporary times that the Rococo style offered in the interior realm, the Goncourts’ collection also evoked the notion of the total work of art. Hardy S. George comments on the Goncourts’ interest in the Rococo and their attempts to create an environment fully consumed by art:

On one level this represents an admiration for the luxury and elegance of the intimate décor associated with the reign of Louis XV. This is combined with an interest in unifying design, ceramics, furniture, and painting to create a total sense of harmony and intimacy no longer available in the fast moving and disjointed rhythms of the over-populated city in an age of enormous change brought about by the noisy clatter of new technology.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Edmond de Goncourt, *La Maison d'un artiste*. 2 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1881), as quoted in Silverman, 20.

<sup>10</sup> Gluck, 120.

<sup>11</sup> John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 193.

<sup>12</sup> George, “The Sacred and Profane: An Exploration of Interiors in Fin-de-Siècle Art,” 14.

French society's interests in reviving the Rococo style during the late nineteenth century, like the poster's shift away from a purely exterior advertisement, was a reaction to, and fear of, the fast-paced and developing modern world.

By the 1890s, interior spaces and the art in them became clearly defined as private realms in which isolation and contemplation provided consolation in a Parisian society consumed with decadence. This resulted from a renewed interest in the Rococo style and ideals of art production and the emergence of the art nouveau style. Silverman argues that the redefinition of the interior and interior decoration in 1890s Paris developed in conjunction with new findings in the field of psychology by Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot, which had been circulating since the mid-1880s.<sup>13</sup> She claims, "A psychology specific to France in the 1890s invested the enterprise of interior decoration with new meanings and transposed the eighteenth-century associations of modernity, intimacy, and interiority into the new key of nervous vibration, spatial self-fashioning, and unconscious projection."<sup>14</sup> The *psychologie nouvelle* (new psychology) that Silverman examines concerns nervous conditions, such as hysteria and neurasthenia, which were thought by the psychologist Charcot to afflict Parisians "over stimulated by the sensory barrage of the metropolis."<sup>15</sup> Watkins puts Silverman's argument this way:

The "new psychology" invested interior decoration with new meanings by eroding the borders between subject and object, conscious and unconscious, dream and reality. The appropriately decorated interior thus became both a refuge from, and a substitute for, public life. Interior decoration could be so composed as to convey the required mood of protective intimism through the selection and arrangement of the abstract elements of design.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Silverman, 78-79.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>16</sup> Watkins, "The Genesis of a Decorative Aesthetic," 20.

The interior in fin-de-siècle Paris, then, began to function not only as a refuge, but as an actual replacement for the outside world. Interior decoration assumed a new role due to its ability to convert domestic and private environments into true escapes.

This chapter, and the previous chapter on the public sphere, illustrates how the poster expanded in its function as a strictly exterior, public advertisement to its use within an interior space as a form of wall decoration. As discussed, this new expanded concept of the poster as a true art form worthy of being hung and preserved within an interior space reflects Parisian society in the fin-de-siècle as it began immersing itself into the interior (mind and body). In the next chapter, I explore the northern area of Paris known as Montmartre and the popular Chat Noir cabaret. In discussing the appearance of the Chat Noir cabaret's interior, I attempt to shed light on my argument that Chéret's four decorative panels executed in 1891—*La Pantomime*, *La Comédie*, *La Danse*, and *La Musique*—contain two forms of interiorization.

## CHAPTER 4

### MONTMARTRE AND THE CHAT NOIR

The neighborhood in the north of the city of Paris known as Montmartre was popular during the fin-de-siècle for its thriving cabaret and entertainment culture. It was also well-known for the throng of avant-garde artists, writers, poets, and musicians who inhabited its socially radical streets. The lively artistic and commercial atmosphere of Montmartre during this period made it a prime locale for the work of poster artists like Chéret and Toulouse-Lautrec, who could benefit from this culture and cover exterior street hoardings and columns with colorful lithographic posters. In addition to covering the streets with their poster designs and advertising for the popular cabarets, Chéret and Toulouse-Lautrec also invested in ventures that would allow for posters and prints to be used within the interior settings of cabarets and homes.

The uniqueness of Montmartre during the last two decades of the nineteenth century lay in its ability to appeal to, and serve, a wide range of social classes from the bourgeois elite to the working-class and even the lowly peasants. Gabriel Weisberg comments on the mingling of social classes in the various Montmartre entertainment establishments as a “blurring of boundaries” and notes,

Here the workers mixed with the bourgeoisie; radical anarchists mixed with moderates and conservatives, and the prostitutes masquerading as barmaids or performers served them equally. The area profited significantly from the members of the middle classes who were compelled to experience the perverse pleasures of Montmartre, and it was their presence that stimulated a quest to provide ever more shocking entertainment, frequently at their own expense—both morally and financially.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel P. Weisberg, “Montmartre’s Lure,” in *Montmartre and the Making of Mass Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 4.

The bourgeois citizens of Paris could, thus, escape to Montmartre to partake in the revelry of the café-concerts or cabarets, while artists and the working-class could escape the center of Paris to benefit from cheaper rents and rich sources of subject matter for their work. While Paris was radically transformed by Haussmannization, Montmartre retained its old character and charm both in terms of appearance and more importantly in its independent and lively spirit. Marcus Verhagen comments on the bohemian quality that characterized the area of Montmartre, “Bohemia was not a movement but a community; its productions were not the working out of an artistic credo but the expressions of shared social and economic values.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, similar to the concept of the interior as an escape or retreat from the exterior world, Montmartre, during the end of the nineteenth century, could also be viewed as a place that had preserved its pre-industrial character and where Parisians could come to feel a sense of gaiety and belonging.

The distinctive bohemianism that characterized Montmartre during the fin-de-siècle was based largely on the activities and personalities that permeated the interiors of the artistic and literary cabarets. One of the most eminent cabarets of this time was the Chat Noir (Black Cat), which opened in 1881. The establishment of the Chat Noir was primarily a result of the meeting and aims of two men—Rodolphe Salis and Emile Goudeau. Salis, who had struggled to survive as a painter, formed a relationship with the poet Emile Goudeau, who, in 1878 had started a literary café and theater in Paris’ Latin Quarter as a meeting place for the Hydropathes, “an eclectic society of writers, poets, artists, and performers whose principal goal was to serve as a nonjuried arena for diverse

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<sup>2</sup> Marcus Verhagen, “Bohemia in Doubt,” in *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (New York: Routledge, 2004), 328.

artistic voices.”<sup>3</sup> Salis’s Chat Noir became the new meeting place for the Hydropathes who, in turn, provided the newly formed artistic cabaret with a model for how it should be operated. For example, not only did the cabaret serve as an eclectic place for the exchange of avant-gardist ideals related to philosophy, art, and society, but it also presented the opportunity for obscure writers and artists to exhibit their work to the public. Many artists and performers would donate drawings, paintings, and stained-glass to decorate the interior space of the cabaret.

The interior decoration of the Chat Noir promoted not only the work of the artists who were regular participants of the cabaret’s entertainment, but also emphasized the bohemian atmosphere. Chapin notes,

The Chat Noir was decorated in a pseudo-medieval style, bursting with Louis XIII furniture, heavy oak tables, and a playful assortment of accessories, including medieval armor, tapestries, pewter mugs, and stained glass. This was in sharp contrast to the more refined cafes on the *grands boulevards*, where tastefully decorated interiors featured chandeliers, mirrors, and harmonious furniture.<sup>4</sup>

One of the largest paintings hanging in the cabaret’s interior was Adolphe Willette’s *Parce Domine* (Lord, Have Mercy) (fig. 9), which had been prominently displayed in Salis’s street parade. Willette’s cartoons appeared frequently in the *Le Chat Noir* journal, and in this painting, executed for the cabaret in 1884, is an intriguing scene of Pierrots and female dancers joyfully gliding through the air in a processional formation with the windmill of Montmartre behind them and the city of Paris down below. Verhagen notes that the Pierrots who appear dancing, singing, and throwing money into the wind are first

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<sup>3</sup> Phillip Dennis Cate and Mary Shaw, *The Spirit of Montmartre: Cabarets, Humor, and the Avant-Garde, 1875-1905* (New Brunswick, N.J.: The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1996), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Weaver Chapin, “The Chat Noir & The Cabarets,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, ed. Richard Thomson, Phillip Dennis Cate, and Mary Weaver Chapin (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 90.

dressed in white and then black.<sup>5</sup> The last Pierrot in the scene is in black and is depicted holding a gun which denotes that he is likely partaking of a crime or suicide.<sup>6</sup> Willette's purpose in creating a somber incident such as this was to point out the inevitable fate and dangers awaiting a person who participated in the excesses and struggles of bohemian life.

While Willette's painting exhibited the downside and harshness of bohemian life, the symbol of the black cat, which habitually decorated the exterior and interior of Salis's cabaret, stood for sexual indulgence and sexual innuendo.<sup>7</sup> Armond Fields explains that Salis's decision to use the black cat for the name and image of his cabaret was due to its "sexual connotations and artistic symbolism, which enabled him quickly and clearly to communicate his cabaret's social, political, and entertainment intentions."<sup>8</sup> Willette incorporated the black cat into various exterior signs, a piece of stained glass showing a woman holding up a black cat before a full moon, and painting titled *The Green Virgin* or *The Virgin with Cat* (fig. 10), which depicts a woman adorned with symbols of the Virgin Mary who gazes upward at the black cat and moon she is lifting up as if in an act of veneration. Another prominent Montmartre artist associated with the Chat Noir, Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, created a huge wall mural titled the *Apotheosis of Cats* (fig. 11) for the cabaret's interior. This work features a menagerie of various colored cats sitting on a rooftop that are all positioned toward one black cat who also sits before a full moon. Chapin claims, "They appear to be worshipping the feline on the hill of

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<sup>5</sup> Verhagen, "Bohemia in Doubt," 334-335.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 233.

<sup>8</sup> Armond Fields, *Le Chat Noir: A Montmartre Cabaret and Its Artists in Turn-of-the-Century Paris* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1993), 11.

Montmartre and all that it represents: freedom, sexuality, and an alternative to bourgeois Paris.”<sup>9</sup>

Another popular form of art and entertainment at the Chat Noir beginning in 1886 was the shadow theater, which was primarily developed by two artists—Henri Rivière and Henry Somm. The types of plays reflected the character and spirit of the Chat Noir and included *fumiste* humor, realism, fantasy, and more serious subject matter that was symbolist, religious in tone.<sup>10</sup> With the increasing popularity and importance of the shadow theater plays at the Chat Noir through the late 1880s and 1890s, there was a simultaneous desire to decorate the area surrounding its screen, as well as the room that contained it. Not only was the shadow theater an innovative artistic creation in itself, but the variety of artworks chosen to flank it was also of significance. For instance, in 1893, with the opening of the newly renovated and enlarged theater screen, one could see displayed on the walls the four framed decorative panels by Chéret, color prints by artists such as Rivière, Louis Morin, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Georges Auriol, an elaborately decorated screen façade by Eugene Grasset that featured two fifteenth-century style lanterns and an enormous heraldic, bronze black cat surrounded by golden sunbursts.<sup>11</sup>

My examination of the poster’s interiorization in fin-de-siècle Paris thus far involves a discussion of the cultural and historical context of this period that promoted the occurrence of this type of expansion. I will now shift focus and analyze actual posters by Chéret that exhibit in their style and subject matter the two types of interiorization. The two types I address are the physical, literal interiorization or the

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<sup>9</sup> Chapin, 90.

<sup>10</sup> Phillip Dennis Cate, “The Social Menagerie of Toulouse-Lautrec’s Montmartre,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, ed. Richard Thomson, Phillip Dennis Cate, and Mary Weaver Chapin (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

placement and preservation of these art forms on the walls of homes and other establishments, and psychological interiorization which concerns the deep connection and mental stimulation derived from viewing these works.

## CHAPTER 5

### JULES CHÉRET

Jules Chéret was born in Paris on May 31, 1836, to an artistic, working class family—his father was a typographer and his brother Joseph a sculptor. Chéret’s artistic education began at age thirteen when he apprenticed to a lithographer, where he learned to do lettering for brochures, flyers, small posters and funeral announcements. His apprenticeship was supplemented by visits to the Louvre, where he encountered the art of Jean-Antoine Watteau and Peter Paul Rubens.<sup>1</sup> After three years at the École Nationale de Dessin under the tutelage of Lecoq de Boisbaudran, Chéret began selling his services to various printing establishments.<sup>2</sup> The various tasks he undertook included developing designs for ornamental lettering, creating labels for pharmacists and perfumers, as well as drawing illustrations for department store catalogs.<sup>3</sup>

Before the execution of his first poster in 1858 for Jacques Offenbach’s opera *Orphée aux Enfers*, Chéret spent six months in London where he attempted to establish a secure living, but failed and returned to Paris. A year later, in 1859, Chéret was back in London, where he met the perfume maker Eugene Rimmel, who supported Chéret in developing his own printing company, which finally opened in Paris in 1866.<sup>4</sup> It was Rimmel who took Chéret on various business trips to Italy and North Africa, provided him with opportunities to learn the process of lithography, and who possessed the means to furnish his printing company in Paris with advanced machines and large lithographic

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<sup>1</sup> Camille Mauclair, *Jules Chéret* (Paris: Maurice Le Garrec, 1930), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Collins, “Jules Chéret and the Nineteenth Century French Poster,” 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

stones.<sup>5</sup> With the opening of Chéret's printing company, the poster began to revitalize the monotone streets of Haussmann's Paris.

If one aspect of subject matter describes the whole of Chéret's poster work, it is his use of the *chérie*. The *chérie*, who is the center attraction in the majority of Chéret's posters ranging from advertisements for lamp oil products to the famous Montmartre cabaret *Le Moulin Rouge*, is a charming and delicate woman with no particular identity. The use of the term "*chérie*" resulted from a need to characterize Chéret's repeated use of his standard female figure in nearly all of the poster designs he produced. Marcus Verhagen writes of the *chérie*:

As Chéret achieved a certain fame in fin-de-siècle Paris, so did the *chérie*, as she was called—the dancing, nymph-like figure who tended to dominate his designs. The *chérie* was animated by restless mirth, twisting and stretching provocatively as she laughed. Critics of the time saw her as regenerating la gaieté française, a national tradition of humor and play.<sup>6</sup>

Victor Arwas, in writing on Belle Époque posters, claims that the *chérie* was the "archetypal girl...a girl so popular that real girls copied her dress and style, and collectors pursued her image for their portfolios."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in using the iconic *chérie* figure in nearly all of his posters, Chéret started a trend that resulted in many Parisians wanting to obtain their own images for household decoration.

For the sake of the interiorization argument presented in this thesis, it is important to understand what the *chérie* potentially represents for the viewer. Although there is no precise definition of what a *chérie* is, it is undoubtedly fitting to claim, as Verhagen has, that she "is a performer and her charm was made of artifice" and resides within a

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<sup>5</sup> Arwas, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Marcus Verhagen, "Re-figurations of Carnival; The Comic Performer in Fin-de-Siècle Parisian Art" (Ph.D. diss., University of California Berkeley, 1994), 82.

<sup>7</sup> Arwas, 41.

“kind of ether, with no bearings in the physical world.”<sup>8</sup> Verhagen sees the *chérètte* as a “soulless figure suspended in a void,” which inhabits a space with “no point of origin or closure.”<sup>9</sup> In light of this interpretation, perhaps Chéret created an indefinite environment for many of his *chérèttes* in order to alleviate any indecent associations that she would possibly acquire as an advertisement for various risqué entertainment locales. An example of the indefinite environment occurs in Chéret’s 1894 poster for the Eldorado music hall (fig. 12), where the *chérètte* floats in the air in front of a large, circular form that serves as a backdrop. While this poster was meant to advertise a popular Parisian entertainment establishment, there is hardly any indication of this purpose within the poster’s visual elements. The *chérètte* and a small, shadowy figure in the foreground hold musical instruments, but remain nevertheless in a non-identifiable space.

Bradford Collins asserts that during the 1880s, Chéret’s *chérètte* underwent a change in her physical appearance, which also reflected a change in her persona. She evolved from being an overtly sexual and physically gratifying woman to possessing a “spiritual quality and happiness.”<sup>10</sup> This change is witnessed in the juxtaposition of two posters. The first is a poster titled *Les Muscadins* from 1875 for the Théâtre-Historique (fig. 13), in which Chéret renders the women in the foreground as fleshy and voluptuous. These women possess an earthly, realistic quality. In Chéret’s 1889 poster *Palais des enfants* for the Grand Théâtre de L’Exposition (fig. 14), the woman featured takes on the characteristics of the *chérètte*—thinner, playful, happy, ethereal. In Collins’ critique of Chéret’s poster work, the *chérètte* is not merely a woman with a bright smile and a happy

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<sup>8</sup> Verhagen, “Re-figurations of Carnival,” 97.

<sup>9</sup> Verhagen, “The Poster in Fin-de-Siècle Paris: ‘That Mobile and Degenerate Art,’” 105.

<sup>10</sup> Collins, “Jules Chéret and the Nineteenth Century French Poster,” 118.

disposition, but also represents Chéret's escapist desires.<sup>11</sup> Chéret utilized figure types such as the *chérie*, Pierrot, and harlequin in order to escape the reality of the times, enabling him and viewers of his posters to drift off into a world of imagined characters. Chéret's endeavors facilitated the poster's ability to gain artistic legitimacy and, by the 1880s, be considered a collector's item among French aesthetes.<sup>12</sup> It is not coincidental that much of the praise that he received during the peak years of his fame (1880s and 1890s) as a poster artist comes from critics who were also involved in promoting its use within the interior realm. For example, the anarchist art critic Félix Fénéon advocated the ripping of posters off street walls to decorate one's room, "A Toulouse-Lautrec or a Chéret at home, good Lord, that gives a good light!"<sup>13</sup>

The first form of interiorization associated with Chéret's poster work, which is the physical, literal placement of posters on the walls of interior spaces, centers on a series of four decorative panels executed in 1891. Phillip Dennis Cate describes these four decorative panels as *placards decoratifs*, which were color lithographs in the format of large vertical posters, but were void of lettering and were to be framed and hung indoors.<sup>14</sup> A photograph taken in 1896 of the Chat Noir's interior provides direct visual evidence that these four decorative panels—*La Danse*, *La Musique*, *La Pantomime*, and *La Comédie*—hung in frames, in pairs, flanking both sides of the centralized shadow theater screen (fig. 15). *La Musique* and *La Pantomime* hung next to one another on the

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<sup>11</sup> Collins, "Jules Chéret and the Nineteenth Century French Poster," 126.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>13</sup> Halperin, 261.

<sup>14</sup> Cate and Hitchings, *The Color Revolution*, 28.

right-hand side of the screen and *La Comédie* and *La Danse* replicated this same pattern on the left-hand side.

The four panels each measure approximately four feet-by-three feet and contain the typical blond-haired, joyful *chérieure* engaged in four different activities of entertainment. Appropriate accoutrements are included in all of the scenes except for *La Danse*, to denote the activity in which she is engaged. For example, the *La Musique* panel contains a tambourine, drum, horn and a lute trailing behind the *chérieure*, while she plays the cymbals. In *La Danse*, although lacking in accoutrements like the rest, the first, real *chérieure* in the scene is mimicked by a mirror image of herself, as if a piece of glass had been inserted to reveal her glancing at her own image. Behind this main group, which is closest to the foreground of the picture plane, trails a long line of twisting and turning dancers rendered in black and white shadows. These figures eerily move and maintain frozen expressions, as if mere mannequins of the first *chérieure* in the panel. In *La Danse*, Chéret fills the space with shadow dancers in order to replace the lacking accessories and emphasize the important dancing movement of the main *chérieure*. In each panel, except for *La Pantomime*, is a sense that the figures aiding her are memories or hallucinatory visions, because they are rendered in a hazy and translucent manner. In *La Pantomime*, the comic performers present are executed in a more stationary fashion with less illusionistic qualities. However, their actual physical presence remains questionable as well, for they poke and attempt to interact with the *chérieure* while she appears to be undisturbed. In each panel, the *chérieure* is suspended centrally in mid-air in an indistinct space, as if floating in a void with blurry splashes of bright, *chérieuresque* colors that evoke a dream-like atmosphere. The composition and style of this panel

series support the idea that Chéret utilized the *chêrette*, as well as the other figures accompanying her in the scenes, as a means of evoking a dream world—an escape.

Surprisingly, little critical analysis or even mention of these four decorative panels exists in Chéret scholarship. Lucy Broido in her catalogue raisonné of the artist's works does provide brief information regarding them:

Unlike posters “before letters,” they were never intended for advertising but were created for home use. Paul Duverney (*The Poster*, June-July, 1899, p. 223) explains that manufacturers of wall fabrics and papers became alarmed and commissioned them when “people of great taste began to adorn their private residences with Chéret's best posters.” Duverney says the Muses (*La Danse*, *La Musique*, *La Pantomime*, and *La Comédie*) were a great success, but Chéret did only two others “The Spinner” and “The Lacemaker” for the International Exposition of 1900.<sup>15</sup>

Robert H. Sherard in 1893 describes these four panels as “Chéret's very best work” and mentions they were “specially designed for decorative purposes, and are printed in eight colours on thick paper.”<sup>16</sup> Sherard believes that the purpose of these panels was to “meet the wishes of those who so greatly admired his work that they used to cover their walls with posters bought from bill-stickers or from agents who came by them by nightly larceny.”<sup>17</sup> It has been suggested that one of Chéret's most avid supporters—Huysmans—upon seeing these four panels declared: “There is a thousand times more talent in the smallest of Chéret's posters than in all of the paintings of the Salon.”<sup>18</sup> Cate verifies the presence of the four panels in the Chat Noir and links them to the phenomena of the interior wall print, or *l'estampe murale*, which was “smaller than a poster, but

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<sup>15</sup> Lucy Broido, *The Posters of Jules Chéret: 46 Full-Color Plates and an Illustrated Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1980).

<sup>16</sup> Robert H. Sherard, “Jules Chéret,” *The Magazine of Art* (1893): 372.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

larger than the average print.”<sup>19</sup> These prints were collected and kept in portfolios, but not often hung on walls—another indication that prints, as well as posters, were becoming legitimate forms of art.<sup>20</sup> Several other artists, such as Steinlen, Grasset, Mucha, and Rivière, received various commissions to execute interior wall prints for interior spaces, such as dining rooms, foyers, children’s bedrooms, even schools.<sup>21</sup> That many artists of this period were being commissioned to produce specific works of this type for a wide range of interior settings validates the argument of the poster’s interiorization. The poster’s absorption into the interior initiated the rise of interior wall prints.

The second form of interiorization concerns the psychological interiority that pervades Chéret’s four decorative panels in the interior of the Chat Noir. This notion of psychological interiority stems from Debora Silverman’s chapter “Psychologie Nouvelle,” in which she states, “A psychology specific to France in the 1890’s invested the enterprise of interior decoration with new meanings and transposed the eighteenth-century associations of modernity, intimacy, and interiority into the new key of nervous vibration, spatial self-fashioning, and unconscious projection.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to the discussion of psychological interiority, I will examine the manner in which Chéret treats the depiction of interior spaces within his poster designs.

In discussing the psychological interiority of the four decorative panels, it is important to question why Chéret, who was likely aware of the panels’ potential decorative function in a home or interior setting, continued to utilize the same *chêrette*

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<sup>19</sup> Cate and Hitchings, *The Color Revolution*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>22</sup> Silverman, 75.

and style that he used in posters destined for the street. Certainly, there are numerous speculations as to why this is the case. Perhaps, Chéret at this late point in his career of poster making was less likely to develop a new style for an interior space. More likely it was intentional, with Chéret wanting an individual sitting in the Chat Noir to glance up at these four panels and become psychologically engaged with the *chérètte*'s activities as a subconscious reflection of their own partaking of entertainment in decadent times. In support of this idea, Jerrold Seigel explains:

The Montmartre world represented by the Chat Noir and Le Mirliton drew its clients with a remarkable mixture of elements: sensual abandon, metaphysical anxiety, political passions difficult to define. Perhaps what the patrons of these establishments were seeking was, more often than not, what all these experiences had in common: the release of feelings and emotions that were repressed or restricted in everyday bourgeois life. Here, as before, Bohemia was a realm of liberated fantasy, a space where—as in the unconscious Freud would begin to explore at the end of the century—wishes and anxieties associated with sexual passion, death, and violence eddied in and out of each other. Simply to enter the Chat Noir was to experience the permeability of these boundaries.<sup>23</sup>

The four panels' placement high up near the ceiling and on either side of the large shadow theater screen where the crowd's attention would obviously be focused, as well as the large dimensions, further suggests a psychologically stimulative purpose.

Francesca Berry notes that during the late nineteenth century, guides to interior decoration critiqued the “generic banality of Haussmann apartments” and recommended that its readers “create an interior environment with intimate psychological encounter.”<sup>24</sup>

This “intimate psychological encounter” consists of using interior decoration to convey to visitors a sense of the personality of the inhabitant of the apartment.<sup>25</sup> Berry also

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<sup>23</sup> Seigel, 239-240.

<sup>24</sup> Francesca Berry, “Lived Perspectives: the art of the French nineteenth-century interior” in *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic Interior since the Renaissance*, ed. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant (London: Victoria and Albert Publications, 2006), 179.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

comments on Henry Havard, a writer on interior decoration, who attempted to associate the interior space of an apartment with the physical and psychological interiority of the individual by “employing bodily metaphors that equated the apartment building to the body as both surfaces and containers.”<sup>26</sup> If Chéret’s four panels were installed in the Chat Noir only for decorative purposes, why would they not have been framed and hung elsewhere in a less noticeable area of the interior with other artists’ works? This is surely indicative of their power and purpose to engage psychologically with the viewer.

Thus the question remains, what exactly constitutes psychological interiority in Chéret’s four decorative panels? One idea mentioned earlier included the panels’ prominent position and large dimensions, which would have encouraged the viewer to engage in the works psychologically. Further understanding of the psychological interiority can be derived from applying four goals central to the French Symbolists during the late nineteenth century. While I am not suggesting any direct connections between the Symbolist artists and Chéret, by outlining the Symbolist principles, clarification of the argument of psychological interiority in the four decorative panels will result. Silverman in her chapter “Psychologie Nouvelle” highlights four goals or principles: idealism, subjectivism, a redefinition of artistic language, and the use of artistic formal elements (line, color, shape) to appeal to the inner world of the audience.<sup>27</sup>

In the designs for the four panels and for the majority of his poster work, Chéret conforms unintentionally to many of the Symbolist principles. For instance, subjectivism involved producing art that would activate the inner psychic world or dream state, the third principle centered around replacing direct depiction with allusion or association, and

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<sup>26</sup> Berry, 179.

<sup>27</sup> Silverman, 76-77.

the fourth concerned the power of line, color, and shape to attract or influence the inner world of the audience.<sup>28</sup> The style and subject matter in the four panels exhibit a dream-like atmosphere, and Chéret appears to have manipulated the formal elements, especially line and color, to promote a psychological engagement with the cabaret viewer. The figures that surround the *chérètte* performer in each work can even be interpreted as allusions to the activity being performed, not actual depictions of a dancer or clown. It is certainly no lapse in judgment that Chéret specifically chose these four panels to be placed within an interior setting. In support of this claim, Verhagen states that the *chérètte* figure, who lights up these works and maintains her prominent position in the middle, represents elements of a fairy and a prostitute.<sup>29</sup> This strange duality derives from her weightlessness, which exudes “purity and immateriality,” and an otherworldliness, as well as from her alluring sexual quality.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the nineteenth-century supporters of Chéret and the poster, such as Roger Marx and Huysmans, claimed that the *chérètte* exuded a nervousness or madness that reflected the late nineteenth century’s obsession with hysteria, which was considered a mental illness caused by “excessive sexual stimulation and manifested itself in unconscious displays of sexual longings.”<sup>31</sup> Amy Kazee notes that as a poster artist, Chéret must have acted like a psychologist in determining what visual elements were necessary to influence and connect within the viewer’s mind, “His posters welcome and invite the viewer to join in the revelry.”<sup>32</sup> The Chat Noir’s four panels possessed, then, a psychological dynamism along with their decorative purpose. Chéret manipulated the

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<sup>28</sup> Silverman, 77.

<sup>29</sup> Verhagen, “Re-figurations of Carnival,” 110.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 128-129.

<sup>32</sup> Kazee, 50.

formal elements within each of the four panels' compositions to generate this psychological dynamism, which encourages the viewer to enter into and be immersed in this dream-like world. His incorporation of the Symbolist principles increases the decorative object's ability to be mentally stimulating. Kazee states: "His [Chéret's] images appeal to viewers visually while making a psychological connection with them. They contain a certain spirit, or ambience, that plants a persuasive suggestion in the mind of the viewer."<sup>33</sup> As such, it is plausible to understand the four panels' placement in the interior of the Chat Noir in terms of their psychological interiority.

A component of the discussion of psychological interiority in the four decorative panels is the manner in which Chéret depicts interior spaces within his poster work. A study of Chéret's *oeuvre* shows that he is not an artist like Toulouse-Lautrec, who commonly represented interior realms. Toulouse-Lautrec's interests were grounded in capturing the more realistic and often sober aspects of modern existence. Rather than confront and depict the harshness of modern life and any darkness that it harbored, Chéret opted for a lighter, carnivalesque world that enabled him to escape the troubles of the late nineteenth century. Even in circumstances where Chéret could have depicted the interior, such as in his commission for the *Moulin Rouge's* poster in 1889 (fig. 16), he renders the red windmill (*moulin rouge*) of the exterior of the cabaret and inserts his happy, smiling *chérie* on a donkey off to the right. Moreover, in his poster advertisements for domestic products such as lamp oil and soaps for instance, Chéret only vaguely insinuates that the female using the products may reside within an interior realm. This is only suggested, but never clearly represented. It should be noted that while Chéret either chose an exterior, or in most situations a void-like, indefinite space in which

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<sup>33</sup> Kazee, 50.

to place his figures, Toulouse-Lautrec repeatedly represented the interior view of the cabaret, as well as recognizable dancers. I am not claiming that Chéret was opposed to the representation of definable interior spaces, rather I am arguing that representing an actual interior space that is recognizable was not his objective, or a part of his artistic philosophy.

Two forms of interiorization exist in Chéret's four decorative panels for the Chat Noir cabaret. The two forms of interiorization are the physical placement of the panels on the walls of the interior space of the cabaret and the psychological interiority which figures prominently in these works. Chéret's *La Danse*, *La Musique*, *La Pantomime*, and *La Comédie* represent the poster's shift in 1890s Paris from a predominantly exterior visual phenomenon to an interior one used to decorate the walls of Parisian apartments.

## CONCLUSION

While the analysis of the work of Jules Chéret and the discussion of interiorization have comprised the most important components of this thesis' argument, I want to conclude by highlighting the work of Toulouse-Lautrec. This will illustrate the wider impact of French society's turn to the interior on the poster artists of this period. In examining the first form of interiorization in Toulouse-Lautrec's posters and lithographs, I offer an insightful quotation from André Mellerio's 1898 book *La Lithographie originale en couleurs*.

And even science itself, which in our day is concerned with improving public health, seems to encourage the print. After having opened up the wide boulevards and avenues, science wants light flooding into our homes, and it even advocates gaiety, that health of the soul, as a physical remedy. Now, isn't color the embodiment of light and gaiety? Furthermore, there is the everyday decoration of our interiors, which is pursued so rightly in its aim, but so erroneously and clumsily in its applications. Certainly, color lithography, without usurping anything from painting, holds its own in our decorative schemes, fitting in with simple furniture and natural woods from which gold leaf is excluded. One might almost say of Chéret's posters and Rivière's prints that they are the frescoes, if not of the poor man, at least of the crowd.<sup>1</sup>

Mellerio edited the contemporary journal *L'Estampe et l'affiche* and advocated the artistic use of the medium of color lithography. This quote addresses several important points regarding the popular status of posters and prints during the 1890s in Paris. For one, it alludes to the fact that color lithographs in the form of posters and prints had evolved from their strictly commercial purpose and were used alongside paintings for decorative purposes in the interiors of homes at this time. Moreover, it comments on the

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<sup>1</sup> André Mellerio, *La Lithographie originale en couleurs* (Paris: Publication of *L'Estampe et L'Affiche* 1898), as quoted in Phillip Dennis Cate and Sinclair Hamilton Hitchings, *The Color Revolution: Color Lithography in France 1890-1900* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1978), 96-97.

accessibility that these art forms possessed in terms of their ability to be enjoyed and owned by wealthy art collectors, as well as people of a lower economic status.

With the rise of poster production and society's fervent desire to collect and use these objects in interior spaces, came the widespread use of the print. Prints, although higher in price than most posters because of the limited number printed, were more convenient than posters to preserve in the home and for art collectors to store, due to their manageable size. Roger Marx explains,

Even those who try, find their good intentions hampered by the smallness of the home, the difficulty to display and to preserve these fragile sheets, so delicate when unfurled, so large that the eye can almost never, unless we step back, embrace the entire picture. From there stems the desire to save people the trouble of making a selection and the idea to offer a poster reduced to the size of a print, in every respect faithful to the original, easy to handle, suitable for frequent and quick examination and concurrent enjoyment.<sup>2</sup>

After his huge success with the 1891 poster for the Moulin Rouge, Toulouse-Lautrec began creating deluxe edition prints of Montmartre dancers and singers in smaller formats.<sup>3</sup>

One of the prints created for this purpose was Toulouse-Lautrec's 1892 *At the Moulin Rouge, La Goulue and Her Sister* (fig. 17). This print—designed for print collectors and fans of the dancer—was made available for sale through an art dealer for twenty francs, an amount which Mary Chapin notes, “was within reach of collectors but that elevated it above the cheap star paraphernalia and souvenirs hawked on the boulevards.”<sup>4</sup> Another instance of the print's use was a commission Toulouse-Lautrec received from Aristide Bruant, a popular entertainer known for his vulgar poetry and

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<sup>2</sup> Roger Marx, “Preface”, *Masters of the Poster, 1896-1900* (New York: Images Graphiques, 1977), 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Weaver Chapin, “Toulouse-Lautrec & the Culture of Celebrity,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, ed. Richard Thomson, Phillip Dennis Cate, and Mary Weaver Chapin (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 55.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

songs, which he performed in his own cabaret *Le Mirliton*. In this commission, Toulouse-Lautrec was asked to produce small photomechanical reproductions of the popular poster he had created of Bruant in 1892 (fig. 18). These unsigned and unnumbered prints were then signed by Bruant himself and either given away or sold to cabaret patrons to take home. An intriguing issue raised by Chapin, which relates to the first form of interiorization, is the peculiarity, or perhaps oddity, that surrounds bringing an image of a lower-class celebrity, such as depicted on a small print or poster, into the private world of the home to use as a form of decoration.<sup>5</sup> These low social status performers, such as La Goulue who graced many of Toulouse-Lautrec's posters and prints, were associated with prostitution and the syphilis epidemic.<sup>6</sup> Chapin notes that by the end of the 1890s, it was actually considered a "mark of one's fashionable tastes" to own deluxe images of Bruant or Yvette Guilbert in particular, due to their high popularity and acceptance by the upper classes.<sup>7</sup> Both Bruant and Guilbert had throughout their careers performed in high society functions.<sup>8</sup> Toulouse-Lautrec also produced original prints of Montmartre performers in album and book formats, which "increased his exposure to the art-buying public, enhanced his association with the performers, and allowed him to straddle the worlds of commercial art (entertainment posters) and fine art (original prints)."<sup>9</sup>

The second form of interiorization exhibited in the style and subject matter of Toulouse-Lautrec's poster designs concerns psychological interiority. In examining the *oeuvre* of Toulouse-Lautrec, it becomes apparent that he was an artist clearly engrossed

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<sup>5</sup> Chapin, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 55.

in depicting, with vitality and accuracy, the various mental states of human beings, as well as their movement and expressions. While Toulouse-Lautrec reveled in the entertainment culture of Montmartre and utilized it to form the core of his artistic output, he, nonetheless, was also consumed by an interest to portray the inner vision and psychological complexities of the public celebrity. It was uncommon for an artist during this time to depict a public personality's private life and expose him or her in a manner that was contrary to what was normally shown on stage to the public. For example, although these works are paintings and not posters or lithographs, they nevertheless exemplify this psychological, private nature. The two works executed by Toulouse-Lautrec in 1892 I am referring to are *Jane Avril in the Entrance to the Moulin Rouge, Putting on Her Gloves* (fig. 19) and *Jane Avril Leaving the Moulin Rouge* (fig. 20). Chapin claims in regard to these paintings, "The artist depicts the dancer in her street clothes, wearing a solemn expression and wrapped up in her own thoughts. Her conservative outfit gives no hint of her stage life in the raucous dance hall; her downward glance and closed body language take us from the realm of public personality to private individual."<sup>10</sup> These works reveal Toulouse-Lautrec's simultaneous interest in portraying the dances and entertainment acts which popularized these celebrities, as well as the reality of the person when they were off stage and immersed in their own thoughts. In other words, moving from an exterior or public representation to an interiorized view or representation.

The next example of psychological interiorization involves the representation of facial expression and body language in Toulouse-Lautrec's posters and lithographs, as well as a work executed in oil on cardboard. Following largely in the footsteps of Debora

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<sup>10</sup> Chapin, 57-58.

Silverman's argument concerning the fin-de-siècle's *psychologie nouvelle*, Richard Thomson argues in "Toulouse-Lautrec & Montmartre: Depicting Decadence in Fin-de-Siècle Paris" that the underlying meaning and style in Toulouse-Lautrec's works, such as *Jane Avril Dancing* from 1892 (fig. 21) relate almost directly to the current ideas of hysteria in the field of psychology.<sup>11</sup> In an analysis of *Jane Avril Dancing* 1892, Thomson points out that this celebrity had once been treated by Charcot at the Salpêtrière for two years and that "in her memoirs she explained that it was the creative therapy of dancing the *courtille*, in a dress lent her by Charcot's daughter, which cured her."<sup>12</sup> Thomson comments on the manner, in which Toulouse-Lautrec has divided Jane Avril's body into two disparate parts,

Above the waist the primly bloused body seems almost steady, her face placid, introverted, even dreamy. Below the waist a claw like hand grasps her skirts high, while her spindly legs careen and gyrate at what seem to be tortuously distorted angles, not unreminiscent of the physical contortions of hysterical patients in Dr. Richer's drawings.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Paul Richer, a pupil of Charcot's in the 1880s, who had executed several large drawings of the various stages of hysterical fits that were seen in lectures and later published in clinical texts. The physical contortions and exaggerated gestures that Thomson observes in *Jane Avril Dancing* are also present in a well-known poster of this same subject from 1899 titled *Jane Avril* (fig. 22). Here she is shown on a white background with a dramatically curving, writhing body, which is accentuated by the large, colorful snake which wraps around her dress. Her expression exudes one of fear and madness and contrasts strongly from the calm and introverted expression seen in

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Thomson, "Toulouse-Lautrec & Montmartre: Depicting Decadence in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," in *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre*, ed. Richard Thomson, Phillip Dennis Cate, and Mary Weaver Chapin (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 19-20.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

*Jane Avril Dancing*. She holds her arms up in the air around her large hat as if she is engaged in a hysterical fit. Frey notes that this poster, as a result of its ambiguous or frightening quality, was never used to attract the public.<sup>14</sup> She also notes that “Jane Avril’s expression and gesture resemble those in Edvard Munch’s 1893 work *The Scream*, which Henry had almost certainly seen reproduced in *La Revue Blanche* in 1895, if he had not seen it exhibited in Paris.”<sup>15</sup> It becomes clear in examining *Jane Avril Dancing* that Toulouse-Lautrec began exploring artistic ways of incorporating the psychology of the time into his depictions of gestures and expressions, which characterized many of Montmartre’s famous entertainers. Thomson claims, “Such was Toulouse-Lautrec’s grasp of modernity that he could combine his acute powers of observation and the contemporary instinct for caricature with the malleable performance of the brilliant Montmartre *diseuse* and even the clinical approach of contemporary psychology.” Unlike the majority of Chéret’s poster designs which exude a sense of cheerfulness, Toulouse-Lautrec remains unique in his approach to instilling a high degree of psychological interiority into the style and subject matter of his posters and lithographs.

The analysis of the posters and color lithographs executed by the late nineteenth-century artists Jules Chéret and Toulouse-Lautrec confirms the argument that by the 1890s in Paris, these art forms, like society, had become interiorized. Although commonplace in contemporary society, the notion that a poster, in its primary function as a publicly viewed street advertisement, could evolve into an art form capable of being admired and intimately viewed within the confines of one’s home is intriguing. The

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<sup>14</sup> Frey, *Toulouse-Lautrec: A Life*, 450.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

twenty-first century person, who purchases a poster or print to decorate the walls of the interior of his or her home, will be aware upon reading this thesis that this concept originates in late nineteenth-century French society.

In understanding the poster's exterior to interior expansion as a reflection of French society's inward mindset at the end of the nineteenth century, historian Rosalind Williams, in addressing *A Rebours*, provides compelling insight: "Huysmans demonstrates the futility of an isolated effort to escape the mass market, the impossibility of wholly autonomous consumption cut off from the rest of society, the spurious nature of pride in being above the ordinary run of mankind, the curse of the kind of superiority which expresses itself in an eccentric and finally mad isolation."<sup>16</sup> The poster's emergence in Paris during the middle of the nineteenth century was a response to the rise of mass consumerism, as well as a way of decorating and brightening up the monotone aesthetics produced by Haussmannization, thus resulting in a type of exterior art gallery that caught the eye of the Parisian public. Whereas, by the 1890s, posters, in addition to their function as advertisements, had acquired a new purpose as interior forms of wall art. This expansion of the poster past its original boundaries paralleled a society escaping the perils of modernity and becoming more consumed with the private realm.

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<sup>16</sup> Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late-Nineteenth Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 151.

## ILLUSTRATIONS



**Figure 1.** Jules Chéret, *La Pantomime*, 1891. Color lithograph, 46.9 x 32.3 in.



**Figure 2.** Jules Chéret, *La Comédie*, 1891. Color lithograph, 46.9 x 32.3 in.



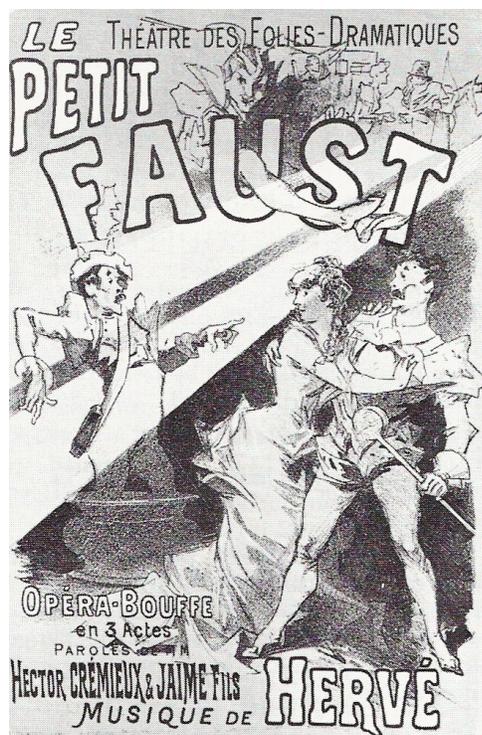
**Figure 3.** Jules Chéret, *La Danse*, 1891. Color lithograph, 46.9 x 32.3 in.



**Figure 4.** Jules Chéret, *La Musique*, 1891. Color lithograph. 46.9 x 32.3 in.



**Figure 5.** Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Moulin Rouge, La Goulue*, 1891. Color lithograph, linen backed, 74 x 45 in. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.



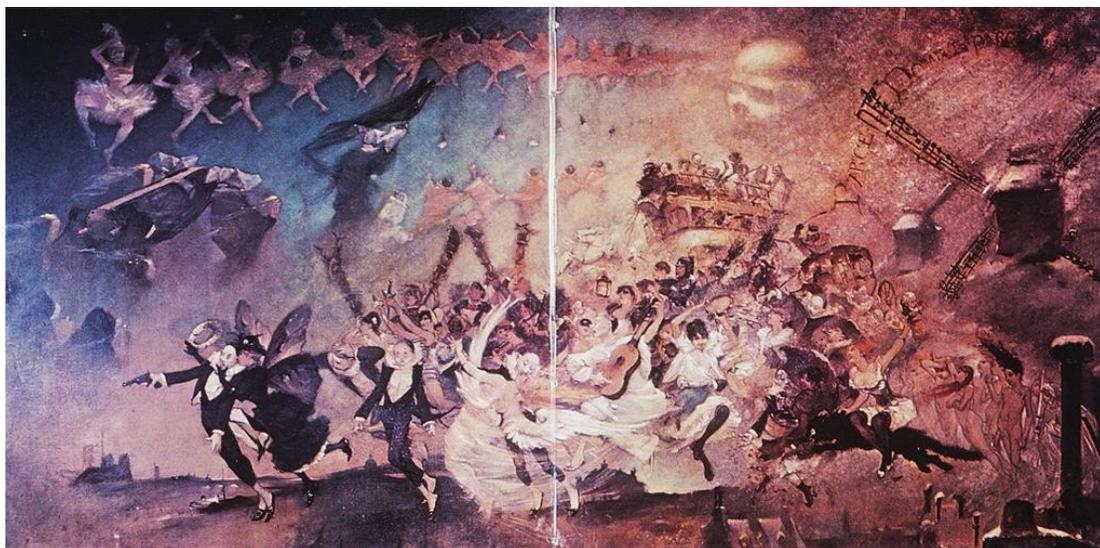
**Figure 6.** Jules Chéret, Poster for *Le Petit Faust*, 1869. Four color lithographic poster, 26.8 x 20.5 in.



**Figure 7.** Jules Chéret, Poster for *La Biche au Bois* (The Doe in the Woods), 1867. Color lithograph, 28.7 x 39.4 in.



**Figure 8.** Edouard Dammouse, *Interior of Pottery Studio*, 1899.



**Figure 9.** Adolphe Willette, *Parce Domine*, c.1884. Oil on canvas, 78.7 x 153.5 in. Paris, Musée Carnavalet



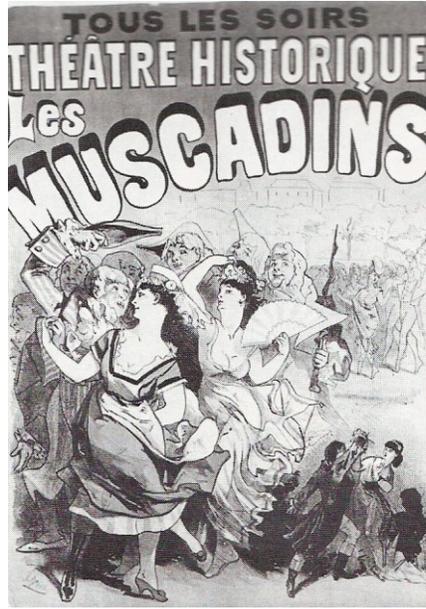
**Figure 10.** Adolphe Willette, *The Virgin with Cat (The Green Virgin)*, c.1882. Oil on canvas, 78.3 x 22.6 in. New Brunswick, The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.



**Figure 11.** Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, *Apotheosis of Cats*, c.1890. Oil on canvas, 64.8 x 118 in. Geneva, Petit Palais, Musée d'art moderne.



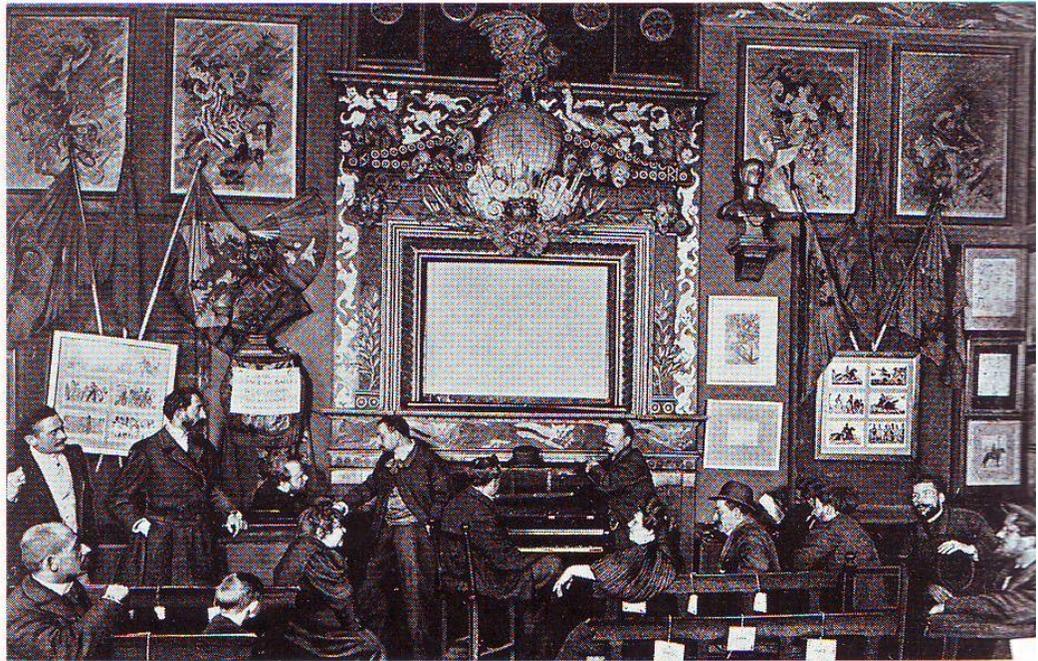
**Figure 12.** Jules Chéret, Poster for *Eldorado Music Hall*, 1894. Color lithographic poster, 46.5 x 32.3 in.



**Figure 13.** Jules Chéret, Poster for Théâtre Historique, *Les Muscadins*, 1875. Color lithographic poster, 46 x 32.7 in.



**Figure 14.** Jules Chéret, Poster for Grand Théâtre de L'Exposition, *Palais des enfants*, 1889. Color lithographic poster, 21.3 x 14.6 in.



**Figure 15.** *Interior of the Chat Noir cabaret, 1896.* Photorelief. Illustration in *Le Figaro illustré* (June 1896), 113. New Brunswick, The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.



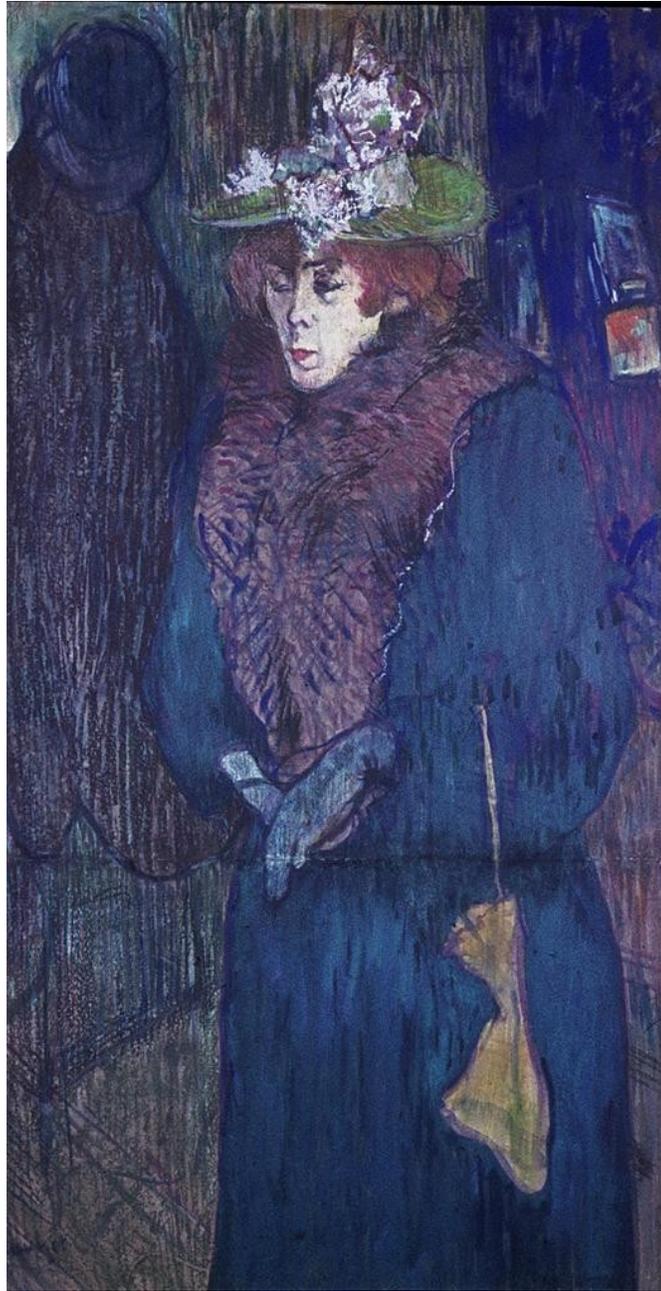
**Figure 16.** Jules Chéret, *Bal du Moulin Rouge*, 1889. Color lithograph, 47.2 x 34.3 in. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



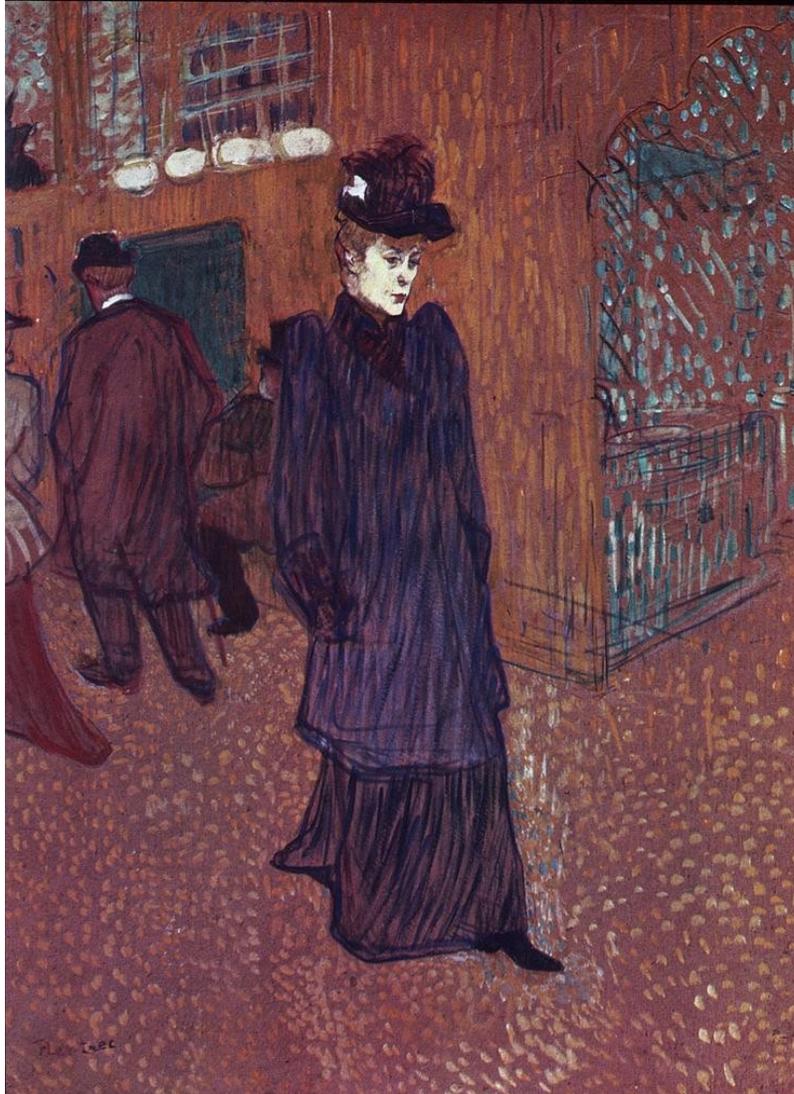
**Figure 17.** Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *At the Moulin Rouge, La Goulue and Her Sister*, 1892. Color lithograph, 25.6 x 19.6 in. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.



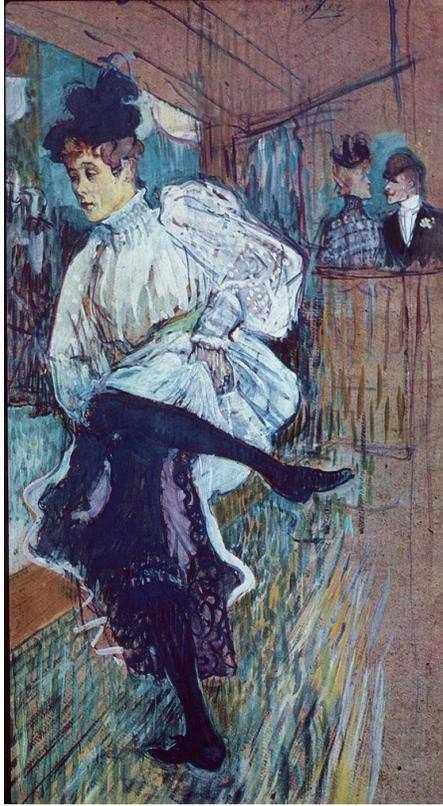
**Figure 18.** Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Ambassadeurs: Aristide Bruant*, 1892. Color lithograph, 58 x 39.3 in. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.



**Figure 19.** Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril in the Entrance to the Moulin Rouge, Putting on Her Gloves*, 1892. Oil and pastel on millboard laid on panel, 40.2 x 21.7 in. London, Courtauld Gallery.



**Figure 20.** Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril Leaving the Moulin Rouge*, 1892. Essence on board, 33.2 x 25 in. Hartford, Connecticut, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art.



**Figure 21.** Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril Dancing*, 1892. Oil on cardboard, 33.7 x 17.7 in. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.



**Figure 22.** Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril*, 1899. Color lithograph, 21.9 x 14.8. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the poster's evolution from an exterior, public phenomenon to an interior and private art form in 1890s Paris. In examining this development, I undertake an analysis of the poster designs of Jules Chéret and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. I also discuss two separate kinds of interiorization related to the poster's transformation from a type of public advertisement to an interiorized and privatized form of wall art. The first form of interiorization is the literal, physical placement of the poster on the walls of the interior of homes and popular entertainment venues to serve as decoration. Jules Chéret's series of four panels executed in 1891—*Dance, Music, Pantomime, and Comedy*—which was installed in the interior of Montmartre's famous cabaret, *Le Chat Noir*, best exemplifies the poster's physical interiorization. The second form of interiorization concerns the style of such posters, which suggests a certain degree of psychological interiority, or in the words of Nicholas Watkins, a "protective intimism." A component of the discussion of psychological interiority involves examining how Chéret and Toulouse-Lautrec treat the direct representation of interior space within posters and lithographs. An understanding of these two forms of interiorization in the work of these two artists ultimately becomes clear through the analysis of the style and subject matter of specific images and the cultural context in which they emerged.