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## ABSTRACT

This thesis, submitted for the degree of M.A. in the University of Durham, and entitled A Study of the Relations between the Sexes in the Novels of Emile Zola, is of 264 pages and approximately 75,000 words in length. The thesis is intended as a broad survey of the relationships between men and women created by Emile Zola in his novels. It comprises six chapters, the last three of which are subdivided. The first chapter gives a brief review of the author's own involvement with different women. The second chapter attempts to establish to what extent such personal experiences influenced, either directly or indirectly, his fictional portrayal of relations between the sexes. The thesis continues with a discussion on the extent of Zola's indebtedness to the Romantic theme of the 'Fatal Woman', and its significance in his overall depiction of relationships between men and women. Chapter Four examines relations between the sexes from the point of view of the individual, and contains discussion of many of Zola's own attitudes towards woman and the treatment she receives from her male partner. Chapter Five examines the same relationships from the point of view of society, and seeks to determine their sociological interest and relevance. The final chapter concludes by linking the relationships already considered to the art of the novel in an assessment of their psychological, literary, and didactic interest. The thesis also arrives at a very general conclusion that, in the particular aspect of his novels under review, Zola did not reveal the same prophetic radicalism which has often been noted of his work as a whole.

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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONS  
BETWEEN THE SEXES  
IN THE NOVELS OF EMILE ZOLA.

Thesis presented for the  
degree of M.A. in the  
University of Durham

by

Malcolm Johnson, B.A. (Dunelm. 1968.)  
of Hatfield College

October, 1969.

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#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

I have made extensive use, both in chapter headings and in the text of the thesis, of the word 'relationship', either alone, or qualified by the adjective 'human'. I have intended this to mean specifically a relationship between a man and a woman, or, more often, between a male and female character created by Zola.

M.K.F.J.

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### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

For Zola's works I have used parts of three different editions. From the beginning of my documentation I was able to use, for the Rougon-Macquart series of novels, the "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade" edition in five volumes. For other material by Zola I had intended to use the original "Charpentier" edition as far as possible. However, during the course of the year the first ten volumes of the new "Cercle du Livre Précieux" edition of Zola's Oeuvres Complètes arrived in Durham and it was the appropriate volumes that I subsequently used for all further material other than the Rougon-Macquart novels. For Zola's own works I have, therefore, referred mostly to two collected editions with occasional use of single works published by Charpentier.

### ABBREVIATIONS

For editions of Zola's works I have employed the following abbreviations: R.M. followed by a volume number refers to the appropriate volume of Les Rougon-Macquart in the "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade" edition. Similarly, O.C. followed by a volume number designates the appropriate volume of the Complete Works in the recent "Cercle du Livre Précieux" edition. For volumes of the Charpentier edition I use the abbreviation B.C. In the footnotes I have used the following symbols for periodicals and journals: F.S.- French Studies, L.C.N.- Les Cahiers Naturalistes, M.F.-Mercure de France, M.L.N.-Modern Language Notes, M.L.Q.-Modern Language Quarterly, M.L.R.-Modern Language Review, P.M.L.A.-Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, P.Q.-Philological Quarterly, R.H.L.F.-Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France, R.L.C.-Revue de Littérature Comparée, R.R.-Romanic Review, R.S.H.-Revue des Sciences Humaines.

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I wish to thank Professor D.J. Mossop for the helpful assistance and supervision he has given me in my period of study for this thesis. I should also like to thank the staff of the Durham University Library for meeting my demands for books and material not available in Durham. My thanks are also due to the University of Durham for granting me a Research Studentship without which this work would not have been possible.



INTRODUCTION

Many of the individual relationships Zola created in his novels have received detailed attention within the general context of criticism of his work. This thesis attempts to consider the author's depiction of relations between the sexes as a whole, and to evaluate the psychological, literary, and sociological content of this feature of Zola's work. Human relationships are used by him to illustrate social problems as well as individual emotions and have considerable importance as part of the author's treatment of the decline of one society in his major cycle of novels, and of the rise of a more ideal one in later works. In themselves the stories of men and women related by Zola form an unremarkable part of his work, because of the way he relegated their individual importance to a broader canvas. Other aspects of his novels have received greater consideration; this is perhaps due to the fact that some of the attitudes Zola revealed towards relations between the sexes are untypical of the quality many critics have most admired in him - the foresight he showed in postulating problems and conditions which have arisen in our own age. Marc Bernard, in his introduction to Présence de Zola, a collection of articles by various authors, regarded a prophetic, visionary ability as the hall-mark of all great writers, "Il n'est point de grand écrivain sans doute qui ne soit aussi un annonciateur et un prophète, peut-être même est-ce là le signe le plus assuré de sa grandeur."<sup>1</sup>) Bernard claimed this distinction for Zola, and many critics have agreed. Philip Walker, in consideration of Germinal, talks of Zola's "revolutionary modern thought" and describes him as a "representative of the new mentality."<sup>2</sup>)

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1) Présence de Zola. Fasquelle 1953 p. 8. 2) Philip Walker Prophetic Myths in Zola. P.M.L.A. No. 74 1959 p. 446.

In many ways Zola was undoubtedly a progressive, far-sighted forerunner of the half-century which succeeded his death. His anticipation, for example, that one of the greatest conflicts of our time would be the struggle between capital and labour has been well vindicated. However, for Thomas Mann, Zola was a more typical representative of his own age, "Emile Zola m'est toujours apparu comme l'un des représentants les plus fortement marqués, les plus exemplaires du XIX siècle. 1) In Zola's age and just after it European life underwent great change - industrial, social, religious etc. Amongst these changes there was to be a radical alteration in the relations between men and women, and the attitude of one sex to another. Zola obviously sensed that man had to reform his personal life, for the society he created was one in which relations between men and women had reached a state of corruption and hostility. However, both in his descriptions of relationships as they existed, and in his recommendations for their modification, he revealed himself more as a representative of traditional thought than as a prophet of the ensuing century. Perhaps the most obvious example of his conservatism was his view of woman's situation. He recognised the need for reform but found a solution in man's willingness not to abuse his natural superiority rather than in any female emancipation. In most of his attitudes towards relations between the sexes Zola was neither a prophet nor a revolutionary. However, the relationships he portrayed have a corporate interest as an integral part of the picture given of society in general and they have some individual appeal as reflections of the author's particular ideas on the motivation of human behaviour.

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1) Présence de Zola. p.11.

The opening chapter considers Zola's own involvement with the opposite sex, which, although less complicated than that of many of his literary contemporaries and acquaintances, seemed to be required in a consideration of the way in which an artist depicts the relationships between man and woman. The second chapter seeks to evaluate to what extent such personal encounters influenced the fictional portrayal of relations between the sexes. The following chapter discusses the degree of interest Zola showed in the literary tradition of the "Fatal Woman", and the extent of his borrowings from it. Chapters four and five deal with relationships with regard to the individual, and then in the light of society. Chapter four contains reflections on many of the attitudes Zola himself revealed in his writings towards various aspects of relations between the sexes. Some of the observations on marriage as shown in later novels, which are contained in this chapter, have a social implication and perhaps more rightly belong to chapter five. However, marriage as recommended in Zola's ideal society seems so close a reflection of the author's own preferences that they are contained in the first of the two chapters. Zola's relationships seem to observe class distinction and some differentiation to this effect is made in chapter five, which deals with the sociological interest. The final chapter concludes by attempting to analyse the significance and importance of what has been noted in previous chapters from a literary point of view.

CHAPTER I : THE WOMEN IN ZOLA'S LIFE

Emile Zola was born on April 2nd 1840 in the Rue St. Joseph in Paris. His father, François, an engineer, was a colourful cosmopolitan figure who had settled down to marriage and family life at a relatively advanced age. He had come to Paris at the time of his son's birth in connection with a project for the canalisation of the water-supply of Aix-en-Provence and the family soon returned to Provence where business called. A Parisian he may have been by birth, but the author's roots stretched firmly back to Provence where he spent his childhood and youth. The Zola family was a close-knit and happy one, but tragedy disrupted it when Emile was seven years old. Whilst on a business trip François Zola contracted pleurisy and died in a Marseilles hotel room. The son's upbringing and the pursuit of the family fortune were unavoidably left to Emile's mother and grandparents. The future novelist was left to grow up in a household dominated and run by two women, for his grandfather played little part in family affairs, and from an early, impressionable age Emile knew surroundings in which the traditional roles of the sexes were of necessity not respected. As an only son he was undoubtedly spoiled a little by the two doting women who had only Emile to rely on for a renewal of the family fortune. It is not surprising that the young man proved excessively shy in his relations with members of either sex outside the family circle. When he went to school the "Parisian" became the natural butt for ragging and teasing by his more robust schoolmates. However, one of the latter, Paul Cézanne, befriended him and protected him from being bullied. Their friendship blossomed into an extremely deep relationship, and they were joined by Jean-Baptistin Baille to form a trio of inseparables. This triangular friendship is the most significant

detail of Zola's adolescence; years spent in each other's company in carefree enjoyment of the countryside around Aix provided the basis of a profound and mutual understanding which was only slowly eroded when the three left Aix to make their separate ways in the world.

Emile's mother and grandmother were obviously both extremely energetic women, for they ceaselessly had to combat difficult circumstances. François Zola had unfortunately died when his affairs were in a very fluid state. Slowly, despite all efforts by the two women, the family's resources were dissipated by a string of complicated law-suits. The Zolas were forced to move to a more modest house several times; economies had to be made to provide Emile with as good an education as they could reasonably afford. His grandmother died in 1857 and Mme. Zola felt forced to go to Paris to solicit help. When, however, she found that the support she desired was not forthcoming, she instructed Emile to sell the family's assets to pay for his own and his grandfather's fare to Paris.

Zola's adolescence in Aix was thus brought to an undesired and rather abrupt end; it was not in itself a remarkable part of his life but the Provençal countryside, his childhood spent in a household run largely by two women and above all his friendship with Cézanne and Baille left an indelible imprint on the young man's mind, and found expression in many forms in his later works. One of the favourite pastimes of Zola, Cézanne and Baille in these early years was the reading of the Romantic poets, and of Musset in particular, and such reading material, coupled with the more theoretical writings of Michelet probably played a larger part in forging Emile's ideas on women, love and the sexes at this early age, than any contacts he may have had with the fair sex. Such contacts undoubtedly existed, but their exact nature and relevance to his later novels remain far from certain. Zola himself

indicates that girls were simply disregarded at this time. One of the most closely autobiographical evocations of these early days is to be found in the opening pages of L'Œuvre; in describing the reminiscences by Sandoz and Claude Lantier of their boy-hood around Plassans, Zola had only to transpose the details of the triangular Zola-Baille-Cézanne adolescent period. Claude and Sandoz recall that:

La femme elle-même était bannie, ils avaient des timidités, des maladresses, qu'ils érigeaient en une austérité de gamins supérieurs. 1)

Sandoz, who, in much of the novel, is little more than a self-portrait by Zola, is satisfied, in the absence of any direct experiences, by naïve, romantic day-dreams of beautiful, mysterious women:

Sandoz nourrissait des rêves, des dames rencontrées en voyage, des filles très belles qui surgiraient dans un bois inconnu, qui se livreraient tout un jour, puis qui se disséperaient comme des ombres, au crépuscule. 2)

Early biographers in general formed the view that Zola's deepest youthful attachments were with fictional heroines, rather than real ones, the young man being satisfied, as was Sandoz, with mildly erotic fantasies. Paul Alexis, one of Zola's biographers and most faithful friends in later years, probably relied on what the novelist told him, for his account of his friend's early years. Alexis is emphatic almost to the point of vehemence about the absence of any female attachments during Zola's adolescence:

On peut dès lors reconstruire ce que fut cette adolescence à trois. D'abord pas de femme. De grands désirs sans doute. Mais l'excès même de ces désirs aboutissant, vis-à-vis de la femme, à une grande timidité. Tout au plus quelques amourettes avortées. 3)

It is perhaps significant that Alexis obviously feels that the most important feature of this stage of Zola's life is, "Pas de femme."

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1) L'Œuvre R.M. Vol. 4. p. 40 2) Ibid. Pp. 40-41.

3) Paul Alexis Emile Zola. Notes d'un ami. Charpentier 1882 p.30.

Denise LeBlond-Zola, in her biography of her father, is content to suggest that some of the Contes à Ninon were inspired by a young girl from Aix whom Zola loved without her knowing of it. 1). More recently a tradition has been founded according to which Emile felt great affection for one girl in particular in Aix whom he was forced to admire from afar, for his excessive timidity prevented him from pressing his intentions. This girl received the name "L'Aérienne" from Zola and his close friends, but the vexed question remains: did "L'Aérienne" have a real identity or was she a product of Emile's imagination, an idealised amalgam perhaps of several young girls of his acquaintance? His letters at a slightly later date from Paris do not solve the problem. In two letters to Baille he speaks of "L'Aérienne" in terms that suggest that she had a real identity, but which do not invalidate completely the theory that she was no more than an ideal figure. In a letter dated 3rd. December 1859 we read, "Certes, ce n'est ni Aix, ni l'Aérienne que je regrette," and in one of only a few days later (29th. December), "Si tu vois l'Aérienne, souris-lui de ma part." 2). However, in the following year we find him writing to Baille again, contending that "l'Aérienne" was merely the product of his dreams:

"... permets-moi seulement que je me disculpe de quelques accusations graves - Ce n'est pas S... que j'ai aimée, que j'aime peut-être encore; c'est l'Aérienne que j'ai moins vu que rêvé..." 3)

Zola himself then does not provide a solution to "l'Aérienne's" identity although the fact that he felt obliged to deny her reality might suggest that already a rumour of her existence was in circulation.

The most detailed account of Zola's early life is to be found in Armand Lanoux's slightly romanticised biography

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1) Denise LeBlond-Zola. Emile Zola raconté par sa fille. Fasquelle 1931. 2) Correspondance. Lettres de Jeunesse. B.C. p.8; p.12. 3) Ibid. p.135. Letter of 10th. August 1860.

Bonjour, Monsieur Zola, which appeared in 1954. Lanoux contends that:

" Zola est précoce physiquement, s'il est retardé intellectuellement. Ses petits camarades aussi. Des Latins. L'instinct génital vient de bonne heure et Emile connaît de "petits amours", dans les garrigues et sur les bords de la rivière qui étincelle....." 1)

Lanoux postulates that as he grew older Emile was probably very timid with girls; he believes that there were several reasons for this timidity: the young man's faulty elocution, the fact that he had been brought up by two women in a sheltered atmosphere and also the fact that at the age of five a sexual assault had been perpetrated on him by an Arab boy aged twelve. This fact was unearthed in the Marseilles archives by Alfred Chabaud, a schoolmaster. He discovered there the following police report from the 4th. April 1845:

" Nous avons fait conduire au Palais de Justice le nommé Mustapha, âgé de 12 ans, natif d'Alger, domestique au service de M.Zola, ingénieur civil, logé Rue de l'Arbre, No.4, prévenu d'attentat à la pudeur sur le jeune Emile Zola âgé de cinq ans."2)

Lanoux adopts the view, however, that in spite of all these restrictions Emile felt a timid love for one girl whom he identifies as Louise Solari, sister of a friend, Philippe Solari, later to become a sculptor. The mysterious "S.." of the letter quoted above could of course easily apply to her. When Lanoux first named Louise as the object of Zola's early love, Marcel Girard produced Louise's death certificate to refute the biographer's theory. This document showed that, since Louise died on the 19th. May 1870 aged 23 years, 6 months, she was only twelve when Zola left for Paris in February 1858, aged eighteen. In Girard's opinion this age gap

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1) Lanoux's biography has been adapted to form the opening of Vol.1 of the new edition of the Oeuvres Complètes. It is from this I quote. Lanoux. Zola Vivant. O.C.Vol.1 p.25. 2) Alfred Chabaud. Un épisode inconnu de l'enfance d'Emile Zola. M.F. 1929.p.508.



invalidated Lanoux's naming of "l'Aérienne", and he preferred the concept of several vague female figures as the total of Zola's encounters with the opposite sex during his Provençal adolescence. 1) But Lanoux found a supporter in F.W.J. Hemmings, who did not accept that the death certificate necessarily made it impossible to see Louise as the girl who captivated the young Zola and whom he addresses as "l'Aérienne" in the Lettres de Jeunesse, and as "Ninon" in the Contes. 2) A passage from La Fortune des Rougon describing the young heroine Miette Chantegreil at the age of thirteen, in Hemmings' view, adds weight to the theory that the real girl who monopolised Emile's attentions was of approximately the same age, an age at which it would not be unusual to find a girl, who led a healthy outdoor life in the Provençal climate, blossoming forth into a woman, and suitably equipped to engage the attentions of a youth of Zola's age.

Whether it was with Louise or another unknown girl, it is now largely accepted that Emile experienced, before he went to Paris, a relationship which was strong and deep enough to leave a lasting impression both on the man and on parts of his mature work.

Few biographers have tried to establish whether the young man had any sexual experience before he left for Paris. Henri Guillemin, basing his views no doubt on some of the letters Zola wrote to Aix soon after arriving in Paris, states that he had no sexual involvements:

"A vingt ans, Zola est vierge et il voudrait demeurer tel pour celle qu'un jour il épousera. Il attache un grand prix à la chasteté. " 3)

Lanoux on this question is wisely non-committal; he is content to state that Zola had ample opportunity when his mother went to Paris in 1857, but is inclined to agree with

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1) Marcel Girard. Emile Zola and Louise Solari. R.H.L.F. 1958. Pp. 371-2. 2) F.W.J. Hemmings. Emile Zola and Louise Solari. R.H.L.F. 1960. Pp. 60-1. 3) H. Guillemin. Zola, légende et vérité? p.13.

Guillemin that the opportunity was not taken:

Est-ce alors, que Zola "devint homme", comme on dit, furtivement, à la sauvette? Il en avait l'occasion, mais elle resta, selon toute vraisemblance, occasion manquée. 1)

Zola's total involvement with the opposite sex during his early years in Aix is open to doubt. Certainly when he first arrived in Paris in 1858 he was still the timid youth who had nurtured charmingly naive, romantic ideas of pure love and idealised women in the company of Cézanne and Baille on their excursions into the Provençal countryside. Indeed, in his early letters from Paris, especially to Baille, Zola feels obliged to upbraid his friend for his over-realistic views on love and women, and at the same time exposes his own ideas on the same subjects. Such letters provide interesting and amusing reading, written as they are by the same pen which, was soon to depict scenes of such realism in sexual matters that they aroused storms of scandalised indignation. In a letter to Baille on the 14th. January 1859 Zola reports that in his correspondance Cézanne is in a platonic mood and that he, Zola, has done nothing to dissuade him from it. At the same time he feels that he must admonish Baille for holding to his realistic views of love, describing himself as one who had once held such views but who had changed his opinions:

Il était un temps où...je raillais, lorsque l'on me parlait de pureté et de fidélité, et ce temps-là n'est pas bien ancien. Mais j'ai réfléchi, et j'ai cru découvrir que notre siècle n'est pas aussi matériel qu'il veut le paraître. 2)

In a letter of the 14th. February of the following year to the same recipient Zola again feels obliged to chide Baille for being too pessimistic; the future author of La Terre and Germinal criticises his friend for regarding human relationships in altogether too sombre a fashion. he agrees that society appears evil and predominantly sensual, but affirms a conviction that even in the basest heart there remains a

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1) Lanoux. Zola Vivant. O.C.Vol. 1 p.56.

2) Correspondance. Lettres de Jeunesse B.C. p.2.

spark of love. In the same letter Zola contends that a true relationship depends on consideration both of the body and the soul, an exclusive preoccupation with either prejudices the relationship:

Dans un sentiment tel que l'amour, où l'âme et le corps sont si intimement liés, on ne peut, sous peine de sottise, écarter ni l'un ni l'autre. Qui écarte l'âme est une brute, qui écarte le corps est un exalté, un poète que le caillou du chemin attend. 1)

In his earliest writings Zola showed a preference for a pure, idyllic form of love, but in his ideal union the body also had its part to play. The society Emile was to portray in most of his Rougon-Macquart novels was a society obsessed only with the body, disregarding the spirit, and, consistently with Zola's thought, imparting to its love affairs only excesses of brutality. In a materialist age of "blasé" young men, Zola turned largely to Michelet for ideas on the roles and natures of the sexes. The early letters, apart from expressing a need for pure and noble love, also call attention to the low status to which woman has been lowered and from which she should be rehabilitated. The young man would like to see a rebirth of love and respect for woman, who is at least deserving of man's veneration.

The young Emile Zola in his first years in Paris is thus not very different from the timid idealist who left Aix. He embarked on a carefree, Bohemian existence, living independently of his mother in a succession of garrets in the Latin Quarter. In such surroundings he was content to pass his days in idle rêverie, enlarging his literary knowledge, writing poetry, dreaming of future artistic fame, watching pretty girls pass by, and imagining himself, as before, in the company of fictional heroines. Caught up in this little world of his own, Emile remained oblivious to the hustle and bustle of life in Paris around him, and the strong desire he later felt to become

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1) Ibid. p.14.

a person of importance had not yet asserted itself. Mme. Zola proved very indulgent and showed little impatience with Emile's lack of academic success. But Zola could not remain indefinitely a person apart; slowly he was dragged into the realities of Parisian life around him, the sordidness of which dissipated his romantic ideals and filled him with a need for realism.

Zola moved several times from one home to another in the "Quartier Latin". The end of 1860 and the beginning of the following year found him at 11, Rue Soufflot where he became immersed in the sordid existence of the students of the area and of the girls of easy virtue who shared it. Here, he encountered and had an affair with a young prostitute named Berthe, with whom he tried to repeat a process espoused by many Romantics, the redemption of a fallen woman. 1) Such an attempt is eloquent both of the arrogance and of the idealism that entered into the young Zola's character. This attempt, unlike similar ones described in Romantic fiction, ended in abject failure. Once Zola had embarked on this liaison, he considered he had a duty towards Berthe, which at one stage stretched to a desire to found a home and have children by her. But the relationship foundered on the lack of ability in either partner to understand the other's mentality, and finally Emile had to admit his failure to enlighten Berthe, renounce his plan to save her, and let her slip back into the gutter where he had found her. His experience found artistic expression in La Confession de Claude, but the disillusionment which obviously resulted from it, probably made a much wider impact on his later work. Early biographers tended to disregard this stage in Zola's development. Lepelletier describes the early days in Paris as uncomplicated by any

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1) The dating of this episode in Zola's life remains uncertain  
See F.W.J.Hemmings. Emile Zola p.10 and note.

significant attachments:

"Il (Zola) eut des relations, sans incidents, ni suites, avec de bonnes filles du quartier Latin. Puis il se maria, fort jeune. 1)

Paul Alexis, a close friend of the author's family circle writing a biography whilst his friend was still alive, is understandably reticent about the incident, but admits to a liaison:

"Une fois, ayant couru en vain tout le quartier sans trouver à emprunter les quelques sous du dîner, et il faut tout dire, ayant à ce moment sur les bras une femme...2)

The apologetic tone of " et il faut tout dire " expresses perfectly Alexis' wish to let sleeping dogs lie. Later critics have given more importance to the affair with Berthe as the principal factor in the establishment of a painful contrast Zola felt between the imaginary world of his youth, and the real world he came into contact with in Paris. Certainly, the Berthe episode must have stimulated in his mind the conflict between dreams and reality, which was resolved in the determination to come to grips with reality and succeed as a novelist of objective observation. If it was with Berthe that Zola discovered sexual love, then the obvious disappointment which the affair caused him might also explain some of the equivocal ways in which the novelist later viewed and described sexual matters.

Emile's unfortunate experiences with the young prostitute played a part in his abandonment of romantic idealism in favour of reality, but as an isolated incident it was probably not solely responsible for the considerable change that came over him. It is more likely that a slow but ever increasing involvement in Parisian life as a whole transformed the dreamy youth into a man of great activity, anxious to come to grips with life and work. In an article entitled " Paris. Juin 1875 "

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1) B.Lepelletier. *Emile Zola. Sa Vie - Son Œuvre*. Mercure de France. 1908 p.107 2) Paul Alexis. op. cit. p.52.

written for a Russian periodical, Vestnik Evropy, Zola tells of a visit made some years previously to a gambling den in the Rue Serpente, an establishment protected by the false façade of a greengrocery shop. 1) The interior was entirely sordid:

" Sur les tables l'or tintait; sur les divans, des femmes accueillantes riaient gaiement. Oh! rêves de jeunesse! rêves nés de la lecture des Byron et des Musset qui aboutissent à la rue Serpente, dans la cave d'une marchande de légumes, meublée des friperies de maisons de tolérance. 2).

It was in surroundings such as these that Zola probably progressively lost his illusions and in the company of the sort of women who patronised them, with their fascinating aura of vice, rather than solely with Berthe.

After dabbling in Parisian low-life, Zola sought refuge in work, in an attempt to secure the fame and prosperity he had dreamed of, and to live up to the trust and hope that his mother placed in him. No further significant relationship occupied him until 1864, when he was introduced to Gabrielle-Eléonore-Alexandrine Meley, the future Madame Zola. The theory has arisen that it was Cézanne who made the introduction, but this has not been satisfactorily substantiated, and remains for Armand Lanoux at least, " une hypothèse très discutable ". 3) The couple were not married until May 31st. 1870, but the ceremony only made official a union which had existed for several years. In many letters prior to 1870 Zola refers to Alexandrine as " ma femme ", thus showing in his personal life the same scorn for institutionalised marriage that he expressed in his novels.

Alexandrine's origins remain largely obscure but it is certain that they were nothing more than modest. She was born

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1) The article is contained in Emile Zola Lettres de Paris. Choix d'articles traduits du russe et présentés par Philip. A. Duncan et Vera Erdely. 2) Lettres de Paris. p.62. 3) A. Lanoux. Zola Vivant. O.C.Vol.1. p.65.

in Paris in 1839, the illegitimate daughter of Edmond Jacques Meley and Caroline Louise Wadoux and was thus one year older than her future husband. Her exact social standing in 1864 when she met Zola is not known but it seems likely that she was engaged in small-time commerce, possibly as a shop-girl. Zola did not marry out of reasons of personal interest; his union with Alexandrine must initially at least have been a love-match of a sort which was to prove so rare at any level of the society he depicted in the Rougon-Macquart novels.

Details of the exact nature of Emile's relationship with Alexandrine, both during the five years when she was his mistress, and for the eighteen years of an outwardly happy and normal married life together, remain rather sparse. Mutual respect, admiration and trust undoubtedly existed between the two, but there is little indication that their marriage was anything more than what Hemmings describes as a "solid and sober attachment". 1) The long period during which their union was untroubled by any serious outside interference also saw the birth of most of the novelist's greatest masterpieces; his humdrum and unremarkable married life provided the stability he required to weather the controversy that greeted almost every publication. The unexciting nature of Zola's married life has given rise to the opinion that Alexandrine was an un-feminine figure who quickly acquired a bourgeois "arriviste" mentality, but it has rarely been suggested that Zola, caught up as he was in the ceaseless activity of his writing, may not have been the most stimulating and thoughtful of husbands.

Above all, Alexandrine was a good wife in the material sense. Marriage to Emile quickly transformed her from a working-girl with a dubious past into a sober, hard-working, housewife. When the success of L'Assom<sup>n</sup>oir enabled the Zolas

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1) F.W.J.Hemmings. Emile Zola. p.144.

to purchase a modest property at Médan it was she who was responsible for the setting-up and equipping of a comfortable household in which Emile could seek refuge from the hostility his successive works engendered. Mme. Zola became a wonderful hostess to the circle of literary friends and acquaintances which gathered around Zola at Médan. The pleasant atmosphere which the little group enjoyed was largely of Alexandrine's making. In his letters to fellow writers, Zola is always at pains to associate his wife with the sending of greetings, recommendations and opinions, and the couple must have played an active part together in social life, moving largely in the company of writers, artists and publishers. Alexandrine also showed a lively and stimulating interest in Emile's work. On 14th July 1900 after many years of association, she writes to Albert Laborde's sister who has recently married a writer Georges Loiseau:

"...je ne m'efonne pas du tout, ma fillette chérie, que tu t'intéresses aux notes que prend Georges pour son livre, rien n'est plus intéressant en effet, que ces travaux de préparation et toute vieille que je suis, puisque depuis tant de dizaines d'années j'assiste à cette éclosion d'un livre c'est toujours avec une curiosité et une admiration croissante que je m'initie à chaque nouvelle œuvre."1)

In purely material terms Zola's marriage can be counted as a great success. At times of stress Alexandrine brought all the advantages and comforts of normal married life, encouragement in adversity, security against the outside world and the pleasant, relaxing atmosphere of a well-organised home.

On a personal, intimate level her contribution may not have been so beneficial. Emile's encounter with Berthe probably gave him the conviction that sexual and personal relationships between the sexes were characterised by a sordid realism; the long, uneventful years spent with Alexandrine must only have

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1) Albert Laborde. Trente-huit années près de Zola. La Vie d'Alexandrine Meley. Les Editeurs Français Réunis. 1963.p.153.



added an unexciting, mediocre element to his realistic views of such relationships. The most significant feature of the marriage was the failure to produce any children. It is not clear who was to blame for this sterility, if blame can be imputed to either partner. Hemmings makes an interesting contribution to discussion of this difficult question. He tells of an avowal made by Louis de Robert shortly after Mme. Zola's death in 1925 according to which she used to ask him, "with a trace of bitterness", "Why did he not want children by me when I was still young enough to give them to him?" 1) This remark may only have been a sort of defence from a sensitive woman who had proved incapable of providing for the man she loved what he most desired. If it were true, however, it would mean that Zola himself purposely avoided having a family until it was too late, either for reasons of financial preference or because he was too immersed in his work to afford time for the bringing up of children. Such a policy, would contrast completely with the views he later put forth in Fécondité (1899), where any attempts at family planning, for whatever motive, meet with utter disaster from an avenging nature. It is hard to believe that Zola ever consciously avoided having a family, for in his letters and his works he shows himself to be very fond of children. His novels of working-class life show the pity he felt for the unfortunate, innocent children who have little chance in life and no-one with little interest in children, who had not observed them closely, could possibly have produced the charming description of a children's party in Une Page d'Amour (1878). The inability to produce an heir has often been seen as the greatest tragedy of Zola's life before 1888, the year which inaugurated his fruitful liaison with Jeanne Rozerot, but their sterility was just as much Alexandrine's tragedy as Emile's. The letters reproduced by

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1) F.W.J. Hemmings. Emile Zola. p. 229.

Albert Laborde, in his sympathetic biography of the novelist's wife, show unmistakably the interest both the Zolas were forced to take in other people's children. The greetings at the end of such letters invariably include the children; for example, Alexandrine writing from Médan on the 8th November 1880 to Amélie Laborde ends with the recommendation "Embrassez le plus tendrement vos chers bébés." 1) The Zola household in spite of the frequent gatherings of friends and the happy domesticity which characterised it, was made cold by the absence of children of their own, an absence that afflicted both partners with equal intensity. Zola himself suggests that the love they would so clearly have given to children was diverted to animals, and this could easily explain the great affection the Zolas held for many different types of animals. In a letter to Huysmans from Médan dated 29th October 1887 Zola refers in the following way to a pet dog:

"Vous savez bien mon petit chien Fanfan, pour lequel nous avons une tendresse imbécile de vieux ménage sans enfant?" 2)

It is interesting that with the first person plural Zola associates Alexandrine with this idea.

It is difficult to believe that Emile ever purposely avoided having children, and yet there is a passage in Alexis' biography which suggests vaguely that, at the beginning of his marriage, Emile may not have wanted children for financial reasons:

"Avec ce qu'il (Zola) a gagné et avec le produit de ses livres actuellement en librairie, lui et sa femme, sans enfants, auraient de quoi vivre tranquillement jusqu'à la fin de leurs jours". 3)

The state of material comfort is here directly linked to the absence of children but it may be too much of an exaggeration to see in Alexis' statement the suggestion that such prosperity was wilfully engineered. Franzen in his study of La Joie de

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1) Albert Laborde. op cit. p.79. 2) Marcel Girard. Deux Lettres Inédites de Zola à Huysmans. R.H.L.F. 1958. p. 373.

3) Paul Alexis. op cit. p. 207.

Vivre wisely does not come to a conclusion on this question but he points out that, if one accepts Mme. Zola's declaration that it was Emile himself who did not want any children, as his work left him no time for the responsibilities and cares they involved, then Pauline Quenu, who sacrifices her intense desire to be a mother to the rearing of Lazare's child by another woman, and in self-sacrificing deeds to the general benefit of the community, must be seen as:

"une projection de Zola lui-même; adorant la vie; mais se sacrifiant à une grande œuvre et par là renonçant au but final de la vie: la propagation de l'espèce." 1)

Before concluding these remarks on Alexandrine's contribution to Zola's sentimental life we must consider briefly what relationship she enjoyed with Zola's mother since this too found expression in the novels. The beginning of the liaison may well have been greeted with some hostility by Mme. François Zola who perhaps thought that Emile could have "done better for himself", and it appears certain that some animosity grew up between the two women. It is difficult to state categorically how deep this antagonism went between the two, but certainly Mme. Zola mère at times chose to live apart from the Zola household. Denise Le Blond Zola contended that the friction arose because some of Mme. François Zola's relatives persistently pestered the successful author for financial support. Albert Laborde is of the opinion that rumours of hostility existing between the two women are largely unfounded. Certainly it would be a natural reaction for a mother who had doted so much on her only son to feel slightly resentful towards the woman who had "taken her son from her". The letters Albert Laborde quotes show a definite affection existing between Alexandrine and her mother-in-law, and when the latter died in 1880 the former's grief was as sincere as her husband's.

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1) Nils Franzen. Zola et la Joie de Vivre. Almquist and Wiksell. Stockholm 1958. p. 142.

Alexandrine outlived Emile by more than twenty years and in this period she showed the same devotion to his memory as she had done to him while he was still alive. At her funeral Eugène Fasquelle remembered Alexandrine in the following way:

" C'est, donc, au nom de ceux qui l'ont entourée, que je viens dire ici l'adieu suprême et admiratif à celle qui fut vraiment la compagne d'Emile Zola, dans le sens le plus noble et le plus élevé qu'on puisse donner à cette appellation."<sup>1)</sup>

This sums up admirably Alexandrine's contribution to Zola's life and works. Above all she afforded him priceless support in a turbulent literary career.

There remained, however, a void in Emile's personal life. Alexandrine proved unable to give him complete personal fulfilment. For years the prolific novelist was content to fill this void with intense literary activity, but finally, at a late stage in life, he resolved it in an affair with a young girl who had been engaged in the Zolas' service, in spite of the deep respect with which he held his wife.

Jeanne-Sophie-Adèle Rozerot was born on the 14th. April 1867 and entered the Zolas' service in May 1888. Armand Lanoux sets the courtship in the autumn of that year. Zola had the young girl installed at 66, Rue Saint-Lazare in Paris and their union was consummated on 11th. December 1888. In a few months the aging Zola was rejuvenated, he grew thinner and healthier and benefited morally too. The unexpected happiness he enjoyed with youthful Jeanne increased his optimism, gave him renewed vigour and released him from the disquieting anxiety with which he viewed sexual matters. The birth of two children added the crowning joy to an already delightful relationship, and gave Zola the fulfilment he desired in paternity.

But the relationship brought remorse as well as happiness. Emile was now torn between his mistress and family, and his wife. A difficult double existence began, for he could bring

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1) Albert Laborde. op. cit. pp. 231.

himself neither to abandon the young girl once having used her, nor to leave the wife who had been his faithful companion for so many years. Emile continued to live with his wife and saw as much of his new family as he could, but the dual existence at times proved intolerable. The liaison was unlikely to remain a secret for very long and in 1891 (probably on the 11th. November ) Mme. Zola received an anonymous letter informing her of her husband's infidelity. With a natural jealous reaction, she rushed to the Rue Saint-Lazare, broke open a desk, and burnt Zola's letters to Jeanne. Relations were understandably strained for some time but no open rupture took place. Slowly time acted as the supreme healer and Alexandrine became resigned to the situation; she came to know her husband's children and became very attached to them. In the turmoil of the Dreyfus affair Zola had two women to support him, each in her different way.

The facts of Zola's liaison with Jeanne Rozerot are not in themselves remarkable. What is surprising is that this man of settled habits, who had avoided such an involvement through years of married life, should suddenly be overcome by a fit of passion for a girl less than half his age, and further that this passion was requited, not in a passing affair, but in a total engagement which stayed noble in spite of inevitable embarrassments. Moreover, a relationship of this kind was opposed to all the principles he had upheld in his prior literary output. One might conclude that Jeanne must have simply swept him off his feet and a mutual attraction culminated in an inevitable result. But there is an indication that all that took place would have happened with someone else if Jeanne had not entered his life; his preparatory notes for Le Rêve reveal that in this instance fiction preceded fact. These plans show that Zola had first thought of weaving the plot of this novel around the situation of, " Un homme de

quarante ans, n'ayant pas aimé, jusque-là dans la science, et qui se prend d'une passion pour une enfant de seize ans." 1) This was to become the story of Le Docteur Pascal, but these notes were written in November 1887 before Jeanne had entered the scene. It is probable that at this time a general "malaise" overcame Zola. He was possibly disappointed that no children had been born of his marriage, and work no longer satisfied him. The years devoted more or less solely to the production of his novels convinced him that he had in some way "missed out" on the rest of life, and his union with Jeanne revealed a desire to redress the situation before it was too late, in a burst of extra-artistic creativity.

This theory offers the most plausible reason for Zola's late amorous adventure. Jeanne's social status would seem to rule out the possibility of any intellectual companionship, and that she was of a submissive nature is shown by her obvious willingness to remain in the background, completely in her master's shadow, spending her youth in an existence which must at times have been extremely lonely. She was the obvious model for the mature Zola's ideal woman.

The story of Zola's involvement with successive women is, in its detail, one of great simplicity, but over which, as Lanoux reminds us, there still hang many question-marks:

"La vie sentimentale de Zola, si elle a cessé d'être impénétrable depuis la publication des souvenirs de sa fille, Denise LeBlond-Zola, n'en reste pas moins chargée d'ombres, en dépit de sa simplicité." 2)

Information on Zola's attitude towards women given by Alexis might suggest that his life was monopolised by a small number of women, not through a lack of desire to broaden his

1) See "Etude" to Le Rêve R.M.Vol.4. p.1625.

2) A.Lanoux. Zola Vivant. O.C.Vol.1. p.105

experiences, but because of a scorn and deep-rooted fear of the opposite sex:

" Discute-t-on devant lui le plus ou le moins de beauté d'une femme, il se montre d'un goût difficile et porte des jugements sévères. A l'égard de l'intelligence féminine, sa sévérité tourne au mépris. D'ailleurs, il ne faudrait pas se laisser prendre à cette attitude. Lorsqu'il s'agit des femmes les plus grandes contradictions sont admissibles. Et tel paraît ne pas en faire cas, qui ne fait que les aimer secrètement et les craindre. " 1)

In the absence of experience with many different types of women Zola had to rely on the famous documentation of the Naturalist novel to provide data for many of the countless female characters he needed to people the broad society of the Rougon-Macquart series. To write Nana he had to seek information from his more experienced friends and directly from a woman of Nana's profession. Zola's imagination must also have played a large part in the production of the violent explosions of eroticism which are so characteristic of his greatest creations. The contradiction that exists between Zola's own uneventful private life and the excessive sexual aberrations, perversions and scandalous affairs which he chose to portray in his works is so great that it has produced the opinion that the author's sexual inhibitions were poured into his novels, the powerful eroticism of works such as Nana being the result of the non-satisfaction of Zola's own erotic feelings. Hemmings is unwilling to admit this theory, since during the production of the highly erotic novels Zola was leading a " normal " sex life. It is difficult, however, to disregard the fact that after the satisfying affair with Jeanne Rozerot violent sexuality fades out of his literary creation; with a life now full of sexual joy, his works lose their erotic violence. Such an observation would seem to support the contentions of many Freudian critics on this

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1) Paul Alexis op. cit. p.202.

point, and a passage in L'Œuvre describing Claude Lantier's method of artistic creation, while not in itself admitting it of himself, at least shows that Zola was aware that this was not uncommon in artists. Claude Lantier at the opening of the book is an artist who is content to burn up his sexual energies in his art. When he sets about transferring the sketch he has made of Christine onto canvas Zola describes the process as follows:

" Puis, il attaqua la gorge, indiquée à peine sur l'étude. Son excitation augmentait, c'était sa passion de chaste pour la chair de la femme, un amour fou des nudités désirées et jamais possédées, une impuissance à se satisfaire, à créer de cette chair autant qu'il rêvait d'en étreindre, de ses deux bras éperdus. " 1)

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1) L'Œuvre R.M. Vol. 4. Pp. 50-51.



CHAPTER II: DIRECT BIOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCES.

The influence of Zola's life on his works was not quite as indirect as the psycho-analytical interpretation we have just considered, might suggest. Zola was avowedly an objective writer but on several occasions personal experiences found direct expression in his novels.

Edmond Lepelletier refused to admit that the women in Zola's life had any direct bearing on his works:

" La femme fut donc un élément secondaire, dans la vie de Zola. Elle n'eut aucune influence sur sa destinée d'écrivain. Elle ne lui fit ni commettre de folies dans l'existence, ni négliger un travail. Par contre, elle ne lui inspira aucun chef d'œuvre. " 1)

Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum, in her review of Zola's female characters, still attaches more importance to observation and imagination than to direct experiences, at least as far as the creation of different feminine types is concerned:

" On peut mieux parler d'objectivité lorsque la femme n'a occupé qu'une place secondaire dans la vie du romancier. L'écrivain alors se fonde à la fois sur l'observation et l'intuition qui se complètent mutuellement. C'est à ces deux dispositions que nous devons le charme et la variété des silhouettes féminines créées par Emile Zola. 2)

When one considers the paucity of Zola's experiences with women in contrast to the broad section of female characters he succeeded in creating, this is an opinion with which one can scarcely differ. But for a critic such as Angus Wilson, the events of Zola's life, and particularly those of his early, impressionable years, assume considerable importance. Whilst it would be senseless to disregard the role played by imagination and observation in Zola's creation, since no-one could possibly have " lived "all the relationships his

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1) E.Lepelletier. op. cit. p.109. 2) Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum. La Femme dans l'Oeuvre d'Emile Zola. Thèse pour le doctorat d'université de Paris. Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines. 1962. p.68.

cycle of novels required, Wilson asserts that, " the novels had their roots in deep personal aspects of the author's life. " 1) Such a viewpoint at times leads the critic to attach great importance to facts that remain obscure; in particular he makes much of the fact that Alexandrine was a mistress abandoned by a former lover.

This is not to deny that the method of approaching an artist's works through the man, can be profitable in an appreciation of Zola's novels. With reference to other artists, Zola himself wrote to Valabrègue on the 6th. July 1864, " Ce que nous cherchons dans une œuvre, c'est un homme." 2) Later in his career, in a letter to Jan Van Santen Kolff on the 6th. March 1889, he seems to be confiding to his Dutch associate his willingness to turn his affair with Jeanne Rozerot (it is surely to this that he is referring) into fiction. To apologise for not replying to a letter he writes:

" Il est bien vrai que je traverse une crise, la crise de la cinquantaine sans doute; mais je tâcherai qu'elle tourne au profit et à l'honneur de la littérature." 3)

From a young age, Emile fell under the profound and lasting influence of his mother, and it would be surprising to find that Mme. François Zola did not enter her son's novels in some form. Wilson has characteristically placed great significance on Zola's early dependence on his mother, and sees it develop as a " mother-fixation"; of Mme. Zola mère he writes:

" Both the internal evidence of the novels and the position she occupied in her son's later domestic arrangements show clearly the ascendancy that she gained over his emotions, an ascendancy which his marriage did not break, and which lasted,

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1) Angus Wilson. Emile Zola. An Introductory Study of his Novels. Secker and Warburg. 1952. p.31. 2) Correspondance. Les Lettres et Les Arts. B.C. P.8. 3) Emile Zola's Letters to Jan Van Santen Kolff. ( Edited by R.J.Niess.) p.27.

despite quarrels, until her death in 1880, an event which perhaps more nearly destroyed his precarious mental balance than any other in his life. 1)

Wilson sees Mme. Zola as the model in differing degrees of H el ene Mouret ( Une Page d'Amour ), Mme. Chanteau ( La Joie de Vivre ) and F elicit e Rougon ( La Fortune des Rougon, Le Docteur Pascal ). This suggests that Zola's mother was a very complicated character. In fact she seems to have been a rather simple and natural person. Certainly her love for Emile was very deep, but this is not unusual in a mother of a fatherless only son; she was ambitious for him too, but again not excessively, for she readily pardoned any failures. Mme. Zola, a strong figure, gave encouragement, advised patience and caution and was ready to approve of whatever her son chose to do. Emile appreciated, and perhaps even depended on, the support she provided.

A few of the actual events of Mme. Zola's life have found their way into the novels. The description of Grandjean's death in Une Page d'Amour is based on an account Mme. Zola must have given Emile of his father's end in a Marseilles hotel. The disease which carries off Mme. Chanteau in La Joie de Vivre is the same as the one which caused Mme. Zola's death. It is more or less certain that the antagonism which existed between Alexandrine and Mme. Zola reached hallucinatory proportions in which the latter believed that her daughter-in-law was trying to poison her. This situation exists between Mme. Chanteau and Pauline Quenu, and Mme. Coupeau and Gervaise in L'Assommoir. The moral influence which Mme. Zola may have exerted on her son is also reflected in his works.

At times Emile may have found his mother's possessive love and ambition a little stifling. Mme. Raquin in Th er ese Raquin is a possessive mother who pampers her sickly son, protects

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1) Angus Wilson. op. cit. p.4.

him from the outside world and treats him as if he has no mind of his own. The excessive ambition of Florent's mother in Le Ventre de Paris led to a general disintegration of her character:

" L'idée fixe de voir son Florent avocat, bien posé dans la ville, finissait par la rendre dure, avare, impitoyable pour elle-même et pour les autres. " 1)

The archetype figure of ambitious mothers in Les Rougon-Macquart is Félicité Rougon. She has a burning desire to see her sons succeed; Eugène and Aristide eventually satisfy her hopes for them, but Pascal the doctor, exasperates her with his indifference to worldly advancement. Yet it seems impossible to establish a very close parallel between this fictional character and Mme. François Zola, for the whole of Félicité's hopes for her sons is centred on her own selfish ambition. Through them she seeks personal wealth, and renown for the name of Rougon. Such personal ambition never influenced Mme. Zola's treatment of her son. Personal self-denial in the interest of her child is the over-riding characteristic of Hélène Mouret, one of the more ideal mother-figures in Les Rougon-Macquart, who may owe something to the character of Mme. Zola.

The most direct parallel with Zola's relationship with his mother remains that of Mme. Chanteau and her son Lazare in La Joie de Vivre. Mme. Chanteau, according to R.J.Niess, "is, save for her dishonesty, Emile Zola's mother almost to the life." 2) Moreover, Lazare represents one side of Zola's own character. Lazare is utterly spoilt by his mother, she tolerates his every whim and becomes a party to his wildest schemes; to finance the latter, she is willing to sacrifice Pauline to her own child by using the former's money as

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1) Le Ventre de Paris. R.M.Vol.1.p.640. 2) R.J.Niess. Autobiographical Elements in Zola's La Joie de Vivre. P.M.L.A. 1941. p.1134.

capital. In the same way as Mme. Zola, she is forced by circumstances to become the active head of the family, not because of the death of her husband, but because of the chronic gout which afflicts him. His sufferings do not prevent Mme. Chanteau from criticizing him for not having fulfilled the ambition she had placed in him. These ambitions have been transferred to her son without the same attendant reprimands when he too fails to live up to them. She believes that her son is a genius, and when all his attempts to succeed end in the most abject failure, she will not have a word said against him, preferring to blame other people or unfavourable circumstances. Mme. Chanteau's love of her son is excessive and at times verges on the pathological; she has kept pieces of his hair at successive ages, and loves to recount insignificant events of his childhood, such as the losing of a tooth. Lazare has become conditioned by this stifling upbringing and is entirely dependent on his mother. Zola might have resembled this character more closely had he not claimed a degree of independence by living slightly apart from his mother in Paris. La Joie de Vivre gives, in an exaggerated form, a mother/son relationship which is at least recognizable as a literary interpretation of the one which existed between the author and his mother, and allows us to agree in part with Wilson's view that it represents an attack on Zola's part on the protective, adoring love Mme. Zola had shown him.

Evocations of Zola's innocent affair with Louise Solari, or other young girls in Aix, are also to be found throughout his mature work. One theme of Zola's early poems and Contes written in Paris, is the naive, idyllic love he had been forced to leave behind when he left Provence, in which his partner is represented by "Ninon", half a real figure and half a product of his imagination. The Contes à Ninon are full of nostalgia for Provence and youthful purity, but the

recurring mood is essentially one of regret, since they are characterised by acceptance of the fact that all is irrevocably part of the past. The pure, young love of Stephen and Nini, in the Conte entitled Un Coup de Vent, unusually ends happily. 1) Most other idyllic affairs described by Zola are doomed to founder on the rocks of reality or death, proof perhaps that the only idyllic episode in his own experience went unfulfilled.

The story of Miette Chantegreil and Silvère Mouret in La Fortune des Rougon offers the best example of his memory of Louise Solari or other youthful companion. We have seen already how Hemmings found in the description of Miette support for Lanoux's identification of "l'Aérienne" as Louise. The love that grows between the two is ingenuous, naive but sincere, fighting to exist in difficult times and amid hostile forces. Zola describes the freshness of their youth with enthusiasm tinged with sadness by the tragic ending. Both young lovers have an unhappy background. Silvère was abandoned to the care of the deranged Tante Dide by the Rougons; the unfortunate Miette is publicly ostracised as the daughter of an unjustly convicted criminal, and within the family circle she is abused by her uncle and cousin. She and Silvère seek refuge in each other from the hostile world around them. From their first embarrassed encounter love grows between the two based on a purity of feeling completely alien to the rest of a decadent society. The sense of their apartness is accentuated by the charming interlude when their courtship is conducted through a reflecting well, which allows them to conceal their love. The young couple are portrayed as being more in harmony with nature than with man's society. The insistence throughout that this love is out of the ordinary and sublime contains indirect veiled criticism of the personal values rife in the rest of

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1) This tale is contained in the section Autres Contes et Nouvelles, in Vol.9. of the Oeuvres Complètes.

society. The difference lies, not in an absence of carnal appetite, but in the fact that their relationship is not founded on the same considerations of interest which afflict society, not only in this novel, but in most of the others in the same series too. Miette is at the delicious stage where a young girl blossoms forth into a woman on receiving the gifts of her sexuality, which, in her case, come relatively early under the influence of the climate and the harsh life she is forced to lead. Love between the couple begins in a fraternal form, but beneath the surface seethes a desire, which neither fully understands, as strong as that which in other novels leads, in different circumstances, to destruction and death. The idyll is poised to undergo the irruption of passion. When Miette becomes exhausted, the pair leave the column of Republican marchers for a while to rest. They exchange a long, avid kiss on the lips, which fills them both with a burning warmth. At the height of her ecstasy Miette remembers the insults her cousin Justin had previously uttered, and begins to feel ashamed. Love goes no further than the kiss, and the couple die, their love unfulfilled, martyrs to a doomed Republican ideal. As she dies Miette regrets having remained a virgin, wishing that Silvère had possessed her fully.

The love story of Miette and Silvère is more important in an appreciation of Zola's treatment of relations between the sexes, than merely as a possible representation of the author's encounter with a youthful companion. La Fortune des Rougon previews many of the themes Zola was to elaborate in later novels. With the death of the pure love of Miette and Silvère dies Republicanism, and also the possibility of any such disinterested love existing in the Second Empire society which has just been established. The charming description of Miette, the virgin, and her ultimate rejection of her "undefiled" state foreshadows the conflicting fascination and distrust

which Zola was consistently to attach to virginity. Miette feels no shame at her passionate kiss until memories of Justin's abuse occur to her, a fact which suggests that the sexual instinct is natural and perfectly healthy, but that it has been debased and made perverse by 'civilised' society. These ideas received wider application in successive novels, but all may be said to arise from the first of the cycle, which was based initially on the doom of the novelist's own adolescent idyll. No similar story of an idyllic affair receives the same prominence in any later novel, but Louise, and a nostalgia for purity in love lived on in Zola.

At times the novelist seems obsessed with virgins and young girls at the same stage of development as Miette. Cadine, the founding, who grows up to become a sort of spirit of 'Les Halles' in Le Ventre de Paris, is described at one juncture as having, " toute la fantaisie d'une gamine de douze ans, dans laquelle la femme s'éveillait. " 1) Catherine in Germinal is late in undergoing the process of becoming a fully endowed woman. The onset of menstruation in Pauline Quenu is fully dealt with in La Joie de Vivre. The rousing of sensual appetite takes place in Christine when she meets Claude Lantier in L'Œuvre, " Elle se révélait ce qu'elle devait être, malgré sa longue honnêteté: une chair de passion, une de ces chairs sensuelles, si troublantes, quand elles se dégagent de la pudeur où elles dorment." 2) Albine, the wild young mistress of Paradou has, "...toute une grâce de corps naissant, encore baigné d'enfance, déjà renflé de puberté." 3) In La Terre, Françoise, the peasant girl, can be placed in the same category, and Angélique in the novel Le Rêve, is another heroine at the stage of puberty. Some of these heroines proceed to

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1) Le Ventre de Paris. R.M.Vol.1.p.769. 2) L'Œuvre.R.M. Vol.4.p.147. 3) La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret.R.M.Vol.1.p.1340.



sexual experience, the 'purity' of others is preserved by death. Consistent evocation of such figures suggests an interest on Zola's part in the contradictions and mysteries of femininity, sex, love, and death, and the number of examples further suggests that the obsession might well be rooted in personal memory.

All episodes of innocent, faltering love, which is afraid to avow itself, treated by Zola in the Rougon-Macquart cycle after La Fortune des Rougon, are doomed to failure, some are almost ridiculously naive, and yet the resultant relationships are altogether more noble than the general type of relationship practised in Second Empire society. Their charm often offsets the squalor in which they are forced to exist.

The definitive conclusion that idyllic love ending in happiness, is impossible, is embodied in the story of Angélique and Félicien in Le Rêve. Furthermore, in this novel one can not help believing that Zola treats his heroine's quest for idyllic bliss as naively absurd. In Au Bonheur des Dames Deloche, the poor insignificant lad, gauche to an extreme, an inevitable laughing-stock for the rest of the store's cynical staff, who nourishes a one-sided devotion for Denise Baudu, attended by tears and heartache, is a slightly ridiculous figure. Goujet, the gentle giant in L'Assommoir, is similar, but at least here his tender love for Gervaise appears like a ray of sunshine on an extremely sombre horizon. In Madeleine Férat Guillaume dreams of sharing life's happiness with a single woman of his choice, but the supreme irony lies in the fact that the woman he encounters is prevented from ever belonging to him by a purely physiological obstacle.

The best example of a love affair treated as the exception rather than the rule in society, takes place between Etienne Lantier and Catherine Maheu in Germinal. It is made up of delicacy, timidity and an inability to understand each other's

feelings, which results in an unhappy, unsatisfied love. Etienne is shy in Catherine's company; she regards him as more polite and refined than the rest of the miners, but a barrier remains between the two. When Etienne goes to live with the Maheu family, their 'malaise' reaches its height when they have to undress in each other's presence, an activity which causes no such embarrassment with anyone else. Like similar examples, this idyll is not platonic. The desire for sexual union seethes beneath their outward tenderness, and is the cause of uncertain feelings between the two. Finally, almost in desperation, when they are entombed in the pit, Etienne possesses Catherine and seizes a last chance to create life before they die. Etienne is thrilled that he has been the first to possess her as a woman (her retarded puberty has now broken out) and is delighted with the idea that she might be pregnant. In some measure tender affectionate love is here fulfilled but only in the depths of a ruined mine; on the surface it is still not possible. The insistence on the contrast of Etienne's and Catherine's love with relationships around them is an important element in Zola's treatment of it. Grant speaks of their love as follows, "It stands in marked contrast to the brutality that dominates much of the book. There is even genuine tenderness in Zola's analysis of their unspoken love". 1)

It would be an exaggeration to contend that the girl identified as Louise Solan had a direct influence on all the examples quoted above, but there is every indication that her image lived on in Zola's mind long after he left Provence. His

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1) Elliott M. Grant. Zola's Germinal. A critical and historical study. p. 67

own passionate, ideal love of adolescence was embodied in the story of Miette and Silvère and elsewhere his youthful experience coloured his views on human relationships. Romantic love is considered impossible, if not as an abstract conception, then certainly within the framework of the Rougon-Macquart society. The death of Silvère and Miette symbolises the death of liberty and of the possibility of the love they had enjoyed; as Silvère's brains are blown out the Rougons are feasting to celebrate the inauguration of the Imperial Age; the era of depraved desire and squalid relationships is founded on the tomb of idyllic innocent love.

Zola's first novel, La Confession de Claude, belongs in part to the young prostitute, Berthe. Marcel Cressot denies that this novel is very autobiographical, preferring to see Claude, not as a mere self-portrait of the author, but as a general representative of his age, wanting pure love but thwarted by social reality. 1) This opinion is borne out to a certain extent by the fact that the practices of polite society are blamed for youthful debauchery since 'respectable' fathers protect their daughters from young men avid for love, preferring them to gain experience in bad circles before they will allow their daughters to marry:

"Aussi combien peu se gardent pour l'épouse, combien peu, dans le désert de leur jeunesse, refusant les seules et impures compagnes que leur laisse la singulière prévoyance des hommes". 2)

Claude's experiences contain some general social comment but most critics see this novel, the only one written in the first person, and of which the hero's name provided on occasion a pseudonym for its author, as autobiographically inspired. Henri Guillemin, for example, in his introduction

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1) See Marcel Cressot. Zola et Michelet. Essai sur la genèse de deux romans de jeunesse. La Confession de Claude. Madeleine Féral R.H.L.F. 1928 Pp. 382-9.  
 2) La Confession de Claude. B.C. p. 38

to the novel in the latest edition of the Oeuvres Complètes 1) writes, "... jamais peut-être Zola n'en aura dit plus long sur ses secrets, sur son identité intérieure, que dans ce livre-là". Imagination may well have played just as great a rôle as experience, however, in the genesis of the novel for it seems likely that the same process of postulating a situation before living it, that occurred with respect to Jeanne Rozerot, had a precedent in Zola's meeting with Berthe. The dating of early letters from Paris has given rise to considerable speculation. 2) This is especially true of a letter to Baille apparently dated as July 1860 and thus, most critics would contend, prior to the Berthe incident. Discussion in the letter arises from a question Zola says a young man should ask himself- is he to choose as his lover a prostitute, a widow or a virgin? In an examination of the first possibility Zola contends that the resolution to save a fallen woman is quite common among young men, but already he is convinced that any such attempt is doomed to failure. A young idealist will succeed only in rousing the girls animosity. He concludes with a bitterness that seems personal, "Aimez la lorette, elle vous méprisera; méprisez-la, elle vous aimera". 3) When he comes to enquire into the second possibility he cannot speak from experience, thereby implying that he can do so as far as prostitutes are concerned, "Notre jeune homme trompé une première fois s'adressera-t-il à une veuve? Ici l'expérience me manque et je ne puis que deviner et dire mon propre goût". 4) He could of course be speaking of someone else's experience and not his own. The similarity between this letter and the eventual plot

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1) La Confession de Claude. O.C. Vol. 1 p. 3.

2) For suggestions on alternative datings for some of these letters see Henri Mitterand. La Jeunesse de Zola et de Cézanne: Observations nouvelles. M.F. 1959 Pp. 351-9.

3) Correspondance. Lettres de Jeunesse. B.C. p. 120

4) Ibid. p. 120.

of the novel is too striking to be missed. Sophie Weinstein 1) says that the imagined situation of the letter embodies the germ of the novel and Armand Lanoux has called the letter the "première ébauche" 2) of "La Confession de Claude". Berthe's influence would thus be restricted to the rôle of giving consistency to a plot which already has its outlines and the novel becomes the illustration of Zola's dreams of redeeming a whore, as expressed in his letters, and as he tried to do to some extent in reality.

The novel opens with Claude, the hero, lonely, poor and without love in his garret, looking for his dream in life but finding that all in reality is different. One night he meets, almost by accident, Laurence, an ugly woman of twenty-four who seems years older and who has been evicted from her room in the same house. She takes refuge with Claude who decides to redeem her. At the beginning he feels more disgust than love for the unfortunate wench but still resolves on the experiment in redemption. Many critics have seen an excessive arrogance of character in this decision. The charitable act of redemption also affords Claude (and Zola?) much-needed justification and an excuse for entering into a liason of which he is greatly ashamed. Writing in retrospect he is able to rationalise his actions and conceal the fact that Laurence's real attraction for him lay in the exciting aura of vice that surrounded her. The rhetorical questions posed intermittently to Baille and Cézanne (to whom the work is addressed) smack of pure rationalisation, "Ne serait-ce pas une assez grande récompense si je l'aménais à me donner tout l'amour dont elle est capable?" 3) Claude needs the affirmative answer to justify

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1) In, The Genesis of Zola's La Confession de Claude.

M.L.N. 1938 Pp. 196-8

2) Armand Lanoux. Zola Vivant. O.C. Vol. 1 p.45.

3) La Confession de Claude. B.C. p. 73.

himself.

The relationship is doomed through the inability of either partner to understand the other. Laurence has a complete whore's mentality; she is happiest when Claude seems to be exacting payment from her body like other men. She on the other hand, remains an enigma for Claude; he can never communicate with her to grasp what she is thinking or feeling. Laurence betrays him with a friend, Jacques, and their relationship undergoes the inevitable disintegration, with Claude realising that he has been suffering from a form of sickness. He is not fitted to join in the vulgar life of Paris, where youth wastes itself in debauchery, and he resolves to return to Provence to recapture his purity. He also feels let down by woman; he has given her all his innocence and love and has received in return only despair and suffering. If Zola shared Claude's views then it is possible that we owe many of the poisoned relationships and the antagonism that exists between the sexes in many of his later novels to Berthe. Zola, unlike Claude, did not return to Provence, but preferred to stay to face reality. If Laurence has any beneficial effect on Claude it is that she kills his naive idealism and brings him face to face with realism, so that he can at least console himself with the thought that he is gaining experience.

Once more the full influence of a woman on Zola is hard to establish. Berthe gave him some material for a work which he might have written anyway, if not with the same power. She also did much to change him as an author; henceforth Zola's insistence will be on the sordid aspects of human life. If she was the first woman with whom the novelist had any profound liaison, the disappointment and disgust that must have attended it may well have coloured his future ideas on women and sex. Certainly, his views changed drastically. A letter to Cézanne suggests that this event of his life was the cause of this change; from 11 Rue Soufflot on the 5th February 1861 he writes,

"..je sors d'une rude école, celle de l'amour réel " 1)  
and consequently "...le résultat est celui-ci, que j'ai  
maintenant pour moi l'expérience.... Un autre résultat est  
que je possède de nouvelles vues sur l'amour.. 2)

Eugène Fasquelle honoured Alexandrine at her funeral as  
" la compagne d'Emile Zola ", and it is as such that she is  
most frequently evoked in the novels produced during the years  
of undisturbed married life. Zola always stresses the advantages,  
comforts, and encouragement afforded by a good woman, which  
has led Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum to classify the ideal  
woman modelled on Alexandrine as "une collaboratrice-intendante." 3)  
The reflection inspired in Zola by Alphonse Daudet's marriage,  
" le mariage, selon moi, est l'école des grands producteurs  
contemporains " could equally have been inspired by his own  
marriage, which probably convinced him of the salutary effect  
of stability on writers. 4)

The beneficial influence of a well-organised woman can  
extend to other men apart from husbands. Pauline Quenu brings  
material advantages to the whole Chanteau household in La Joie  
de Vivre. In Germinal, when Etienne goes to lodge with the  
Maheu family, all his domestic requirements are taken care of  
by La Maheude so that, "enfin, il sentait autour de lui la  
propreté et les bons soins d'une femme." 5) In L'Œuvre  
Catherine puts order into Claude Lantier's studio, and in  
familiar phraseology, " Claude, à cette heure, sentait autour  
de lui les bons soins d'une femme. " 6) Another woman in the  
same novel, Henriette, wife of the author Sandoz represents  
the best depiction of Alexandrine in the novels. She keeps the

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1) Correspondance. Lettres de Jeunesse.B.C.p.258. 2) Ibid.p.259.  
3)Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum.op.cit.p.144. Later, under Jeanne's  
influence, the ideal woman becomes 'l'épouse-amante'.p.217. 4)  
Les Romanciers Naturalistes.B.C.p.258.. 5) Germinal.R.M.Vol.3.  
p.1274. 6) L'Œuvre.R.M.Vol.4.p.100.

household clean, is a good cook, and a friendly hostess for the artistic people Sandoz likes to entertain. On one occasion when Claude returns to Sandoz's home for a Thursday evening dinner, as had been the custom in their bachelor days, the atmosphere is changed somewhat by the presence of Sandoz's wife, " Puis, le milieu était nouveau: une femme, aujourd'hui apportait son charme, les calmait par sa présence." 1) Sandoz's discussions with Claude on the subject of marriage allow him to describe the good effects of his own marriage to Henriette, " Lui, d'ailleurs, avait le besoin d'une affection gardienne de sa tranquillité, d'un intérieur de tendresse où il pût se cloîtrer, afin de consacrer sa vie entière à l'œuvre énorme dont il promenait le rêve. " 2) From what we know of it this sounds similar to the relationship between Emile and Alexandrine, a stolid sort of union, beneficial to the vast task he had set himself, tender, but devoid of any great passion. Christine had begun by affording her man many material benefits, but as their liaison disintegrates, her deperate love of Claude causes her to neglect her household and maternal duties. At this stage Zola obviously has more sympathy for the solid Henriette than for the passionate Christine.

Such a significant subject as the Zolas' childlessness was unlikely not to be reflected in the novels. Several of the more pleasant female characters are childless, often to their deep and sincere regret, and Zola succeeds in eliciting a great deal of sympathy for such women. Mme. Caroline in L'Argent suffers from her lack of children, and her frustrated, maternal ambition is diverted onto Victor, the unfortunate offspring of Aristide Saccard. Busch tries to interest Mme. Caroline in the boy and, by cleverly playing on her maternal instinct he

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1) Ibid. p.193. 2) Ibid. p.160.



succeeds in rousing her pity by telling her of Victor's background and the squalid nature of his present situation. His method of approach bears immediate fruit, "...puis, visiblement, elle s'attendrit, émue du triste sort de la mère et de l'abandon du petit, profondément remuée dans sa maternité de femme restée stérile." 1) Her frustrated maternity also has much to do with her later affair with Saccard. Victor forges the necessary link between the two, and Mme. Caroline's interest in the boy plays a major part in her submission to the father.

The greatest sacrifice the martyred Pauline Quenu has to make is a renunciation of maternity, a resignation to care for the children of others rather than have her own. Thoughts of what she has missed in life haunt her most strongly after Lazare's marriage to Louise. She returns from the wedding and pictures to herself the couple on their wedding night. She could have been in Louise's position which causes her to reflect on her potential as a woman:

" Son regard descendait de sa gorge, d'une dureté de bouton éclatant de sève, à ses hanches larges, à son ventre où dormait une maternité puissante. " 2)

Pauline feels herself ready to be fertilised and yet destined to remain barren. She recognises that by not creating life she has missed the point of life itself:

" Elle voulait vivre, et vivre complètement, faire de la vie, elle qui aimait la vie! A quoi bon être, si l'on ne donne pas son être? " 3)

Even after witnessing the horrifying confinement of Louise, Pauline only wants the chance to undergo the same experience herself. She contemplates the puny offspring Louise has produced and is convinced that she could have done better.

In both these cases sterility primarily afflicts a woman.

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1) L'Argent.R.M.Vol.5.p.143. 2) La Joie de Vivre.R.M.Vol.3.p.1043.  
3) Ibid.p.1044.

This is not to suggest that the two characters are closely modelled on Alexandrine alone. Their heart-felt need to create life also reflects the author's own frustrated paternity. We have seen how Franzen at least sees the possibility of considering Pauline Quenu as a symbolic figure of the novelist. But Zola obviously recognised that the affliction of sterility can be strongly felt in women too, since they are in this way thwarted of their main role in life.

In Le Rêve sterility troubles both partners to an otherwise happy marriage. Hubert and Hubertine regard their childlessness as punishment for their disobedience in marrying without parental consent. Each partner still adores the other, but their lives are spoilt by haunting ideas of guilt. In spite of the inner 'malaise' which they both feel, their mutual tenderness and affection succeed in filling with a warm glow a house otherwise made cold by the lack of children. None of the factual events of this union and its consequences can in any way be compared to that of Emile and Alexandrine, but no doubt some of the mutual suffering of the partners described in the novel has its roots in personal experience. The worst parts of the marriage are the things that go unsaid, both know what the other is thinking and their suffering is done in silence. Similarly Zola describes several times how he and his wife would lie awake at night silently brooding on life and death. The characters of Hubert and Hubertine may also have been modelled, to some extent, on Zola and his wife respectively. Hubertine is a down-to-earth, practical woman. It is she who voices the reasoned views of love and marriage to Angélique. She asserts that her own youthful love has been cursed by sterility, and uses her experience to try to dissuade Angélique from what she regards as an impossible marriage to Félicien. Hubertine also indicates that a woman who is not a mother is only half a woman:

" Une femme qui n'a point d'enfant n'est pas heureuse.. Aimer n'est rien, il faut que l'amour soit béni. " 1)

Hubert for most of the time subscribes to his wife's views on love and marriage, but basically he is of a more romantic disposition. When he realises the depths of Angélique's feelings he reveals himself as a believer in strength and purity of true love and regrets having played a part in the campaign to keep the two young lovers apart.

Alexandrine and Emile of course never had any children; the dead mother, however, forgives Hubert and his wife, and sends them the child of pardon.

The origins of the union between Zola and Alexandrine remain obscure. Angus Wilson is the critic who makes most of Mme. Zola's shady past; of the couple's meeting he says:

" It seems clear...that the young man's sympathy was called forth by her position as a deserted mistress, and this sympathy soon led to a closer liaison. When her former lover returned, he blessed the new liaison and made a present of his mistress to Emile. The internal evidence of Zola's novels suggests that, whatever the exact circumstances in which his new relationship began, they were such as to create great stress in his emotional centre for most of his life. One of the most powerful and destructive forces in his novels is the figure of the returned lover, the third party in the domestic set-up - indeed he seems to have had some belief that the first lover of any woman always has a powerful hold on her affections, a view which must have undermined his own sense of security. The triangular situation is treated from many angles, but always as a source of murder, suicide, madness or general decay. " 2)

Harry Levin countered with a denial of this interpretation of the many triangular situations in the novels; talking of jealousy in one of the three parties to such a situation he contends that:

" This jealous suspicion becomes so obsessive that some of Zola's biographers have been ungallantly tempted to ascribe it to his own domestic plight. They would surmise that,

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1) Le Rêve. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 961. 2) Angus Wilson. op.cit. p. 19.

if his preoccupation was not grounded on scientific experiment, it might have been based on intimate experience, mistaking a qualm of jealousy for a law of nature. But little is known of Madame Zola's prehistory, except that she had been her husband's mistress for a few years before she became his wife, and that - after the death of his dominating mother - she became the hostess of his circle. " 1)

It is hard to come to any definite decision as to whether the dramatic triangular situation which Zola so obviously thought to be a common and disruptive feature of relations between the sexes, is rooted in personal anxiety or in scientific theory. Before he met Alexandrine he had often expressed his belief in monogamy as an ideal state, alien to the society around him. The 'Theory of Impregnation' was adopted partly from Michelet, whom he had read before meeting Alexandrine. There is no reason to believe, therefore, that the fictional triangular episodes had any basis in a similar situation in Zola's own emotional circumstances. Yet the portrayal of two partners disrupted by a third party remains so consistent and so obsessive as to make it questionable whether all such situations can be entirely imputed to mere personal preference and scientific theorising. This obsession, while it remains with Zola as a source of high dramatic interest, becomes less intense in later years. In early works it is treated in an extremely melodramatic fashion, whereas in later novels it provides still violent, but less sensational, human drama. The whole plot of Madeleine Férat and the tragic fate of its heroine, revolve solely around a tri-partite situation. In L'Assommoir a returning lover also causes havoc in a stable domestic set-up, but in this case he is only one of a complicated series of interrelated causes of the disintegration of the Coupeau household. This decline in the force of a triangular plot could be attributed to two developments:

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1) Harry Levin. The Gates of Horn. p.317.

either Zola ceased to believe quite so implicitly in a theory which was never more than tenuously substantiated, and which, when treated exclusively in a novel impaired the literary appreciation of the work, or, as his uneventful married life continued without incident he slowly lost the fear that his emotional equilibrium would be upset by a returning third party.

Madeleine Férat is based entirely on the theme of a woman fatally caught between two men, and, not surprisingly, Wilson sees it as an artistic reflection of Zola's early liaison with Alexandrine. Madeleine originally co-habited~~es~~ with a young man who saves her from the attentions of her guardian but then abandons her. She enters a second liaison with another man to whom she can never belong completely, but this union continues without interruption until the first lover returns, and, although no love exists between the two, Madeleine is magnetically attracted to him. The inevitable disaster of such a situation is described in a very melodramatic way by Zola. J.C.Lapp, in his review of this novel, has some additional interesting remarks to make on Zola's triangular affairs:

" In all the triangle situations...the unfortunate one of the two men is physically weak and unprepossessing, the female powerful, virile, attractive...the strong figure who has earlier been the weak one's protector betrays him by seducing his wife or mistress. This pattern in all probability arises out of a deep-hidden emotional source in Zola himself." 1)

Lapp adds that the image of a weakling comes possibly from the experience of a fatherless boy who found strength in the protection of a friend, in whom psycho-analysts would no doubt see a father substitute. If one accepted the theory that Cézanne introduced Alexandrine to Emile, Madeleine Férat could be interpreted as an autobiographical work, with Zola portrayed as Guillaume, Alexandrine as Madeleine and Cézanne as the third party, Jacques. Such an interpretation also fits Lapp's thesis

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1) J.C.Lapp. Zola before the Rougon-Macquart.p.138.

for Cézanne had certainly been the protector of the fatherless Zola in their schooldays, but it will probably never be established as more than a hypothesis.

In Thérèse Raquin the two lovers are separated, not by a living person, but by the dead body of the murdered husband Camille, which keeps Thérèse and Laurent apart even when they are lying next to one another in bed. The same situation does not altogether lose its melodrama in later novels, although it is severely toned down. Lantier's return to the Coupeau household causes a slow, unsensational rupture, rather than a violent disaster. In Germinal, however, the accident in the mine allows the rivalry of two men for one girl to end in a dramatic fashion. Throughout the novel the love interest is provided by Catherine, the pleasant daughter of Maheu, being in an unenviable position between the brutal Chaval, and Etienne Lantier, a man of finer feelings. The three are finally entombed underground. Chaval is brutal to the end, enticing Catherine with the last scraps they possess between them. The situation is resolved when Etienne kills Chaval and makes love to Catherine as they await death in the forbidding darkness, but even after death Chaval's body is washed up to torment them by the water rising in the ruined mine. Françoise in La Terre also finds herself the object of the attentions of a brute - her brother-in-law Buteau, and a gentler man - Jean Macquart. The situation is made complex by family and landed interest. For some reason Françoise feels more excited by the man who is forever trying to violate her but who is a member of the family and also part of the close-knit peasant community, than by the more tender outsider, Jean.

Hallucination and insanity play a bigger role in L'Œuvre. Patrick Brady has established the affinity with the earlier works:

" Dans Thérèse Raquin Zola utilise l'idée d'un troisième corps ( celui de Camille l'assassiné ) qui sépare les époux

dans le lit conjugal; on est un peu surpris de voir une idée analogue utilisée dans L'Œuvre ( où il n'y a cependant pas d'assassiné ) pour symboliser le refroidissement d'une passion. " 1) .

In this case the third party who disrupts husband and wife is a woman, albeit an inanimate one, the painting of a nude which obsesses Claude and which he can never fashion to his own satisfaction. He is haunted by this spectre in much the same way as Madeleine is haunted by the memory of Jacques.

We have come rather a long way from consideration of Alexandrine's influence on her husband's works. It would be a mistake to see her influencing all the examples quoted. Zola, for whatever reason, was manifestly obsessed with tripartite human relationships and used them consistently to convey intense, dramatic interest, and also as examples of the violence and the fatality which so often characterised his portrayal of the relations between the sexes, before Jeanne Rozerot instilled a calmer outlook in him.

Zola had always been impatient to finish his long Rougon-Macquart cycle. As early as 1882 Alexis could establish this desire to make an end:

"Que de fois, depuis quelques temps surtout, n'ai-je pas entendu ce grand travailleur soupirer mélancoliquement après la minute où il écrira le mot "fin" au bas de la dernière page du "roman scientifique" celui qui doit contenir la synthèse de l'histoire naturelle et sociale de toute la famille" 2)

The new spurt of energy and the more optimistic view of life which the middle-aged Zola received from the youthful Jeanne only increased his impatience to round off one cycle and begin a vastly different one, but most critics agree that the affair, which so benefited the man, did not have the

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1) Patrick Brady "L'Œuvre d'Emile Zola. Roman sur les arts  
Droz. Geneva. 1967 p. 87.

2) Paul Alexis. op. cit. p. 120.

same beneficial effect on the artist. Hemmings sums up this general viewpoint thus:

"But the story of this adultery (i.e. with Jeanne) has a relatively minor interest for the literary historian, since the works Zola composed after Jeanne became his mistress have nothing approaching the artistic merit or interest of those written before. The great novels flowered, cactus-like, on the dearth of sexual tranquillity; the climate of consummation encouraged lush and languishing growths, and the mystery why neither his wife nor any other woman could ease for Zola the heart-ache of suppressed yearnings is far from being dispelled" 1)

Certainly Zola never again wrote a masterpiece, but he did at least incorporate Jeanne's story into the scientific novel, the last of the series, which he had long been wanting to write. Le Docteur Pascal ties up all the loose ends of the cycle and retells Zola's liaison with Jeanne Rozerot. The gay, young Clotilde is a portrait of Zola's youthful mistress, and the doctor, of the author himself. Repeating a process he had used before, of assuming the name of one of his creations, Zola used Pascal as a pseudonym during the early days of his exile in England. The final volume of the cycle was officially dedicated to the memory of the author's mother and to his "dear wife" but on the title page of the copy Zola sent to Jeanne Rozerot he wrote:

"A ma bien-aimée Jeanne, - à ma Clotilde, qui m'a donné le royal festin de sa jeunesse et qui m'a rendu mes trente ans, en me faisant le cadeau de ma Denise et de mon Jacques...." 2)

It was fitting that Le Docteur Pascal, as the final novel in a long series, should be dedicated to the two women who had in their own ways influenced and made possible many of the previous units of the whole, but there is no doubt that the novel, as a single entity, owed most to Jeanne, as the

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1) F. W. J. Hemmings. The present position in Zola Studies. F. S. 1956 p. 102.

2) See Etude to Le Docteur Pascal. R. M. Vol. 5. p. 1573.



private dedication shows.

Parallels between the love interest of Le Docteur Pascal and the events of Zola's own middle-age are immediately recognizable. The story opens with Pascal Rougon approaching sixty, living with his neice, aged twenty-five, who acts as his companion and secretary. As a doctor, Pascal is unambitious in a material sense. He has enough funds to keep the household running in a modest but satisfactory manner, and the resultant lack of material worries allows Pascal to devote himself entirely to his researches into heredity and genetics. This work to which he has devoted his life, keeps him wholly occupied and satisfied. Clotilde is similarly content with her unexciting existence as the "maître's" companion and aide. Her thirst for the unknown and her interest in the mysticism of religion provide the only source of dissension between the two. The development which precipitates an immense change in the nature of their relationships arises when Pascal begins to lose faith in his capacity as a scientist and in science itself with the result that his work no longer satisfies his whole being. He comes to regret not having lived, not having married and had a family, and even curses science for having robbed him of his best years and his virility. Pascal begins to feel an intense need for rejuvenation. It is then that he finds he is immensely attracted to his young niece, and has been for a long time without realising it. His first reaction is to fight this apparently monstrous feeling, and he tries to precipitate Clotilde's projected marriage to Ramond. But the young girl refuses the latter, both niece and uncle find that their love is mutual and the seemingly impossible union is consummated. For a short, idyllic interlude, the ageing white-haired doctor and his beautiful young niece share a love which transcends all conventions and disregards all social and material

barriers. Pascal recaptures his zest and enthusiasm, whilst Clotilde's thirst for the unknown is quenched by love. Sex, too, for Zola loses the unseemly quality that had so often characterised his discussion of it in previous novels. But even here the idyll can not last indefinitely. Pascal becomes increasingly aware of the unusual nature of their liaison, and is plagued by the thought that with him Clotilde is ruining her young life. He persuades his niece to go to Paris where her brother Maxime is ill and needs someone to tend him. Clotilde later reports that she is pregnant, whereupon Pascal summons her to return, but before she can reach him the doctor dies, sad that death has not spared him long enough to see his offspring, but happy that he has created life. Many features of this liaison, especially in its 'dénouement', can in no way be compared to Zola's own life. He lived long enough to enjoy the birth of two children and even saw them grow into late childhood. The scientist, who, at an advanced age, begins to feel that his exclusive devotion to his researches has closed the door for him to some of the more basic joys of life, and who determines to taste of such joys before old age robs him of the chance to do so, is sufficiently recognizable as the novelist who has become tired of his long cycle, for Hemmings to remark with justification, " In Le Docteur Pascal Zola dramatized his last love as he had dramatized his first in La Confession de Claude. " 1)

The personal fervour which Zola instilled into this final volume did much to allay the possibility of its love interest becoming sordid. Love in old age can so easily become ridiculous. In literary terms it is often used as a source of comedy, farce or even tragedy, but Zola succeeded in making such a love appear natural and noble. His own involvement in a similar affair probably did much to create this pervading air of naturalness. The fervent tone of the

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1) F.W.J.Hemmings. Emile Zola. p.237.

narration is increased by the fact that Le Docteur Pascal also embodies Zola's excuse for the adulterous affair which caused him both joy and pain. In spite of his wife, for whom he still feels a deep respect and admiration, Emile can not believe that his union with Jeanne is evil. Self-sympathy and self-approval more than anything else render the love of Pascal and Clotilde honourable and well-intentioned. The girl's pregnancy provides much needed justification, as the birth of two children had done for Zola. He exaggerates the search for approval for the old man and the young girl by seeking legitimization of their love in Biblical precedents.

Jeanne Rozerot's influence on Zola's later work is more indirect. She affected his philosophy of life and altered the emphasis of his writings. The girl evoked as Clotilde helped the author complete one series of novels with an act of faith in life, and begin a new one in which the forces of light outweigh those of darkness, for now Zola has greater optimism, a love and a belief in life similar to Pascal's.

Jeanne also became the model for the many robust, pleasant mother-figures of the two later cycles. The paternity which Zola achieved with her gave him a more positive view of love, which affected the ideal human relationships he postulated for the society of the future. It would be wrong to suggest, however, that under Jeanne's influence Zola completely changed his ideas. It is merely the emphasis which changed. The positive recommendations for relations between the sexes in his later work, had already been suggested in a negative fashion in the Rougon-Macquart novels.

The women in Zola's life and the nature of the relationships he shared with them, constitute an important factor in an appreciation of his novels. His first encounters with the opposite sex in Aix, the sordid reality of his acquaintance with Berthe, the long humdrum years of childless marriage to

Alexandrine, his mother's love for her son and slight hostility to her daughter-in-law, and the final joyful, productive union with a girl half his age, all find their way in varying degrees and forms into Zola's novels. But he can still not be termed a subjective novelist. No novel by Zola resembles a work such as Constant's Adolphe in which the author plunges into the depths of his own being to analyse his emotions and his attitude towards a woman. Even in novels where autobiographical content is high, it is never allowed to become the sole 'raison d'être' for the work. All affairs inspired by personal memories are given a wider importance than a mere retelling of private memoirs. In La Fortune des Rougon the two young lovers' story is inextricably linked to the success or failure of the Republican ideal and at times their love becomes a symbol of this cause. La Confession de Claude is used to express the opposition between romanticism and realism, and also for general social comment on the sentimental lives of contemporary youth and the way in which society's principles affect them. In L'Œuvre Sandoz and his wife offer a picture of solid, domestic contentment to offset the turbulent relationship between Claude Lantier and Christine, and even in his most subjective work Le Docteur Pascal, the doctor and his niece are at times used to express the conflict between religious mysticism and scientific rationalism prevalent in France of the 'fin de siècle'. Certain aspects of Zola's own involvement with women also gave him material for his portrayal of relations between the sexes in general. The conviction that romantic, disinterested love is impossible, the heart-ache of sterility, the advantages of a good wife, the squalor of casual relationships and the joys of paternity, which all figure in his description of Rougon-Macquart society or in later novels, all arise from Zola's own relations : with a small succession of very varied women.

CHAPTER III : THE 'FEMME FATALE'.

J.C.Lapp in particular has contended that Zola borrowed from late Romanticism the theme of the 'Femme Fatale', the awe-inspiring, demonic woman who purposely torments the male of the species, cruelly sacrificing her lover victim to her sadistic tendencies. Lapp sees the theme recurring so often in Zola's novels that he expresses surprise that Mario Praz did not include Zola more extensively in his review of late Romantic literature, The Romantic Agony. Surprisingly, for the American critic, Praz mentions Zola only six times, three of them in foot-notes. 1) Lapp recognises that the theme of the 'Femme Fatale', as described by Praz, has been somewhat altered by Zola, but contends that such a theme has a definite place in much of Zola's work. Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum denies that the novelist had a conception of the devilish woman. Of Zola's work she writes:

" Il y manque toutefois ce que l'on trouvait fréquemment dans le roman avant lui: la femme de l'au-delà, la femme-ange, et son antithèse: le démon. "

This opinion leads her to maintain of Zola's thought:

" Il ne croit pas à la malignité originelle de la femme. " 2)

Close attention to the novels is more likely to convince the reader of the truth of Lapp's contentions on the frequency of the theme in question; this critic's review of examples has been extensive, and I have inevitably had to repeat many of his findings.

Zola himself has indicated that the type of woman who nurtures a cruel enmity for man, held some fascination for him. In Souvenir V of the Nouvelles Contes à Ninon, which first appeared on the 22nd June 1868, Zola ostensibly describes his two cats, but they both have female names, and he takes the opportunity to consider two types of women. One of the two,

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1) J.C.Lapp. The Watcher Betrayed and the Fatal Woman: Some Recurring Patterns in Zola. P.M.L.A. 1959.p.278. 2) Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum. op.cit.p.70.

Françoise, is flighty but tender and submissive, whilst the other, Catherine, is cruel and mysterious. Women like Françoise, he concludes, are common, but :

"...j'aime toujours Catherine; je l'aime parce qu'elle est perfide et cruelle, comme une bête de l'enfer...je n'ai pu encore trouver une sœur à Catherine, une créature perverse et froide, une idole noire qui vive dans le songe éternel du mal. " 1)

This fascination with cruel women was perhaps born from a feeling of fear and insecurity with women, for Zola could even see hatred and scorn in the eyes of young girls playing in a park. In Les Squares, which was first published in Le Figaro on the 18th June 1867, he observes the boys and girls in Paris parks, and remarks:

" Un visage de petite fille est un miroir délicat où se peignent déjà toutes les expressions tristes et joyeuses de la passion; il y a des nuances exquisés, des demi-sourires, des clartés de fierté et de tendresse, des ombres légères de mépris et de haine. Ces petits êtres, si frêles et si roses, qui ont encore de l'innocence plein les yeux, sont parfois effrayants de rouerie et de science mondaine. " 2)

Such a passage is eloquent of the fear and inferiority which Zola sometimes felt with women, an attitude which might explain his interest in the theme of the 'Fatal Woman', and his willingness to use it to express his own ideas on the relations between the sexes.

In La Confession de Claude Laurence and Pâquerette, the two prostitutes, are both highly coloured, macabre figures. Laurence is often described by Claude in terms of a corpse which is a feature of the tradition, and the heavy, exaggerated make-up she uses gives her the appropriate pale and deathly appearance. Thérèse Raquin can be an extremely violent woman, and Zola gives hints of an exotic background. For years she has been like dead flesh in the arms of her effete husband

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1) Nouveaux Contes à Ninon. O.C.Vol.9. p.421.

2) Les Squares. O.C.Vol.9. Pp.300-1.

Camille. The latter's more robust friend Laurent manages to awaken her dormant sexuality, and under the influence of her voluptuous African blood, she becomes a highly passionate woman, almost exhausting her virile lover in excesses of sexual activity:

" Au premier baiser, elle se révéla courtisane. Son corps inassouvi se jeta éperdument dans la volupté. Elle s'éveillait comme d'un songe, elle naissait à la passion. Elle passait des bras débiles de Camille dans les bras vigoureux de Laurent, et cette approche d'un homme puissant lui donnait une brusque secousse qui la tirait du sommeil de la chair. Tous ses instincts de femme nerveuse éclatèrent avec une violence inouïe; le sang de sa mère, ce sang africain qui brûlait ses veines, se mit à couler, à battre furieusement dans son corps maigre, presque vierge encore. Elle s'étalait, elle s'offrait avec une impudeur souveraine. Et, de la tête aux pieds, de longs frissons l'agitaient! 1)

Such increased sexual activity on the part of the woman is not sufficient to classify Thérèse as a 'Femme Fatale'; in the sex act she is still content to offer herself as the more submissive partner, but the joys they savour from their love contain an element of cruelty. Thérèse later tells Laurent:

" Une force fatale me ramenait à ton côté, je respirais ton air avec des délices cruelles. " 2)

Lapp has called attention to the sadism of the period prior to the 'dénouement' in suicide. The two are haunted by the spectre of the murdered Camille, whose body they feel between them in bed. All efforts to counteract the effects of this presence through intercourse result in complete failure. The sexual activity of the two formerly highly sexed partners now consists of a grim struggle with a ghostly third party, which succeeds only in accentuating the horror each feels for the other. Sadism in love plays a major part in the liaison between Thérèse and her lover, but the best evocation of the 'Fatal Woman' in early works came in Madeleine Férat.

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1) Thérèse Raquin B.C.p.56.

2) Ibid.p.61.

Madeleine, the woman who has been impregnated by her first lover, is described in the terms of the 'Fatal Woman' tradition especially towards the end of the novel when the effects of her impregnation are brought to a disastrous conclusion. Initially, Zola is content to pose her as the more dominant partner in her union with Guillaume, a weak character, who is happy to let himself be governed by Madeleine. When the two are married, they enjoy several years of dull but contented existence in which the wife consolidates her more active position and the husband is happy to accept it. Zola explains that this is a result of the stronger of the two personalities conditioning the weaker, but there is no question of any perverse cruelty in the relationship. For much of the work there is little indication of any extensive utilization of the 'Femme Fatale' theme, apart from a mild inversion of the roles of two partners to a marriage. It is the return of the former lover which precipitates the tragic ending, and unleashes a flood of melodramatic descriptions and events which have a much greater affinity with the tradition in question.

Under the influence of the traces of Jacques left in her, which are rekindled by the latter's reappearance, Madeleine begins to inflict humiliations and torments on her husband. She dreams aloud of her lover in the presence of Guillaume, whose impotent jealousy arouses hallucinatory visions; he sees his wife's body tainted by the traces of former loves and recoils from her.

Lapp has indicated two restrained features of Zola's handling of the 'Fatal Woman' theme, which prevent one from regarding him as a complete adherent to a well-established tradition. Firstly, the infliction of suffering by his examples of this type of woman is purely involuntary; secondly, they are only 'Fatal Women' to some people, for some of the time. This effect is achieved by angling descriptions through the



eyes of another character. Madeleine only acts as she does because a frenzy due to physiological causes forces her to do so. Her unintentional cruelty accentuates the fatal power of her physiological motivation, and also renders her an incomplete example of the 'Femme Fatale', who was elsewhere portrayed as a wilful torturer of the male. Zola's practice of presenting his 'Fatal Women' through what Lapp calls the " point of view " 1) of another character is particularly evident in Madeleine Férat. In fact, in this novel, he does it through two people. As Jacques' physical hold over her becomes stronger and more apparent, Madeleine appears ever more cruel and horrific to her husband Guillaume. In an attempt to escape Jacques' influence they flee to Madeleine's former dwelling, in which they had known love and happiness together. But their efforts to recapture past serenity are in vain, in spite of a roaring fire the place seems cold and uninviting. In Guillaume's eyes Madeleine takes on a typically cruel 'Fatal Woman' appearance:

"...il n'éprouvait aucun désir, il lui trouvait une attitude de courtisane, une face dure et épaisse de femme rassasiée. " 2)

Thoughts of the first lover plague him equally; his male ego is horrified lest the man with whom he has shared his wife was a better lover than he. Because of these conflicting doubts and ideas Guillaume can only regard Madeleine's nudity with disgust and horror. Zola insists that all such thoughts are purely a product of Guillaume's imagination; outside of his projection of her, Madeleine has no real essence as a 'Femme Fatale', " Son imagination l'emportait, rêvait alors des choses horribles. " 3)

The wronged husband in this fated triangular affair thus imagines his wife as a devilish monster, but descriptions which make use most closely of the vocabulary of the Romantic

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1) J.C.Lapp. Some Recurring Patterns in Zola.P.M.L.A.1959.p.279  
2) Madeleine Férat.O.C.Vol.1.p.799. 3) Ibid.p.801.

tradition are placed principally in the mouth of the fanatical old housekeeper Geneviève. Her excessive Protestantism and prolonged virginity give this demonic figure an exaggerated view of sin. For her, it is inevitable that Guillaume, the offspring of adultery, will be punished, and she sees Madeleine as the instrument of his punishment. Lapp observes, therefore, that, " It is through Geneviève that Zola firmly links his heroine to the tradition of the Fatal Woman, " 1) The critic notes that, in her frequent denunciations of her mistress, Geneviève uses the terms of the theme in question. In this way Zola has succeeded in making his use of such descriptive passages a little less extraordinary. It seems natural for this woman of deranged mind, who is accustomed to talking a demonic, Biblical language to have a horrific conception of Madeleine, " Cette forte fille, blanche et rousse, (Madeleine) l'effrayait, comme une goule avide du sang des jeunes hommes." 2) Madeleine is only a 'Femme Fatale' for the ramblings of a twisted mind.

In the early works borrowings from the tradition of the 'Fatal Woman' are responsible for much of the melodrama which they contain. Successful suppression of such melodramatic elements is one feature which differentiates the later mature work from the early novels. This does not mean, however, that the 'Femme Fatale' disappears from Zola's work. On the contrary, she finds her way into some of the key units of the Rougon-Macquart series. In Son Excellence Eugène Rougon sadism and cruelty play a large part in Clorinde Balbi's desire to exact revenge from Eugène Rougon, who spurns Clorinde and despises most of woman-kind. An initial attempt at rape is characterised by brutality on both sides. Most of the novel concerns a duel

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1) J.C.Lapp. Zola before the Rougon-Macquart. Pp.126-7.

2) Madeleine Férat. O.C.Vol.1.p.848.

between equally forceful male and female personalities in which the biggest mistake Rougon makes is to consider Clorinde as just another woman:

" Quand elle le surprenait encore par un geste, un mot dont il ne trouvait pas l'explication, il avait des haussements d'épaules d'homme fort, il disait que toutes les femmes étaient ainsi. Et il croyait par là témoigner un grand mépris pour les femmes, ce qui aiguïssait le sourire de Clorinde, un sourire discret et cruel, montrant le bout des dents, entre les lèvres rouges. " 1)

Clorinde's cruelty towards Rougon is caused mainly through the scorn he has shown her. To avenge this she repeatedly refuses any advances he makes, which arouses his exasperation to such an extent that he is forced at one stage to crawl, in an attempt to press his intentions. Although Eugène's seduction has to adopt this grovelling form, he remains the physically violent male, but Clorinde answers brutality with brutality. Although Clorinde is described in terms reminiscent of the 'Fatal Woman' theme, and although her treatment of Rougon is often governed by a sadistic wish to inflict both moral and physical pain, one can not see her as a true 'Femme Fatale', since the basic situation of the tradition, that of a strong woman dominating and hurting a weaker man is in no way adhered to. Violence in this case results from the clash of two equally strong personalities.

Nana is a much better example from later novels. She is the cause of the ruin, not of one man, but of a host of men, attracted to her like dogs round a bitch on heat. The image is Zola's; he also compared his heroine to a fly which poisoned men. His intention was to portray her as holding the whole race of man in her clutches, and to illustrate her potency with individual examples. The heroine is immediately introduced, invested with all the power of her sex, as a devourer of male

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1) Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. R.M.Vol.2.p.234.

flesh:

" Tout d'un coup, dans la bonne enfant, la femme se dressait, inquiétante, apportant le coup de folie de son sexe, ouvrant l'inconnu du désir. Nana souriait toujours, mais d'un sourire aigu de mangeuse d'hommes. " 1)

Her fame is assured after her success at the 'Théâtre des Variétés', and Nana is launched on a glittering career, in the course of which she ruins a whole string of men both morally and financially.

It is in her relationship with Count Muffat in particular that Nana is most perfectly evoked as a 'Femme Fatale'. The enslavement of this chamberlain at the Imperial court to Nana, the avenging demon from the slums, causes financial ruin, the disintegration of his family, and the loss of his social position. Zola uses the same techniques with Nana and Muffat as he had done with Guillaume and Madeleine; he insists on the unintentional nature of Nana's actions and slants descriptions of her through the Count's eyes. Muffat has led a very pious life and his religious education makes it easy for him to see Nana either as a devil or a goddess:

" Il croyait au diable. Nana, confusément, était le diable, avec ses rires, avec sa gorge et sa croupe, gonflées de vices." 2)

In her room he feels as if he is in the presence of some awful deity:

" Lui, dévot, habitué aux extases des chapelles riches, retrouvait exactement ses sensations de croyant, lorsque, agenouillé sous un vitrail, il succombait à l'ivresse des orgues et des encensoirs. La femme le possédait avec le despotisme jaloux d'un Dieu de colère, le terrifiant, lui donnant des secondes de joies aiguës comme des spasmes, pour des heures d'affreux tourments, des visions d'enfer et d'éternels supplices. " 3)

In Nana the best example of what Lapp calls Zola's 'point of view' technique is provided by the scene in which, as Nana admires her nudity in a mirror, the author describes the

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1) Nana.R.M.Vol.2.p.1118. 2) Ibid.p.1213. 3) Ibid.p.1271.

thoughts provoked by this sight in the Count who is watching:

" Il songeait à son ancienne horreur de la femme, au monstre de l'Écriture, lubrique, sentant le fauve. Nana était toute velue, un duvet de rousse faisait de son corps un velours; tandis que, dans sa croupe et ses cuisses de cavale, dans les renflements charnus creusés de plis profonds, qui donnaient au sexe le voile troublant de leur ombre, il y avait de la bête. C'était la bête d'or, inconsciente comme une force, et dont l'odeur seule gâtait le monde." 1)

To Muffat, Nana is thus a savage, destructive beast, an impression rendered extremely vivid by the animal vocabulary Zola chose to employ. That Nana is an awesome woman for Muffat alone can be seen not only from the techniques of description, but also from the relationship she has for a while with an actor, Fontan. This man ill-treats her terribly, but Nana enjoys being dominated, abused and even beaten by her lover. After frequent quarrels it is Nana who has to patch things up, the man thus remains always in the dominant position. To end this episode, in which Nana enjoys submission to a brutal male, Fontan merely throws her out, abandoning her for another woman.

The height of Nana's sadistic treatment of Muffat comes when she makes him act literally like an animal, for, having forced him onto all fours she rides him like a dog. On another occasion she makes him dress up in all the finery of his Chamberlain's uniform which she takes pleasure in defiling. Yet even when indulging in such sadistic activity, Zola insists that Nana is not acting wilfully. In her case it is her poisoned heredity and the vitiated atmosphere in which she was brought up, which cause such abnormal behaviour. After describing the ignominious things Nana forces Muffat to do, the author remarks, " Ce ne fut pas cruauté chez elle, car elle demeurait bonne fille. " 2) Fauchery's thinly disguised article on Nana, in Le Figaro also points to the involuntary manner in which she acts.

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1) Ibid.p.1271. 2) Ibid.p.1460.

Nana is the beauty from the slums, with a magnificent body, stupid but neither good nor evil, irresistible solely through the power of her sex. Symbolically she dominates the whole of Paris to show society firmly caught in the grips of the courtesan. Zola insists more than anything else on her man-eating capacities, a steady succession of men are enticed into her web to be fleeced and then dropped.

The most perfect example of inversion, an essential ingredient of the tradition in question, is to be found in La Curée. Renée, who engages in an incestuous union with her stepson Maxime Saccard, acts in this relationship as a typical 'Femme Fatale', without the same degree of cruelty which is common to others.

From the outset Renée is described in masculine terms. In the first description of her we are told of "sa mine de garçon", and she carries with her, "un binocle d'homme." 1) She is obviously a woman of outrageous, perverse appetites and imaginings, for, as she returns day-dreaming to the centre of Paris at the beginning of the story, 'le Bois de Boulogne' becomes, ".un bois sacré, une de ces clairières idéales au fond desquelles les anciens dieux cachaient leurs amours géants, leurs adultères et leurs incestes divins. " 2)

Maxime is as effeminate as Renée is virile. When he first arrives in Paris his femininity is made immediately obvious, for he is shown as ".à figure de fille, l'air délicat et effronté, d'un blond très doux." 3) Zola consistently criticised contemporary educational institutions as the breeding grounds for perversions, and characteristically it is at school that Maxime acquires his precocious taste for vice, and where his school-mates treated him as a girl. The boy is left by Saccard in Renée's care and spends most of his time in the latter's

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1) La Curée. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 320. 2) Ibid. p. 326. 3) Ibid. p. 403.

circle of idle, female friends, who treat Maxime as another of themselves. He, too, is unsatisfied by the prospect of normal relations; perhaps even more than his step-mother, he has a thirst for the vicious and the outrageous. "Moi, je voudrais être aimé par une religieuse", is just one of his exaggerated fantasies. 1) Lapp suggests that the figure of the androgynous Maxime and the examples of inversion in La Curée may well owe something to the early molesting Zola received from the Arab boy Mustapha, and remarks in this connection, "Perhaps his obvious repugnance for Maxime was sublimated self-loathing." 2)

When two such people as Renée and Maxime embark on a sexual adventure, it is obvious that traditional roles will be reversed. Renée is more positive in beginning a liaison; she has secretly been thinking of an affair before any sexual activity takes place between the two, whereas Maxime has not really considered it:

"Il l'avait effleurée de tout son vice sans la désirer réellement. Il était trop mou pour cet effort. Il accepta Renée parce qu'elle s'imposa à lui, et qu'il glissa jusqu'à sa couche, sans le vouloir, sans le prévoir." 3)

The inversion of roles becomes more pronounced in descriptions of their sexual activities. On a night of extreme cold Maxime comes to the hot-house, the scene of much exotic love-making, and is overcome by the change in temperature; the tingling sensation caused by the heat after the cold is compared to being beaten by rods. He recovers to find Renée kneeling over him, "pareille à une grande chatte aux yeux phosphorescents." 4) In Maxime's eyes she is identified as the female, human counterpart to a black, marble sphinx. Renée dominates their sexual activities. On the same cold occasion:

"Ils eurent une nuit d'amour fou. Renée était l'homme,

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1) Ibid.p.328. 2)J.C.Lapp. Zola before the Rougon-Macquart. p.140.

3) La Curée. R.M.Vol.1.p.482. 4) Ibid.p.485.

la volonté passionnée et agissante. Maxime subissait. Cet être neutre, blond et joli, frappé dès l'enfance dans sa virilité, devenait, aux bras curieux de la jeune femme, une grande fille, avec ses membres épilés, ses maigreurs gracieuses d'éphèbe romain." 1)

In the warm atmosphere of the hot-house Renée acts as the man and Maxime becomes, " cette proie renversée sous elle, qui s'abandonnait, qu'elle possédait toute entière." 2) Renée is aware of her superiority over Maxime but never seeks to exploit it in order to satisfy a taste for cruelty. At a reception she discovers that the marriage contract between Maxime and Louise is soon to be signed. She is furious that the fact has been kept from her and drags Maxime away to quarrel with him. He at first denies that he is going to marry Louise, but then has to own up in a confession which he seeks to bolster with a rather pathetic assertion of authority:

" Eh bien, oui, je l'épouse. Après?...Est-ce que je ne suis pas le maître? "

But Renée quickly puts him in his place:

" Le maître! toi, le maître!...Tu sais bien que non. C'est moi qui suis le maître. Je te casserais les bras, si j'étais méchante; tu n'as pas plus de force qu'une fille." 3)

Renée is conscious of the fact that it is she who directs the relationship, but treats Maxime maternally rather than sadistically. It is her lack of cruelty which prevents us from regarding Renée as a perfect example of the 'Femme Fatale'. Finally it is the two men in her life who ruin her; the father, financially, the son, morally.

The vocabulary of the 'Fatal Woman' convention is also used to describe the woman Claude Lantier obsessively tries to create on canvas in L'Œuvre. Brady has established this link between the product of Lantier's imagination and other real characters in Zola's works:

" La 'femme fatale' représentée par Laurence, (La Confession

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1) Ibid.p.485. 2) Ibid.p.489. 3) Ibid.p.568.



de Claude ), Madeleine ( Madeleine Férat ), Renée ( La Curée ), et Nana ( Nana ) revient dans L'Œuvre sous la forme de la femme peinte. " 1)

In particular, similar treatment of the theme creates for Brady a close similarity between Nana and L'Œuvre:

" C'est surtout par l'obsession de la nudité féminine et par l'idée de la femme déesse qui triomphe de l'homme que Nana, rédigée en 1879, préfigure L'Œuvre. " 2)

Descriptions of the attempts Claude makes to get his woman onto canvas, the obsessive hold she has over the painter, and the cruel triumph she ultimately exacts from him all allow us to agree with the inclusion of this imaginary figure among the 'Femmes Fatales' of Zola's work.

Examples abound to support Lapp's view that use of the 'Fatal Woman' tradition constitutes one of the 'recurrent patterns' in Zola's novels. Zola adapted an exaggerated form of Romanticism in his avowedly realistic writings and made use of it in his portrayal of the relations between the sexes in Imperial society. He did not adopt the convention purely for its own sake, because of a fascination it held for him in itself, or from a desire to titillate his readers. If either of these possibilities had been the reason for inclusion of the theme in the novels, there would presumably have been no point in introducing the adaptations Zola obviously felt necessary, in order to make the tradition fit his own purposes. Indeed, one of these adaptations, the practice of slanting descriptions through the eyes of interested characters makes it possible to contend that Zola was, in fact, producing anti-"Femme Fatale" tracts. Madeleine Férat might be seen as a scientific refutation of an absurd Romantic convention. The character who sees Madeleine most as a devilish woman is herself of a

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1) Patrick Brady. op. cit. p. 378

2) Ibid p. 122

definitely deranged mentality, and Guillaume's own views of his wife are subject to an over-vivid imagination. Neither he nor Madeleine understands the true causes of her fatal attraction to Jacques, her feelings and actions thus seem utterly monstrous. The mental torments that undermine their peaceful existence are simply the result of an inability to explain a physical impulse, so that Zola might be contending that we erroneously give monstrous interpretations to phenomena that have perfectly straightforward scientific explanations.

More than anything else Zola used the Fatal Woman tradition to give forceful expression to many of his most important ideas on the relations between the sexes. In Madeleine Férat it helps to accentuate the horror of the 'Theory of Impregnation' which deprives those it affects of free will and makes them powerless in the hands of a physical law they can do nothing to alter. The vocabulary and the images of the convention are extremely effective in presenting the awful effects of physiological fatality. The fact that Zola reserved his full use of the convention for the sequel to the return of the first lover underlines these effects and indicates a skilful handling of a traditional theme by an author who was obviously intent on adapting it to his own needs. In Nana the theme expresses more of Zola's views on human relationships. Nana represents the terrible power that women possess through their sexual attractiveness, the magnetic quality that renders men helpless at their feet. Muffat, in his relationship with her, shows the destructive, energy-sapping force of sexual involvement in men. In the sum-total of her relations with men Nana becomes a symbolic avenging beast from the slums spreading her poison through the highest ranks of society. In Hemmings' terms, "... Nana dramatizes Zola's own deep dread

of the magnetism of sex, his haunting vision of Woman as the Destroyer..." 1) The inversion and the strange sexual practices in La Curée admirably express Zola's view that this was a society that in matters of sex had lost all sense of values and in which the highest ranks were the most perverse. In a letter to Louis Ulbach of the 6th November 1871, Zola referred to the sociological import he had tried to give to this novel:

" J'ai voulu, dans cette nouvelle Phèdre, montrer à quel effroyable écroulement on en arrive, quand les mœurs sont pourries et que les liens de la famille n'existent plus. Ma Renée, c'est la Parisienne affolée, jetée au crime par le luxe et la vie à outrance; mon Maxime, c'est le produit d'une société épuisée, l'homme-femme, la chair inerte qui accepte les dernières infamies " 2)

Both characters also reflect Zola's central ideas on heredity and environment. Renée is a victim of background, education and circumstance, and the hermaphrodite Maxime is the most terrible product of the tainted Rougon-Macquart genes.

A violent sex war underlies the society of the Rougon-Macquart novels. To appreciate this entirely we must consider briefly some of the more energetic male protagonists too. Whilst it would be very difficult to see in some of Zola's men, examples of the extreme type of Byronic 'Fatal Man' who as Praz tells us, "destroy themselves and destroy the unlucky women who come within their orbit", 3) finding in such activity, "a subtly, perverse pleasure in destruction" 4), there are definitely in Zola's works male characters who prey on women, though usually for financial gain rather than for sadistic pleasure.

Of these men, Lantier in L'Assommoir is probably the least

1) Hemmings. Emile Zola p. 154

2) Correspondance. Les Lettres et Les Arts. B.C. Pp. 84-5

3) Mario Praz. The Romantic Agony. p. 94

4) Ibid. p. 95

violent. He is merely a dreamy Republican whose chief characteristic is an inherent laziness which brings him to live off Gervaise and other women, but there is some cruelty in his ability to disregard them completely once he has wrung all the material profit possible from them. Lantier is merely an idler who is happy to allow women to satisfy his basic, physical needs of eating, sleeping and drinking; as soon as such needs are not satisfied by the Coupeaus he begins to court the Poissons, arranging to have Virginie take over Gervaise's shop. Lantier stays once this transaction has been made and proceeds to exploit Virginie instead of Gervaise.

A more energetic and subtle exploiter of women is Octave Mouret, who, in the two novels where he plays a prominent part, is at times described as just as much a symbolic woman-devourer as Nana is a man-eater. In Pot-Bouille his adventures are mainly with individual members of the opposite sex, but having used them to reach a position of authority, Octave, in Au Bonheur des Dames, extends his campaign to include the whole of womanhood. Women for him are prey and instruments, from which he extracts wealth, fame and pleasure. Individual women fall foul of him in bed and the mass of women are exploited in his department store which is described as a "woman-eating machine". Instead of allowing himself to be subjugated by women Mouret reigns over them and from this assertion of his masculine will and dominance comes his success.

Pot-Bouille is in many ways a prologue to Au Bonheur des Dames, for it is in the first novel that we see the Provençal adventurer introduced into the Parisian bourgeoisie and succeeding in rising to direct a huge department store, largely by playing on the sexual hold he gains over the middle-class females of his surroundings. Such exploitation of women for personal ambition is a conscious action. Octave regards women,

before he meets Denise Baudu, as the road to the top, his ideas on love are purely materialistic. At a reception given by the Duveyrier family, he and Trublot discuss the women present; the reflections of this provincial not long in Paris, intent on making his way in the world, and convinced before he starts, like Marivaux's Jacob, that sex will get him a long way, are typical of his attitude to women:

" Octave souriait. Lui, avait sa position à faire...Une rêverie l'envahissait devant ces rangées profondes de femmes, il se demandait laquelle il aurait prise pour sa fortune et sa joie, si les maîtres de la maison lui avaient permis d'en emporter une. " 1)

His reaction towards Mme. Hédouin, the woman through whom he finally gains control of the store, is predictable; he sees her as, " une femme superbe, à la santé vaillante, à la beauté calme, qui devait être tout bénéfice pour un homme. " 2) He sets out on a long campaign of seduction which is eventually successful, and which guarantees him his position.

Octave's exploitation of women in the succeeding novel is treated more generally and symbolically. In the interval between the two works Mme. Hédouin has conveniently ( for the later development of a liaison between Mouret and Denise ) fallen into a hole on the building site of the expanding store and died three days later. Her blood is thus in the foundations which gives a melodramatic, symbolic touch to the way in which the store is to become an abyss into which women are seduced and subsequently ruined. Mouret uses the same basis of physical charms for commercial seduction, attacking women in the store just like mistresses. He preys on their weaknesses, attacks them through their children and their maternal instincts, flatters and courts them into spending their money, but at the same time, he retains a basic scorn for them, since they allow

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1) Pot-Bouille. R.M.Vol.3.p.83. 2) Ibid.p.83.

themselves to be exploited. Zola makes much use of sexual imagery to give the impression of women being stripped and raped of their money. The determination to exploit the opposite sex is perfectly wilful. Octave explains his procedure to the Baron Hartmann:

" Et si, chez eux, la femme était reine, adulée et flattée dans ses faiblesses, entourée de prévenances, elle y régnait en reine amoureuse, dont les sujets trafiquent, et qui paye d'une goutte de son sang chacun de ses caprices. " 1)

Mouret, in business life, is motivated by a deep antagonism for women and the desire he feels to dominate them:

" Mouret avait l'unique passion de vaincre la femme. Il la voulait reine dans sa maison, il lui avait bâti ce temple, pour l'y tenir à sa merci. " 2)

There is little hint of perversion in this desire to subjugate women, for it is done mainly in financial terms, although material ruin does in certain circumstances cause moral disintegration. Mouret is confident that there is no woman who will ever get the better of him. It would be difficult to imagine a less likely instrument of female vengeance than Denise Baudu, but it is this timid girl who succeeds in breaking Mouret, and she uses him to introduce better conditions in the store. Mouret, the great woman-exploiter, is in turn conquered and exploited by woman.

A more sinister figure, who uses women for his own ends, is L'Abbé Faujas, the scheming Imperial agent in La Conquête de Plassans. Félicité Rougon, the woman who, in the early days of the Imperial régime, gained much experience in social manipulation, advises him to use women to carry out his mission of imposing an Imperial candidate on the town of Plassans:

"..soyez aimable, plaisez aux femmes. Retenez bien ceci, plaisez aux femmes, si vous voulez que Plassans soit à vous." 3)

Faujas succeeds in gaining indirect power over the town

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1) Au Bonheur des Dames. R.M.Vol.3.p.461. 2) Ibid.p.612.

3) La Conquête de Plassans. R.M.Vol.1.p.961.

through its womenfolk, by remaining an enigmatic figure who initially keeps out of social contacts. His ultimate success is founded on his ability to influence a whole circle of women but the greatest effects of his scheming are seen in the fate of one woman, Marthe Mouret. She changes in the course of the novel from a pleasant, middle-class wife and mother into an hysterical, passionate fanatic, whose weaknesses are carefully used by the priest. Traditional priestly hatred of woman causes Faujas to treat Marthe with perverse cruelty. Because of Marthe's infatuation with him, Faujas is able to mould her like wax, but he shows no pity:

" Et quand elle devenait inquiète, qu'elle tendait les mains vers lui, le cœur crevé, les lèvres gonflées de passion, il la jetait à terre d'un mot, il l'écrasait sous la volonté du ciel. Jamais elle n'osa parler. Il y avait entre elle et cet homme un mur de colère et de dégoût. Quand il sortait des courtes luttes qu'il avait à soutenir avec elle, il haussait les épaules, plein du mépris d'un lutteur arrêté par un enfant. Il se lavait, il se brossait, comme s'il eût touché malgré lui à une bête impure. " 1)

Once Faujas has triumphed he reveals his scorn for women by becoming even harsher, but being treated roughly appeals to his penitents and increases his power:

" La peur sourde des femmes affermit encore son pouvoir. Il fut cruel pour ses pénitentes, et pas une n'osa le quitter; elles venaient à lui avec des frissons dont elles goûtaient la fièvre. " 2)

His treatment of Marthe becomes yet more sadistic:

" Mais le prêtre s'emportait, s'oubliait jusqu'à la traiter grossièrement, refusait de l'entendre, tant qu'elle ne serait point à genoux, humiliée, inerte, ainsi qu'un cadavre. " 3)

By far the most disturbing woman-hater is Jacques Lantier in La Bête Humaine. His antagonism towards the opposite sex, which assumes the proportions of wanting to kill, is caused, not by a desire to exact financial or political gain, but by obscure, uncontrollable atavistic forces. The origin of

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1) Ibid.p.1105. 2) Ibid.p.1166. 3) Ibid.p.1170.

Jacques' homicidal tendencies, which are directed at women, lies in an accumulation of male resentment against the opposite sex over generations:

" Cela venait-il donc de si loin, du mal que les femmes avaient fait à sa race, de la rancune amassée de mâle en mâle, depuis la première tromperie au fond des cavernes? Et il sentait aussi, dans son accès, une nécessité de bataille pour conquérir la femelle et la dompter, le besoin perverti de la jeter morte sur son dos, ainsi qu'une proie qu'on arrache aux autres, à jamais. " 1)

Jacques hopes for a moment that his projected murder of Roubaud might cure him of his obsession which is attended by horrific images:

" Guéri, mon Dieu! ne plus avoir ce frisson du sang, pouvoir posséder Séverine, sans cet éveil farouche de l'ancien mâle, emportant à son cou les femelles éventrées. " 2)

Not all of Zola's masculine exploiters of the opposite sex are as violent as Jacques Lantier. None of the examples quoted can seriously be regarded as a Romantic 'Fatal Man'. However, consideration of such characters at the same time as the demonic women to be found in the novels, helps to establish the sex-war which underlies the society Zola created, and shows that at different times both sexes were responsible for waging it.

One can also find other elements, mentioned by Praz as typical of an excessive form of Romantic literature, in Zola's novels. These elements normally take the form of perverse, sexual activities.

Praz remarks, for example, that incest gave some Romantics a fascinating spice for love, which at times led them to ennoble it. The incestuous relationship between Maxime and Renée in La Curée is used to portray the excessive perversion of Parisian high society; it is not treated sympathetically, and leads only to ruin and death. Incest only exalts the frenzied Renée, who, in search of excitement to fill the void in her

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1) La Bête Humaine. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 1044. 2) Ibid. p. 1235.



being, finds that the forbidden fruit of incest alone has sufficient intensity. For Palmyre and her cretin brother Hilarion in La Terre incest provides their only refuge in an extremely hostile world. The unfortunate pair seek tenderness and affection in each other, but incest is here treated neither attractively nor with fascination. One might have expected it to be dealt with at least sympathetically in the story of Pascal and Clotilde, but here so little mention is made of family ties, although they are not glossed over by the author, that one can easily forget that the relationship is an incestuous one. \* age.

Lesbianism, which provided similar titillation for some Romantics, can also be found in Zola's works. Nana's involvement with Satin allows Zola to show how much she despises men, and gives her greater scope for cruelty, since she can spurn their offers and advances to return to the other woman instead. \* In La Curée two lesbians are treated with some ridicule, both by Maxime and the author. For the performance of the 'Amours du beau Narcisse et de la nymphe Echo', the Marquise d'Espagnet insists on having a long costume to hide her large feet, (presumably because they are too masculine) and Mme. Haffner dreams of wearing an animal skin (for opposite reasons?). This relationship, which throughout is only alluded to, and usually in mocking terms, adds a scabrous detail to the picture of a corrupt society.

Praz says of the Romantics he was studying:

"It was the fashion, then, to affect a real, genuine taste for such beauty as was threatened with disease or actually decaying." 1)

Nana, who dies of small-pox as the crowds outside chant "A Berlin. A Berlin." is far from beautiful in her horrid, putrid end. She is a symbol that vice is punished as it was

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1) Mario Praz. The Romantic Agony.p.58.

not for Sade and his followers. Her death is not designed to give an air of morality to an otherwise licentious work. The putrescent Nana is a symbol of a France rotten with perversion and excessive appetites, and fast approaching disaster.

There is some trace in Zola of the active pursuit of vice for its own sake. Claude's attraction to Laurence in La Confession de Claude is increased by the excitement of vice. The young hero feels disgust for Laurence, but at the same time she has a strong hold over him, " Il y a une joie malsaine à se dire qu'on est dans la fange, qu'on y est bien, et qu'on y reste. " 1) Here Claude is revelling in the bitter-sweetness of dirt; Laurence has brought him to her level, and he feels a fascination for his tainted tormentor, " J'embrasse cette femme avec d'autant plus d'emporement qu'elle est plus vile et plus souillée." 2) If Zola is here speaking through his character he must at least have experienced the fascination some Romantics felt for the repulsive. Lapp, too, remarked on this aspect of Claude's feelings, " His repugnance yields rapidly to fascination, and the signs of depravity form an essential ingredient of this emotion." 3) But Zola's other great vice-seeker, Maxime, is not treated sympathetically. A taste for vice is awakened in him at an early age, and is accentuated in the circles where Renée leads him, but his perverted fun-seeking is shown, not as a positive action, but as the result of heredity and environmental influences which he can not control, " Le vice chez lui n'était pas un abîme, comme chez certains vieillards, mais une floraison naturelle et extérieure." 4)

Praz notes that the victims of the 'Femme Fatale' revel in their abjection, and gain masochistic pleasure from their torment.

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- 1) La Confession de Claude. B.C. Pp.152-3. 2) Ibid. p.153.  
 3) J.C.Lapp. Zola before the Rougon-Macquart. p.51.  
 4) La Curée. R.M. Vol.1. p.425.

The characters in Zola's works who receive harsh treatment from a member of the opposite sex, whether male or female, often find some masochistic thrill in the experience of pain. In describing the effects of his love for Laurence, Claude establishes a direct analogy with monks and flagellation: \*  
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" Je la presse entre mes bras comme un cilice qui me met en sang, qui me donne une volupté amère. Elle me déchire; et je l'aime. Je l'aime pour toutes les pointes qu'elle fait entrer dans ma chair, j'éprouve l'extase douloureuse de ces moines qui mouraient sous les verges dont il se frappaient eux-mêmes: " 1)

Guillaume in Madeleine Férat delights in a form of mental masochism. He is curious about Madeleine's past involvements, imagining that others have loved her before. Such thoughts torture him, but he still questions her, knowing that her answers will probably inflict the pain he seeks. Masochism plays a large part in Marthe Mouret's religious devotion, which is closely linked to her infatuation with Faujas. She enjoys being reprimanded and treated harshly by the priest. On a Good Friday she is plunged into a fainting rêverie in which she too thinks she is being beaten, " Elle rêvait qu'on la battait de verges, que le sang coulait de ses membres. 2) In its detail her masochism has close religious identification, for she feels also that she is made to wear a crown of thorns. Muffat, too, comes to enjoy being made to act as an animal, asking Nana to increase the force of the blows she inflicts, " Tape plus fort.. Hou! Hou! je suis enragé, tape donc! 3)

Are we also to see traces of vampirism in Zola? On this subject Praz informs us that, " A love-crime becomes an integral part of vampirism, though often in forms so far removed as to obscure the inner sense of the gruesome legend." 4) Passion and \*

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1) La Confession de Claude. B.C. Pp. 268-9. 2) La Conquête de Plassans. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 1107. 3) Nana. R.M. Vol. 2. p. 1461.  
4) Mario Praz. The Romantic Agony. p. 95.

murder are closely connected in Thérèse Raquin, in which there exists a very watered-down form of vampire activity. The scar left on Laurent's neck by Camille's teeth at the moment of his murder exerts a great attraction on Thérèse. When the surviving couple try to rekindle their old desire her lips go for the scar:

" Thérèse, affolée, revint, voulut baiser encore la cicatrice; elle éprouvait une volupté âcre à poser sa bouche sur cette peau où s'étaient enfoncées les dents de Camille. " 1)

As time goes by their relationship deteriorates; when Laurent treats Thérèse roughly, she flies for the tender spot to bite it and impose physical pain, and a moral one too, since the scar always reminds Laurent of his crime. In the highly dramatic ending, when both take the prussic acid Laurent has prepared, Thérèse's mouth, in death, fastens like a leech on the unhealed sore. Thérèse is, of course, not a vampire in that she wants to suck Laurent's blood, but her action provides one way of reminding them both of the murder they have committed, their remorse and the self-torment this causes them to inflict are given a powerful and ghoulish expression.

In the interests of melodrama, Zola uses a similar incident in the finale of La Conquête de Plassans. François Mouret returns from the asylum to exact vengeance on Faujas, by setting fire to his own house with the priest inside it. Mme. Faujas tries to carry her son out of the conflagration on her back, but the madman jumps onto the priest and drags him into the fire," Et il roula avec le corps le long des marches embrasées; pendant que Mme. Faujas, qui lui avait enfoncé les dents en pleine gorge, buvait son sang." 2) This episode is a dramatic part of a similar ending, but it serves to heighten the horror and also to emphasise the animal-like, instinctive devotion which Mme. Faujas consistently showed for her son.

Vice, perversions and strange practices can all be found

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1) Thérèse Raquin. B.C. p.207.

2) La Conquête de Plassans. R.M. Vol.1. p.1200.

in Zola's works; the very extent of such subject-matter has often led him to be classed as a pornographic writer. A willingness to portray such aberrations does not necessarily indicate a fascination with them or a wish to glorify them on Zola's part, either to express his own literary preference or even from purely commercial motives. They are used to heighten the drama of a work, or to complete the background to the vice ridden society which was Zola's chief 'character'.

Zola has definite affinities with the literary tradition described by Praz in The Romantic Agony. Of Zola the critic wrote:

" Even Zola, as early as 1866, had said, ( Praz quotes from Zola's Mes Haines ) ' Mon goût, si l'on veut, est dépravé. J'aime les ragouùts littéraires fortement épicés, les œuvres de décadence où une sorte de sensibilité malade remplace la santé plantureuse des époques classiques! " 1)

The 'even' with which Praz introduces this remark, is significant, since it shows that he definitely believed Zola to be outside the main current of the type of literature he was studying. This is the viewpoint which it is probably wisest to adopt. Zola chose at times to use the same conventions, but for his own ends, not for their own sake, and rarely with the same intensity. The Romantic search for pleasure in vice and pain, the sickly fascination with, and ennoblement of evil is calculated. Zola's portrayals of rape, murder, incest, patricide and other horrors are uncalculated vices, since according to his basic prémisses, evil is only the result of social and physical factors. Nevertheless, use of a Romantic convention remains an important feature of Zola's treatment of the relations between the sexes. With reference to this part of his works, to observation and imagination, might be added judicious borrowing from contemporary culture, as a source of inspiration.

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1) Mario Praz. The Romantic Agony. p.344.

CHAPTER IV : RELATIONSHIPS AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

1. Zola's Late Views on Sex.

The whole of Zola's work bears the marks of sexual preoccupation. At times his treatment of sexual matters seems to vary, his attitude to the erotic instinct remains equivocal, a state of affairs which has given rise to conflicting opinions from different critics. Henri Guillemin, who has done more than any other critic to establish Zola's uncertainty on sexual matters, refers to the interesting nature of the problem, " Zola n'est pas un charnel. Et il y aurait même une bien curieuse étude à faire sur Zola et la sexualité." 1)

In an examination of Zola's attitude towards sex it is perhaps easiest to start at the end by discussing the views he adopted in later life, for they were more straightforward and consistent than his early opinions. La Revue Blanche conducted an enquiry into the subject of 'Tolstoi et la question sexuelle'. Various celebrities were asked to reply to Tolstoy's views that chastity was man's ideal state, that marriage could not be considered beneficial, that it was unchristian, that the troubles of society were caused by the power invested in women from whom man should emancipate himself. The replies to these ideas, including Zola's, were published in La Revue Blanche on the 1st March 1902. 2) His answers constitute an attitude towards women and sex which he consistently adopted in late novels.

First and foremost Zola is anti-christian in his views on sex; it is this religion which has perverted the natural, sexual instinct and fostered the twisted views of it which

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1) Henri Guillemin. Zola, Légende et Vérité? p.58.

2) This interview has been reproduced in Les Cahiers Naturalistes No.20.1962.Pp.171-3, under the title 'Zola et la Question Sexuelle.' It is from this that I quote.

afflict society, " Léon Tolstoy se base sur l'Évangile, qui nous étouffe depuis dix-huit siècles" 1). Zola regards Christ as a man of perverted values, the spokesman for unnatural non-procreation, " Jésus n'a ni patrie, ni propriété, ni profession, ni famille, ni femme, ni enfant, - il est l'infécondité même". 2)

Christianity mistakenly recommended and revered chastity, and Tolstoy in turn was misguided in exalting it, "... cette chasteté est l'arrêt de l'évolution. Un être est fait pour enchaîner un être". 3) Chastity in man is an attempt to deny passion and desire which, far from being shameful, are the motive forces behind the world's continuing evolution. Virginity should be merely regarded as a period of waiting prior to production. " La virginité n'est qu'un état d'attente; le bouton fait présager l'éclosion de la fleur, l'épanouissement prochain, le fruit éclatant ... et le nouvel être qui sera à son tour un recommencement". 4) Human happiness is only to be found in the creation of human life, " Le bonheur qui est, après tout et pour tous, l'idéal, doit être la fonction à accomplir - et l'enfantement, qui est la fonction naturelle, est le bonheur". 5) As a logical extension to these views, Zola would like to see a cult of the mother substituted for the Christian cult of the Virgin, " L'idéal n'est pas dans la Vierge, mais dans la Mère .... C'est la Mère qui est répandue, divinisée, et c'est Elle, couvant, allaitant, gardant d'un soin jaloux l'Enfant, qui sourit à notre rêve". 6)

This short article gives a concise picture of the principles which Zola adopted to control the relations between the sexes in the ideal world of his late novels. He despised chastity,

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1) Zola et la Question Sexuelle. L.C.N. 1962. p. 171

2) Ibid. p. 172. 3) Ibid. p. 171 4) Ibid. p. 172

5) Ibid. p. 172. 6) Ibid. p. 171.

virginity and any attempt at birth-control; he exalted the creation of human life and the Mother-figure who nurtured such life, and at the same time he rated the Catholic religion, which in many cases recommended exactly the opposite. He had never expressed these ideas with such power and vehemence in the Rougon-Macquart series, although they may have been latent within him. His novels also quite suddenly lose their erotic intensity. Hemmings sees the change take place with the publication of L'Argent. This critic indicates the way in which the childless heroine, Mme. Caroline, often makes a comparison between the conception of a child and the success of financial moves, which allows Zola to underline the creative urge which should be the motivating factor behind all sexual activity. 1) Hemmings is surely right in maintaining that the conferring of a new dignity on the sexual urge can not be divorced from Zola's affair with Jeanne Rozerot and the birth of their daughter Denise.

In Le Docteur Pascal Zola's late views on sex receive clear expression. In this novel is to be found the first of many affirmations that sexual love has no meaning if it is not intended to be creative. Later, in Fécondité Zola devoted the whole of a rambling novel to this subject. The love between Clotilde and Pascal is an act of life, of faith in life, and of participation in creation, which, whilst it may provide unbounded pleasure, is not directed towards the delights of the flesh, but to furtherance of the species. Clotilde, although she is described as beautiful and a source of rejuvenation for Pascal through her gift to him of her youthful body, is exalted more as the woman who gives Pascal an heir, than as a dispenser of pleasure. Maternity is extolled before erotic pleasure. It is almost as if Zola saw the only expiation for carnal appetite

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1) F.W.J.Hemmings. Emile Zola. p.227.



in the fact of procreation, which may have neutralized the ugliness he earlier saw as inherent in sexual practices.

Zola does not condemn lust as sinful in the religious sense that it turns people away from God, but as an unnatural rejection of the laws of the human condition. In Le Docteur Pascal Zola insists from the outset of their union on the couple's desire for children, " Au bout de chacun de ses ( Clotilde's ) baisers, se trouvait la pensée de l'enfant; car tout amour qui n'avait pas l'enfant pour but, lui semblait inutile et vilain." 1) Sex for her is meaningless without the hope of fertility and the satisfaction of joining in with nature's great design. She becomes impatient with the authors of the world's great novels, most of which treat love as a means to physical pleasure only. Clotilde also becomes the first in a series of ideal women portrayed in the late novels.

The influence of his affair with Jeanne Rozerot, and the children she bore him, on the ideas Zola included in his late novels, remained strong and consistent until death stopped his artistic production. After Le Docteur Pascal he built up his ideas received from this great experience of his life, into a vision of an ideal society diametrically opposed to a Catholic-based one. His ideas on the proper nature of human relationships become violently anti-Christian.

Virginity, which had once been a source of some mystery and charm for him, is now an unnatural, pitiful condition. In Lourdes Zola constructed a novel around the materialist industry, which flourished in the spa city by capitalising on a young girl's vision of the Virgin Mary. He takes the opportunity to criticise the sterility of the cult of the Virgin, on which Catholicism in general, and the prosperity of Lourdes in particular, is founded. Such a cult is regarded as a denial

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1) Le Docteur Pascal.R.M.Vol.5.p.1086.

of woman's true role in life:

" Décréter que la femme n'est digne d'un culte qu'à la condition d'être vierge, en imaginer une qui reste vierge en devenant mère, qui elle-même est née sans tache, n'est-ce pas la nature bafouée, la vie condamnée, la femme niée, jetée à la perversion, elle qui n'est grande que fécondée, perpétuant la vie? " 1)

The young girl who experienced the vision is treated with great pity by Zola as an unfulfilled woman. In the version of the legend given by Pierre Froment, Bernadette regrets in her convent not having enjoyed an ordinary life, with a husband and children. The exploited, figure-head of a legend which has become ecclesiastical big business is forcibly resigned to claustration, sterility and death. The conclusion to Lourdes seeks to draw a lesson from her pitiable condition:

" Là-bas, Bernadette, le nouveau Messie de la souffrance, si touchante dans sa réalité humaine, est la leçon terrible, l'holocauste retranché du monde, la victime condamnée à l'abandon, à la solitude et à la mort, frappée de la déchéance de n'avoir pas été femme, ni épouse ni mère, parce qu'elle avait vu la sainte Vierge." 2)

Pierre Froment's loss of faith is complete after his experiences in Lourdes and Rome. In Paris Zola brings him to the logical end of his rejection of Catholicism, by marrying him to a healthy, young girl who bears him fine children, thus rehabilitating him to life by his acceptance of natural instincts. His rejection of Christianity means an acceptance of woman and creation as he explains to l'Abbé Rose:

" Jésus est destructeur de tout ordre, de tout travail, de toute vie. Il a nié la femme et la terre, l'éternelle nature, l'éternelle fécondité des choses et des êtres. " 3)

In Fécondité the cult of the Mother is substituted for the cult of the Virgin, and triumphs over it. The novel, in which Zola's avowed intention was to make the fertile woman aesthetic,

1) Lourdes. B.C. Vol. 2. p. 285. 2) Ibid. p. 296.

3) Paris. O.C. Vol. 7. pp. 1442-3.

is built up around a form of combat in which the defenders of fertility are ranged against its attackers. Nature takes terrible revenge on all who refuse to propagate the human species.

The novel opens with Mathieu and Marianne, the proud parents of four children after seven years of marriage. Under the influence of opinions rife in the rest of society and of a precarious financial situation, Mathieu is for one brief period tempted to be 'cautious', to limit the further growth of his family. But his desire to be forever creating life re-asserts itself and more and more children are born in regular succession. The children bind the two partners together into a strong union based on love, which does not diminish with the years. The Froments' resolve to be fruitful is richly rewarded; their willingness to obey what Zola considers as the proper rules of sexual behaviour is handsomely repaid by a fine family, solid prosperity, and strength is found in close-knit family solidarity. Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum has shown how, in this work in particular, woman is sanctified, for it is she, who by fertility and constructive love regenerates humanity. Marianne is a life-dispenser whose happiness is increased by the birth of each new child, and for whom fertility is a pre-requisite to satisfaction.

In order to contrast sharply with Mathieu and Marianne, the rest of society is portrayed as perverse and rotten. Other couples in the novel are given all kinds of intellectual and material reasons for espousing sterility, but their search for pleasure for pleasure's sake alone is treated with great scorn and a merciless fate. Techniques for preventing conception are viewed as obscenities and the cause of all family, social and moral disasters. In Pot-Bouille a family which had tried to ensure that no more children would be born had been treated in a comic fashion when offspring regularly appeared, but the fate of all who cheat nature in Fécondité

for carnal pleasure or reasons of interest is deadly serious. Morange's wife dies as a result of an abortion and his beloved daughter Reine suffers a similar fate after undergoing a sterilising operation. Even when women survive such an operation and lose their capacity to become mothers, Zola has them turned into prematurely aged, sexless monsters such as Euphrasie Moineaud. Sérafine, la Baronne de Lowicz, undergoes an operation so that she can take her pleasure without incurring the risk of having children, but ironically the operation removes her capacity for pleasure and she ends up in a straight-jacket, maddened by the non-satisfaction of her sensual appetites. All attempts at controlling either the size of a family or the time at which children are born, for whatever reason, meet with utter failure. The Beauchêne take precautions to ensure that their beloved son Maurice will not have to share his inheritance but their plans are thwarted by his death which occurs when they are no longer capable of having children, and the loss of this only son turns Constance Beauchêne to ignoble crimes of jealousy against the Froments, who for her, are usurping the position originally reserved for Maurice to inherit.

Zola completely rejected the use of contraceptive techniques as a legitimate human activity. His ideas were no doubt influenced by the concern which the French birth-rate was causing at the time of writing. He clearly never imagined the problem that could arise from behaviour such as the Froments', even in Western Europe, " Est-ce qu'il y aura jamais trop de vie? " 1) he asks in Fécondité. An affirmative answer, such as most people would be empowered to give only half-a century later, would probably have surprised Zola. Less than a decade

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1) Fécondité. O.C. Vol. 8. p. 75.

later Lepelletier could see that the views of the author of Fécondité were misdirected," Dans la réalité, dans les conditions présentes de la production....la fécondité est plutôt funeste, c'est comme une maladie pour l'individu, et c'est bien près d'être un fléau pour la collectivité." 1) Lepelletier excuses his views as motivated by a belated paternity,"..il ne faut envisager le livre de Fécondité que comme la rêverie optimiste d'un écrivain humanitaire, influencé par la satisfaction d'une paternité effective et récente." 2) The puritanical conclusions which Zola finally arrived at on the question of sex with the insistence that sex used for purely personal pleasure is an illegitimate human practice, do not allow us to regard him as a forerunner of the twentieth century 'liberators of the erotic instinct' as some critics have tried to suggest. A consideration of Zola's early views will only convince us that this is true.

## 2. Male Brutality and Possessiveness

The central idea that sexual indulgence when not linked to a creative urge is wrong, is not to be found in works prior to L'Argent. The sexual activities described in the Rougon-Macquart series are mostly distasteful, destructive and brutal, but they are not specifically portrayed as sins against nature. Catherine Maheu in Germinal, does feel that sex is wrong, if there is no risk of conception, but her plaintive cry," On a une excuse encore, lorsqu'on peut faire un enfant." 3) is more self-pity at her misfortune in being initiated into a full sex-life before the onset of puberty gives her even the possibility of conceiving, than condemnation of her own or Chaval's behaviour.

Zola's descriptions of carnal love often reveal an air of

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1) E.Lepelletier. op.cit. Pp.446-7. 2) Ibid.p.450.  
3) Germinal.R.M.Vol.3.p.1489.

disquiet and foreboding which has led a critic such as Henri Guillemin to question Zola's attitude towards the erotic instinct. Wilson, too, believes that the greatest novels are founded on the conviction that sex is accompanied only by sterility and death. A reading of the principal novels suffices to give a strong impression that the animality of man is most apparent in sexual matters, for it is above all in this realm that blind, brutal forces come to the fore, especially in the male of the species. Zola's male is usually the superior partner in love-making, and the majority of his characters accentuate their dominance by excessive brutality. The female characters are less daring and aggressive than the men. Woman, for Zola, as the female of the species, is, apart from a few notable exceptions, the acquiescent partner to the dominant male.

The sexual instinct is perhaps the strongest force felt by Zola's male, and violence dominates descriptions of the sex act when the full power of the urge manifests itself. Thérèse Raquin is portrayed as a woman whose sensuality is aroused by an extremely virile man such as Laurent. She plays her full part in their passionate affair prior to Camille's murder, but Laurent's brutality assures his dominance. On the first occasion the couple are left alone, their love-making is described as follows:

" Puis, d'un mouvement violent, Laurent se baissa et prit la jeune femme contre sa poitrine. Il lui renversa la tête, lui écrasant les lèvres sous les siennes. Elle eut un mouvement de révolte, sauvage, emportée, et, tout d'un coup, elle s'abandonna, glissant par terre, sur le carreau. Ils n'échangèrent pas une seule parole. L'acte fut silencieux et brutal." 1)

More often than not, descriptions of love-making more closely resemble rape than any attempt to share a common source of pleasure. Eugène Rougon's efforts to seduce Clorinde Balbi are purely an attempt at violation:

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1) Thérèse Raquin. B.C.p. 53.

" Rougon, affolé, effrayant, la face pourpre, se ruait avec un souffle haletant de taureau échappé. Elle-même, heureuse de taper sur cet homme, avait dans les yeux une lueur de cruauté qui s'allumait." 1)

Clorinde's self-defence constitutes one of the few occasions on which Zola's women do not submit to the physical strength of man. The parallel drawn between Rougon and a bull is very apt in rendering man's power when sexually aroused, and is a comparison the author often made in such contexts. The unsuccessful rape also takes place in a stable and the human actions carried out in close proximity of the beasts can easily be compared to those of the animal species.

Even Muffat, who is for the most part dominated by Nana, can at times fleetingly reassert his masculinity in a fit of violence, " Il prit Nana à bras-le-corps, dans un élan de brutalité, et la jeta sur le tapis." 2)

The lady-killer Octave Mouret is violent in some of his sexual conquests. Marie Pichon has just finished reading a novel by Sand, lent to her by Mouret, and she kisses him, whereupon he is roused and possesses her brutally on the spot:

" Comme elle refusait de le suivre dans la chambre, il la renversa brutalement au bord de la table; et elle se soumit, il la posséda, entre l'assiette oubliée et le roman, qu'une secousse fit tomber par terre." 3).

The usual ingredients of sexual relations portrayed by Zola are contained in this scene; man's violence in possession, woman's resignation in submission. The same is true of Mouret's relations with Berthe Vabre. One day, after a violent quarrel between Berthe and her husband, the young woman locks herself in her room. The weak husband suggests that Octave should go to pacify his wife. Locked in the room together, the circumstances are right for adultery, and once Octave's desire is

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1) Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. R.M. Vol. 2. p. 118.

2) Nana. R.M. Vol. 2. p. 1271.

3) Pot-Bouille. R.M. Vol. 3. p. 76.

roused the act takes place in a familiar manner:

" Mais il l'empoigna, la jeta sur le lit qu'elle venait d'ouvrir; et, dans son désir contenté, toute sa brutalité reparut, le dédain féroce qu'il avait de la femme, sous son air d'adoration câline. Elle, silencieuse, le subit sans bonheur. Quand elle se releva, les poignets cassés, la face contractée par une souffrance, tout son mépris de l'homme était remonté dans le regard noir qu'elle lui jeta. " 1)

Again, most of the elements of Zola's portrayal of sex are much in evidence here. The brutal male, a selfish lover, is content to satisfy his strong desire as violently and as quickly as possible. No attempt is made to incorporate the woman into his pleasure and she is left to submit without enjoyment. Furthermore, the disappointment she receives from such relations accentuates woman's antagonism towards her male tormentor.

Predictably, the violence of passion is stressed in La Bête Humaine, where brute instincts are the principal motivators of all human conduct. The short episode between Jacques Lantier and the strange Amazon-figure, Flore, is an interesting one. Flore disdains men, and leads a wild, masculine type of existence. She is amazingly strong, and her unusual behaviour for a woman, leads her to be regarded as an oddity by people of the neighbourhood. However, she nourishes a strong affection for Jacques. On the same evening that Jacques becomes an accidental witness to Grandmorin's murder, he tries to possess Flore. His efforts are familiarly brutal, " Il l'avait saisie d'une étreinte brutale, et il écrasait sa bouche sur la sienne." 2) Flore does not submit immediately; her scorn for men and defence of her virtue make her struggle instinctively, but her feelings for Jacques at the same time make her want to succumb. The preliminaries to sex become a struggle between two animals locked in a fight for domination, which Jacques wins by increasing his violence. He rips open her clothes, exposing her

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1) Ibid.p.245. 2) La Bête Humaine.R.M.Vol.4.p.1041.



breasts and Flore sinks to an inferior position, ready to submit, " Et elle s'abattit sur le dos, elle se donnait, vaincue." 1) At the last moment, however, Jacques feels a resurgence of his homicidal urges, when faced with Flore's bared flesh, and flees without profiting from his victory.

Examples of male brutality in the sexual field abound in Zola's novels. Women as dominant partners in a sexual union are extremely rare. The 'Fatal Women' subjugate their male victims in most circumstances and the power they wield stems mostly from their sexual attractiveness, but they too, at times, have to bow to the masculine principle of strength and force. Perhaps only in the relationship between Renée and Maxime are the positions in every sense reversed. It is also very unusual for a female to take any initiative in preliminaries to sexual activity. In La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, however, circumstances necessitate it, since Serge Mouret, until his visit to the garden of Paradou, is dead as a man. It is Albine who is called upon to play the active role in Serge's initiation into the ways of nature and love. Albine finds the long-lost arbour, the shaded place of perfect love, and it is here that all inhibitions are finally lost and the two taste the wonders of love. But in order to get him to the clearing at all, Albine has to offer herself completely to him, and when the act itself takes place, the proper roles are adopted, possession by the man, submission by the woman, " Albine se livra. Serge la posséda." 2) By mere indulgence in the sex act Serge has recaptured the superior masculine role, as is fitting, now that he is once more a man in every sense. The situation of Thérèse Raquin, where a man has to rouse a woman's latent sensuality, is reversed in this novel, but once it has been reawakened, the male reasserts his superiority.

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1) Ibid.p.1041. 2) La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret.R.M.Vol.1.p.1409.

Apart from being brutal, Zola's men tend also to be highly possessive in their attitude towards women. Their possessiveness is selfish since they often demand the male privilege of indulgence in countless affairs, but retain the idea that women should remain faithful. When fidelity is not heeded by the woman they often become the prey to fits of jealousy. When the old hag Pâquerette tells the hero of La Confession de Claude that his friend Jacques is betraying him with Laurence, Claude is overcome by a powerful feeling of jealousy, which manifests itself as a disorder in his complete being. Future evocations of the same emotion in later novels reveal the same intensity. Hennebeau's discovery of his wife's adultery in Germinal causes him agony and he envies the starving miners for the brutal nature of their love-lives.

The violent opening scenes of La Bête Humaine, which foreshadow the brutality of later episodes, are caused by Roubaud's jealous possessiveness. When he discovers that his wife Séverine had slept with her former benefactor, the Président Grandmorin, he loses all self-control and resolves to murder Grandmorin. The novel thus opens with a death caused by male jealousy; it ends with one too, for Pecqueux, the fireman, who has gaily led a profligate existence, starts a fight with the train-driver Jacques Lantier on the foot-plate of their engine, when his anger is aroused by Jacques' apparent interest in his woman, Philomène. The struggle ends with both men falling to a horrific death from the speeding locomotive. In the same novel the hero's murderous tendencies towards women are also due in part to the desire he feels to be possessive. Woman to him is, "une proie qu'on arrache aux autres, à jamais." 1) Murder of a woman is thus a perverted way for Jacques of ensuring that she can belong to no other man. Consequently, when

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1) La Bête Humaine. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 1044.

he has killed Séverine he reflects that, " Elle n'était plus, elle ne serait jamais plus à personne." 1)

In L'Argent male possessiveness is treated a little comically in an episode involving Delcambre. For two hundred francs Clarisse the maid arranges for Delcambre to catch the Baronne Sandorff and Aristide Saccard in a compromising situation in a room which he, Delcambre, pays for to 'entertain' the Baronne. Thus Delcambre is not only being betrayed by the woman's infidelity, he is also being abused and ridiculed. As he lies in wait in an adjoining room to surprise the miscreants, he is described thus:

" Le furieux mâle, aux appétits d'ogre, qu'il y avait en lui, caché derrière la glaciale sévérité de son masque professionnel commençait à gronder sourdement, irrité de cette chair qu'on lui volait. " 2)

It would be wrong to suggest that all of Zola's male characters feel the same strong need for complete and unshared sexual possession. Some of them, indeed, reveal the most blatant indifference in sanctioning the faithlessness of their partners. However, sufficient examples exist to maintain that Zola felt possessiveness, closely allied with brutality, to be an important factor in the male attitude to sex. In contrast, women are often depicted as indifferent to infidelity, as willing and able to share a man.

Mme. Caroline in L'Argent is one such indulgent woman. She is hurt by the discovery of Saccard's affair with the Baronne Sandorff, but overcomes her jealousy, continuing to love Saccard for his activity and energy. In L'Œuvre Christine, who is deeply in love with Claude Lantier, pardons his indiscretion with Irma Bécot. Pecqueux in La Bête Humaine is always at the centre of a strange domestic situation, having a woman at each end of the Paris-Le Havre railway line. Neither of these women feels any jealousy; they calmly accept the situation, and

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1) Ibid.p.1298. 2) L'Argent.R.M.Vol.5.p.211.

carry their complicity as far as wanting to send Pecqueux clean and tidy to the rival at the other end of the line. In Rome the same acceptance of male profligacy is shown in Italian society. Benedetta is in love with her cousin Dario, but is already married to Count Prada, with whom she has refused sexual contact in the hope of giving herself to Dario in a virginal state. A complicated law-suit is taking place in an attempt to have the marriage annulled. While they wait Dario's honour demands that he has a succession of mistresses, which is accepted by Benedetta with equanimity. She explains her indulgent attitude to the Abbé Froment, who has witnessed Dario trying to take his cousin by force:

" Mon pauvre Dario, qu'il aille en voir une autre, je le lui permets..il ne faut point demander l'impossible à un homme, et je ne veux pas qu'il en meure. " 1)

The different standards of sexual conduct for the two sexes is well expressed by Benedetta, who sets inestimable store by virginity before marriage, but can accept Dario's busy sex life as part of the natural roles of the sexes. The law-suit to annul Benedetta's marriage also reveals a society which considers female submission as a basic ingredient of sexual practice. Benedetta pleads that the marriage has not been consummated, to which the Count's defence replies:

"..si même la demanderesse faisait la preuve complète de sa virginité, il n'en demeurerait pas moins certain que son refus seul avait empêché la consommation du mariage, la condition foncière de l'acte étant l'obéissance de la femme." 2)

Woman's lack of possessiveness means fewer women who feel violently jealous. Christine in L'Œuvre does become enraged at the power which the woman Claude tries to paint, manages to wield on her husband. Flore's jealousy in La Bête Humaine is as violent as any man's, but this is perhaps predictable from the virile nature of her character. To calm the jealousy she feels

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1) Rome.O.C.Vol.7.p.683. 2) Ibid.p.657.

whenever she sees Jacques and Séverine together, she arranges for the train on which the two lovers are travelling, to be sabotaged, but the massacre is in vain since both survive. Most other female characters either stifle their jealousy or exorcise it by more indirect means. X

The many instances of male brutality and possessiveness in sexual affairs do not give a very sympathetic portrayal of masculine behaviour, but Zola seems to believe that such characteristics are the right and proper ones for the male. It is only when abused that they become criminal. Male superiority is seen as the source of his strength and his ability to control women. The tale Pour une nuit d'amour deals with the sado-masochistic love of Thérèse de Marsanne and Colombel. For years she is a typical 'Fatal Woman', inflicting pain on Colombel who accepts his torture. One day she rides Colombel like a horse, whipping and abusing him until the horse revolts, throws its rider and rapes her. Things are immediately different; at last the man gains mastery over the woman, " Là, il la jeta par terre, et il la viola sur de la paille. Enfin, son tour était venu d'être le maître." 1) It is through brutal, sexual conquest that the male attains his superiority, and when Thérèse tries to regain her empire over Colombel, he violates her again to retain it.

Zola also shows that a male loss of the possessive instinct brings the disintegration of his own character and the creation of a state of imbalance in the social structure. Lantier's acceptance into the Coupeau household in L'Assommoir is one cause of the family's degradation. When the ex-lover comes to look in through the window during Gervaise's birthday feast, Coupeau is furious and wants to go after Lantier with a knife. The guests succeed in relieving him of his weapon, but an argument between the two men is started. However, Coupeau is

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1) Pour une nuit d'amour. O.C. Vol. 9. p. 601.

replete with wine and food, and in this time for softness, the rivals end up chatting amicably, and it is Coupeau who invites Lantier into his home to take a glass of wine with him. Alcohol has undermined his personality and masculinity to this extent already, but things get worse. Coupeau is forever pushing his wife and her ex-lover together. When they all go out on Sundays, Coupeau makes Gervaise and Lantier walk together to confound any rumours that might be circulating on their account, by showing that he has complete trust in them. Coupeau is directly responsible for the 'fall' when it occurs. He goes off on a 'crawl' lasting several days. Lantier takes Gervaise to a 'café-concert', and they return to find that the husband has vomited, and is lying in the resultant mess on the bed. Lantier suggests that Gervaise sleeps with him. Coupeau, who has been responsible for the growing intimacy between Lantier and Gervaise, has crowned all his actions by making it physically impossible for his wife to sleep in her own bed. At first Gervaise refuses Lantier's suggestions, but he presses her, and kisses her on the ear, as he used to, and she gives in, justifiably putting the blame on Coupeau:

" Tant pis, bégayait-elle, c'est sa faute, je ne puis pas.. Ah! mon Dieu! ah! mon Dieu! il me renvoie de mon lit, je n'ai plus de lit..Non, je ne puis pas, c'est sa faute. " 1)

In this novel more blame is placed on the male's lack of possessive authority for the triangle situation and the social and family disruption it causes, than on physiological fatality as in Madeleine Férat.

In La Bête Humaine the insistence is on the disintegration of the male personality which sexual indifference brings. After the murder of Grandmorin, Roubaud sends Séverine to seek the protection of M.Camy-Lamotte with her charms, and forces her to

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1) L'Assommoir.R.M.Vol.2.p.632.

try to get Jacques Lantier into her power to make sure he does not betray the fact that they are murderers. It is ironic that Roubaud, in order to cover a crime committed to avenge his wife's infidelity, has to use Séverine in a role which is only likely to lead to further adultery, which inevitably occurs. Roubaud is aware of his wife's liaison with Jacques, but the same man who had once committed murder out of jealousy, disregards it and contents himself with gambling. Séverine recognises his indifference to her lover as a sign of general decadence:

" Elle était devenue toute pâle, car elle aussi avait souvent pensé que, lorsqu'un homme, un jaloux, est ravagé par un mal intérieur, au point de tolérer un amant à sa femme, il y a là l'indice d'une gangrène morale, à marche envahissante, tuant les autres scrupules, désorganisant la conscience entière." 1)

When Roubaud catches the two lovers 'en flagrant délit' he does and says nothing, and they despise him for his indifference:

" A leur surprise de l'amant trahi, après l'amant assassiné, succédait un dégoût pour le mari complaisant. Quand un homme en arrive là, il est dans la boue, il peut rouler à tous les ruisseaux. " 2)

The physical and moral decline which follows Roubaud's crime is most apparent in the lack of faith he tolerates in his wife. Of his decadence, Martin Kanes remarks, " The bottom of his downward path is reached when he discovers and shrugs off, Séverine's liaison with Jacques." 3)

Aristide Saccard's lack of interest in his wife's activities is a cause of the incestuous union and the break up of family ties described in La Curée. Aristide is so exclusively engaged in financial affairs that, from the arrival of his son in Paris, he is happy to leave him and his wife to their own devices. Left alone in each other's company or tasting the vices of Paris, provides suitable breeding-ground for later incest. Saccard's

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1) La Bête Humaine. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 1221. 2) Ibid. p. 1224.

3) Martin Kanes. Zola's La Bête Humaine. A Study in Literary Creation. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles. 1962. p. 53.

negligence is perhaps excusable at the outset, since he could hardly expect his wife and son to betray him, but his later complicity when he discovers their union is inadmissible. His insatiable need and love of money kills his male possessiveness. When the two lovers are caught in an embrace by Saccard, he acts furiously for an instant as one might expect: x

" Saccard, foudroyé par ce coup suprême qui faisait enfin crier en lui l'époux et le père, n'avancait pas, livide, les brûlant de loin du feu de ses regards. " 1)

He scans the room for a weapon with which to strike the couple, but his eyes light instead on the 'acte de cession' which he has coveted for so long and which Renée has just signed in order to obtain the necessary money to run away with Maxime. Saccard's love of money is aroused, his anger subsides and he is content with giving them a mild rebuke. Even Renée is amazed that her husband has not caused a scene. x

Muffat tries for a time to demand fidelity from Nana. When he first discovers that his trust has been abused, he is furious, but his anger subsides as he is successively betrayed. His final acceptance of all of Nana's affairs portrays vividly the abject state to which she has brought him.

Although male possessiveness often manifests itself in violent outbursts of jealousy, Zola obviously attached importance to it in relations between the sexes. He portrays the sanctioning of sexual liberty by the man as a certain sign of human decadence. x

### 3. Female Submission and Revenge.

In preliminaries to sexual union, in the sex-act itself and in the general organisation of a sexual relationship, the man is usually depicted as the energetic, dominant partner. The examples of affairs in which the roles are reversed, are shown

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1) La Curée. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 570.



either as perverse (La Curée) or as exceptional (La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret). The female partner is largely a submissive one.

In Madeleine Férat we are told that , " Les femmes succombent plus souvent qu'on ne croit, par pitié, par besoin d'être bonnes." 1) Guillaume feels hurt at being offered love in this manner, but in the later novels, where women still for the most part give themselves like alms, the men have no such scruples and are usually interested only in satisfying their own brute desires. Zola often shows as a consequence of woman's submissiveness and the lack of finer feelings in men, that sexual relations provide less pleasure than disappointment for women. This is true even in Une Page d'Amour, where passion is treated with more delicacy than in most of the other novels. Héléne Mouret yields almost accidentally to Deberle and the experience is only disappointing, even though Héléne is in love with the doctor:

" Quand Héléne revint, les pieds nus, chercher ses souliers devant le feu qui se mourait, elle pensait que jamais ils ne s'étaient moins aimés que ce jour-là. " 2)

The dying fire symbolises the end of the sex act and its after effects; for Héléne there is neither joy nor remorse just a mere anti-climax, but for her it seems that sex takes the pleasure out of love.

In Germinal the most violent male is the ferocious miner Chaval, who exploits his physical superiority over the frail Catherine Maheu. Their relations are characterised by familiar brutality from the man and resigned acquiescence from the young girl, but here female submission is depicted as the woman's unavoidable fate, even as a consequence of heredity. From time immemorial man has been destined to possess and woman to be possessed with little pleasure. Zola describes intercourse

1) Madeleine Férat.O.C.Vol.1.p.701.

2) Une Page d'Amour.R.M.Vol.2.p.1024.

between Chaval and Catherine as follows:

" Il l'avait empoignée solidement, il la jetait sous le hangar. Et elle tomba à la renverse sur les vieux cordages, elle cessa de se défendre, subissant le mâle avant l'âge, avec cette soumission héréditaire, qui, dès l'enfance, culbutait en plein vent les filles de sa race. Ses bégaiements effrayés s'éteignirent, on n'entendit plus que le souffle ardent de l'homme. " 1)

Catherine is resigned to the unpleasant, servile part she is forced to play. When the Maheu family is suffering from the privations of the strike, she offers her mother some provisions. In answer to the latter's tirade against her involvement with Chaval and her desertion of the household for this man, Catherine excuses herself with sad resignation:

" C'est lui. Quand il veut, je suis bien forcée de vouloir, n'est-ce pas? parce que, vois-tu, il est le plus fort..Elle se défendait sans révolte, avec la résignation passive des filles qui subissent le mâle de bonne heure. " 2)

The Chaval/ Catherine partnership offers one of the best examples of a couple in which male mastery is total, but rooted in sexual dominance, and female acceptance of an inferior position is equally profound.

Françoise, the peasant girl in La Terre, is in a similar position to Catherine. Her sexual initiation is violent and disappointing. The excessive heat of a harvest day arouses Buteau's desire for his sister-in-law; Françoise resists his powerful advances and they are interrupted by the arrival of Buteau's pregnant wife Lise. Françoise goes off towards the farmhouse only to be called off the road by Jean Macquart who in turn attempts to possess the young girl. This time she does not resist and in a sort of trance she cedes to Jean, but the experience brings her no pleasure," Françoise rouvrit les yeux, sans une parole, sans un mouvement, hébétée. Quoi? c'était déjà fini, elle n'avait pas eu plus de plaisir! " 3)

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1) Germinal.R.M.Vol.3.p.1245. 2) Ibid.p.1331.

3) La Terre.R.M.Vol.4.p.572.

In La Bête Humaine Séverine tastes erotic pleasure in her affair with Jacques Lantier, but in previous involvements with other men she has played the usual submissive role with little enjoyment. At a young age she had been forced to cede to an old man's desires, and then had let herself drift into marriage. Her sex-life with Roubaud is one of acquiescence to his pleasure. At the opening of the novel she unusually resists her husband's advances, but we are told of the normal nature of their relations:

" D'habitude, elle s'abandonnait avec une docilité complaisante.. ..Cela semblait sans plaisir pour elle, mais elle y montrait une mollesse heureuse, un affectueux consentement de son plaisir à lui. " 1)

Séverine's submissive nature is part of her attraction for Jacques. She is the first woman with whom desire to possess does not automatically bring a desire to kill, her submission appeals to his need to dominate, "elle lui apparaissait si femme, toute à l'homme, toujours prête à le subir, pour être heureuse". 2)

In Zola's later novels most of the mother-figures he came to revere are still content to submit to the more active male. When man becomes gentler and more respectful of woman, harmonious, mutually satisfying unions are formed. The onus is thus still on the male to take the initiative in the forging of relationships. One basis of the sex-war lay in the abuse of masculine dominance, since a beneficial change comes over relations between men and women in the ideal society of Travail, where woman escapes from excessive male superiority;

" L'âpre duel de l'homme et de la femme, toutes les questions qui, pendant si longtemps, avaient dressé les deux sexes l'un devant l'autre, en ennemis sauvages, irréconciliables, se trouvaient très facilement résolues par cette solution de la femme libérée en toutes choses, redevenue la compagne libre de l'homme reprenant sa place d'égal et d'indispensable dans

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1) La Bête Humaine. R.M. Vol. 4 p. 1011

2) Ibid. p. 1123

le couple d'amour". 1)

In the Rougon-Macquart novels it is above all through her sexual subservience that woman finds herself in an unenviable position. Woman is not completely without defence, but rarely does self-defence take the form of answering physical brutality with equal violence. A notable exception is to be found in Germinal. The sensual storekeeper, Maigrat, allows credit to miners who send their wives or daughters to him for payment. When the strike causes starvation among the mining community the women usually have to bow to this blackmail, but during a furious riot a band of women attain vengeance by defiling the dead man's corpse in an appropriate manner. Female opposition to male violence is usually more indirect. x

Man attains his superiority and is able to express his virility in the most effective way by means of sexual dominance, but paradoxically sexual involvement often brings about his downfall. In the Rougon-Macquart series men are the prey to two basic needs: sex and money. The sexual urge is seen as a powerful need to which men are instinctively drawn. For Laurent, in Thérèse Raquin, the heroine becomes an essential necessity to his life-blood, " Il avait besoin de cette femme pour vivre comme on a besoin de boire et de manger". 2) In this novel, as Zola himself indicated in his preface to the second edition, both partners feel the irresistible attraction of physical love: x

" Thérèse et Laurent sont des brutes humaines, rien de plus. J'ai cherché à suivre pas à pas dans ces brutes le travail sourd des passions, les poussées de l'instinct, les détraquements cérébraux survenus à la suite d'une crise nerveuse. Les amours de mes deux héros sont le contentement d'un besoin". 3)

Otherwise it is usually the male who experiences the full strength of physical desire and for Count Muffat the

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1) Travail. O.C. Vol 8. p. 958. 2) Thérèse Raquin. B.C. p. 73.  
3) Ibid. Préface de la deuxième édition. p. ii.

power of love is compared to the power of religious awe:

" Et toujours, malgré les luttes de sa raison, cette chambre de Nana le frappait de folie, il disparaissait en grelottant dans la toute-puissance du sexe, comme il s'évanouissait devant l'inconnu du vaste ciel". 1)

Thus, although they are destined to play the inferior rôle in the sexual act, women possess a powerful weapon in their sexual attractiveness which the unscrupulous can use to great effect to vent the antagonism to which the male sensual appetite often gives rise. Most women, even if they do not use their sexuality to profit from men, are fully aware of its potency and are consequently extremely hurt when their attraction is spurned and rendered ineffective. The disdain of Clorinde Balbi by Eugène Rougon, not specifically as a sexual partner, but as a marriage one, provides the root of all the action in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. To gain account<sup>\*</sup> revenge, Clorinde refuses to allow Eugène to possess her extra-maritally but prostitutes herself to anyone else of political influence to secure the minister's fall from Imperial favour. Her actions are political, but they are motivated, not by personal ambition in the world of politics, but because her feminine pride demands vengeance from a man who scorns her as a marriage partner. The spurning of her attractiveness causes her to embark on political intrigue since this gives her the most effective means of hurting Rougon. When news that Rougon's resignation has been accepted by the Emperor reaches the general public, Clorinde can at last feel that he has paid for his scorn. She gloats over her success, especially when she tells Rougon that her nonentity of a husband is to succeed him:

" Elle avait tout mis dans ce mot, sa colère d'avoir été dédaignée autrefois, sa rancune menée avec tant d'art, sa joie de femme de battre un homme réputé de première force. Alors, elle

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1) Nana.R.M.Vol.2.p.1459.

se donna le plaisir de le torturer, d'abuser de sa victoire; elle étala les côtés blessants. " 1)

In L' Œuvre two women suffer because Claude Lantier is impervious to their charms. Irma Bécot exploits many men through the power of her sex, and is only more determined to include Claude among her conquests when the artist rebuffs her offer of an affair. She later avenges the insult of this refusal by tempting him into her bed. But it is above all the artist's wife who suffers from the decreasing potency of her physical charms. Her agony is made worse by the fact that she is rejected in favour of the inanimate woman Claude is forever trying to capture in oils. Once Lantier has become entirely preoccupied with his painting Christine is reduced to recapturing her husband's affection with her bodily charms. She poses in the nude, but her sexuality, the body he had once so adored, means nothing more to him than an artist's model, and after one session of posing Claude does not even kiss her as usual:

" Alors, les mains tremblantes de hâte, elle se rhabilla, dans une confusion affreuse de femme dédaignée. Elle enfilait sa chemise, se battait avec ses jupes, agrafait son corsage de travers, comme si elle eût voulu échapper à la honte de cette nudité impuissante, bonne désormais à vieillir sous les linges. " 2)

Claude adds to his cruelty by telling her that she is not as beautiful as when she first posed for him, since being a <sup>brutal</sup> mother has spoilt her physically. Christine is ashamed and disgusted at the impotence of her body rather than angry at such an offensive remark. Finally she has to rip off her clothing to contest the painted nude with her own desirability, whereas, as a young girl, she had been loath to pose for Claude in the nude. On one occasion her action seems to have the desired effect and Claude leaves his work to engage in a session of wild love-making. However, Christine is finally beaten, for

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1) Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. R.M. Vol. 2. p. 342.  
2) L' Œuvre. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 243.

after their intercourse she falls asleep and Claude disengages himself from her body to hang himself beside his canvas.

In other novels women put their sexuality to uses other than attracting their chosen man. Nana, through her superb body, is able to exploit a host of men for selfish ends. To attain anything she desires Nana has unashamed recourse to her sex-appeal. When it appears that Muffat is going to refuse to intercede on her behalf to obtain for her the acting role she desires she has only to plant a passionate kiss on his lips and to stroke him to have the world at her feet. Vandeuvores spends his fortune on Nana and has to try to recoup his losses with a desperate gambling effort, but when the attempt fails he commits suicide in the stables. Muffat sells his property to keep her in luxury; Philippe Hugon steals from his regiment for Nana and his brother Georges stabs himself with her scissors when she tells him she sleeps with Philippe and refuses his own offer of marriage. In this novel the male species is the prey to woman and sex, and when the bankrupt theatre-owner, Bordenave, seeing Nana in her splendour at the races, exclaims, " Ah! si j'étais femme..", his remark represents recognition by a man of the power of the opposite sex.

Jacqueline Cognet, Hourdequin's mistress in La Terre, is able, through sex, to exact the peasants' revenge on the bourgeois proprietor. The middle-aged farmer needs her like bread or water, and Jacqueline, aware of this need, capitalises upon it as much as possible. In order to keep her authority over him she rations the frequency of his sexual pleasure, or, if she wants to obtain something specific, she has immediate recourse to her sex-appeal. Hourdequin has eventually to buy his nights with her by granting her every request.

Séverine in La Bête Humaine normally makes an unconditional gift of her body to her lover, but when she is trying to push Jacques to murder her husband, she consciously incites him with

the most potent stimulant she possesses:

"..elle marchait sur lui...avec le sourire invincible et despotique de la femme qui se sait toute-puissante par le désir, Quand elle le tiendrait dans ses bras, il céderait à sa chair, il ferait ce qu'elle voudrait. " 1)

In this case the plan backfires; Séverine becomes so seductive that she rouses Jacques' desire to kill and he stabs her.

In Paris Silviane d'Aulnay, the mistress of Baron Duvillard, behaves towards her lover in the same way as Nana and Jacqueline. To obtain a role at the 'Comédie Française' she withholds any sexual relations from her lover until he agrees to use his influence. The Baron is so attracted to Silviane that he has to accede to her request, and sexual dependence provides the one weak spot in an otherwise strong personality, "..il dut se résigner au caprice de cette terrible fille, dont l'odeur seule l'abêtissait. " 2)

Although women are the submissive partners in the physical side of their relationships with men, they are enabled to gain ample moral revenge through the authority their sexual attractiveness gives them over the male of the species, whose carnal desire often proves to be his undoing. In Nana man is shown at the lowest ebb of his sexual dependance on woman, and the picture of sex as a destructive force is even more effective since the men who bow to Nana's will are all important members of society, the so-called 'lions' of polite circles. It is the courtesans, the corresponding 'lionnes' who are the more dangerous of the species. Zola often compares a man with a bull to indicate his brutality in sexual contexts; in similar situations he favours describing women as cats to suggest the craft and cunning they impart to sexual activity. Woman's life was full of restrictions - economic, legal, moral - but none more obvious than the sexual one. The interweaving of separate

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1) La Bête Humaine.R.M.Vol.4.p.1295.

2) Paris.O.C.Vol.7.p.1353.



sexual needs, desires and impulses into a durable relationship was still a male obligation and choice which he carried out with little distinction. The female had to use her feline charms to wheedle her way and accept what was given her.

#### 4. Distrust of Woman.

The numerous examples of male characters subjugated to complete dependance on woman's willingness to provide for their sexual needs gives a strong impression that Zola believed that sexual indulgence brought a loss of mental and social energy. At times it seems that, for extremely active men, the refusal to become involved with women is an essential ingredient to their success, which is invariably compromised by man's susceptibility to the physical charms of the opposite sex. Certain characters in the novels recommend chastity for men who wish to play an effective role in social affairs, but such characters tend to be exceptional ones.

The exiled Russian, Souvarine, in Germinal, in order to be strong, resolves to have "ni femme ni ami", so that his mistrust of women is just one expression of his fanatical independence. Many of his cynical, disparaging remarks are directed against women. When he has sabotaged the mine, he tries to stop Etienne Lantier going down, but then, seeing Catherine Maheu with him, Souvarine adds this bitter reflection, "Quand il y avait une femme dans le cœur d'un homme, l'homme était fini, il pouvait mourir." 1) There is no woman in the heart of the twisted anarchist himself, since the death of Annouchka, who has been hanged for revolutionary activities in Russia. Souvarine's indifference to women is due in part to his own unfortunate experiences which have inevitably coloured his ideas.

On numerous occasions Zola denied that woman had a detrimental effect on an artist. In L'Œuvre Sandoz gains nothing

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1) Germinal. R.M. Vol. 3. p. 1533.

but benefit from his wife and their marriage; it is the unstable, thwarted genius, Claude Lantier, who comes to believe in chastity as a pre-requisite to artistic success, " le génie devait être chaste, il fallait ne coucher qu'avec son œuvre. " 1) Patrick Brady quotes an article by Zola written for Le Voltaire of 3rd May 1886 giving the author's replies to a journalist's questions about his novel which shows that Claude's views are not Zola's:

"..... dans les romans, on a trop présenté jusqu'ici les femmes comme des Dalilas, épuisant les artistes qu'elles aiment, éteignant chez eux toute inspiration. En réalité le 'ratés' que j'ai connus auraient été des ratés même sans les femmes qu'ils avaient près d'eux. Ce que j'ai vu plutôt ce sont des femmes souffrant de cette inspiration artistique à laquelle elles ne sont guère un obstacle: oubliées, délaissées pour la passion de l'art". 2)

Brady sees three stages in Lantier's sexual development: as a chaste young man he finds an outlet for his desires in art, with Christine he enters a period of normal sexual expression but later finds that his former sublimation of passion in art has rendered him incapable of normal satisfaction; in the frenzied final stage the pleasure he gets from the attempt to paint the nude becomes increasingly sexual. Lantier according to this thesis is a man who has been unable to order his sexual life since his imagined eroticism has killed the effectiveness of real love. His views on chastity and women might therefore be regarded as the exceptional ones of a slightly deranged mind.

L'Abbé Faùjas in La Conquête de Plassans uses the women of the town to fulfil his political designs but this does not prevent him from despising and hating them. Guillemin has emphasised this character's espousal of chastity as a means to strength, while at the same time recognising the

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1) L'Œuvre. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 347

2) Patrick Brady. op.cit. p. 386

scorn Zola showed for the priest's horror of women. Once the Abbé and his mother have been installed for some time in the Mouret household, François invites them to spend the evenings with the family. The husband plays Picquet with Mme Faujas, while Faujas is left mostly with Marthe but we are told that, " L'Abbé avait un mépris d'homme et de prêtre pour la femme; il l'écartait, ainsi qu'un obstacle honteux, indigne des forts". 1) The central character of this novel obviously believes that women are a source of weakness in men, and later, as the action unfolds, he expresses his opinions more succinctly. One day the priest is shut in a confined room alone with Marthe, and Mme Faujas, ever on guard for her son's wellbeing, prevents Mme Paloque from disturbing them in case they might be caught in an embarrassing situation. In fact, nothing had passed between the two, and when Faujas realizes what made his mother act in such a way he tells her, " Vous vous trompez, mère - Les hommes chastes sont les seuls forts". 2)

In Faujas' particular situation he is probably correct in these views; intimate involvement with women would have compromised his effectiveness in inducing the society of Plassans to vote for the chosen Imperial candidate. Once more, however, the spokesman for an anti-sexual, anti-feminine attitude is a man of twisted mentality. Faujas has an exaggerated hatred of woman, based on a religious habit of regarding her as the devil. His priestly mentality is well expressed by his use of religious vocabulary and imagery in his denunciations of women;

" Si j'échoue", he tells Marthe, " ce sera vous, femme,

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1) La Conquête de Plassans. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 969

2) Ibid. p. 1079

qui m'aurez ôté de ma force par votre seul désir. Retirez-vous, allez-vous-en, vous êtes Satan! Je vous battraï pour faire sortir le mauvais ange de votre corps. " 1)

The author explains his character's anti-feminism by his social status, " Pour tout prêtre, la femme, c'est l'ennemie." 2) Later it is the character himself who underlines this idea by his answer to Marthe's avowal of love for him:

" Ah! misérable chair! ..Je comptais que vous seriez raisonnable, que jamais vous n'en viendriez à cette honte de dire tout haut ces ordures..Oui, c'est l'éternelle lutte du mal contre les volontés fortes. Vous êtes la tentation d'en bas, la lâcheté, la chute finale. Le prêtre n'a pas d'autre adversaire que vous, et l'on devrait vous chasser des églises, comme impures et maudites. " 3)

Zola's notes show that he had at first intended to make his priest the brutal lover of the wife of the household. His revised character is an improvement since his chasteness makes the enigmatic Imperial agent an even more mysterious and unique person. However, the perverted Abbé with his exaggerated, priestly views can hardly be seen as the mouthpiece of an author who showed a consistent antipathy towards the priesthood.

It is more difficult to argue against the case of the 'chaste' Eugène Rougon, who sets greater store by power and authority than sexual involvement, and believes that only by escaping from the clutches of a woman can he achieve such authority. Many critics have maintained that the author at least felt some sympathy with this viewpoint. Paul Alexis surmised that the energetic Rougon is a portrait of Zola as he would liked to have been, if he had been a politician. Wilson regards Eugène as the exact opposite of Muffat; Nana's Count symbolised the degradation of the will under the influence of passion, and Rougon demonstrates, by his treatment of Clorinde, how non-involvement with women brings strength and power. The critic contends that the hero's "success is attained through

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1) Ibid. p.1176. 2) Ibid. p.985. 3) Ibid. p.1176.

a hard-won battle for sexual supremacy, which is made to give him an almost magical access of force. " 1) Richard Grant insists on the approval Zola gave to his hero:

" In his novels, when a bull-like character of strong will appears ( Grant cites Faujas and Archangias as examples ) he is usually chaste and fearful of woman, who represents the enemy of man's will. It seems that Zola felt somewhat the same way until his liaison with Jeanne Rozerot. Consequently, while Rougon is a scoundrel, he appears to have Zola's admiration for being one of the few men who do not succumb to the fatal charm of sex. " 2)

Of Eugène and Clorinde, Grant remarks:

" It is obvious that they are deadly enemies. She, as woman, is a dangerous and destructive element against which a man must pit his will in order that his force, like Samson's, will not be dissipated through sexual submission. " 3)

Eugène Rougon's anti-feminism and anti-sexual views have been overemphasised. His attitude is apparent from the beginning. In a discussion between interested parties, when it is not known whether his first resignation has been accepted or not, La Rouquette reports:

" On a envoyé, paraît-il, une dame pour fléchir Rougon. Vous ne savez pas ce qu'il a fait, Rougon? Il a mis la dame à la porte: notez qu'elle était délicieuse. " 4)

This is exactly the way in which Rougon will act towards Clorinde. He refuses, not sex as such, but compromising sexual relations which might impair his political standing and, more importantly, his own control of his destiny and actions. The surprise which the rest of his entourage express at Rougon's rejection of female charms shows to what extent Rougon is out of step with the customs of a society which accepted that sexual attractiveness was a legitimate weapon on political and social battlegrounds. It should not be forgotten that Rougon is later married. His rejection of Clorinde represents a

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1) Angus Wilson. op. cit. p. 34. 2) Richard. B. Grant. Zola's Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. p. 17. 3) Ibid. p. 122.

4) Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. R.M. Vol. 2. p. 21.

preference for an insignificant spouse who keeps very much in the background, rather than an energetic, strong-willed woman, who might undermine his own power and authority if he allowed her to gain an ascendancy over him. Zola does not express an antipathy towards sex, but rather towards the type of sexual arrangements and practices which were rife in the society of the Rougon-Macquart novels.

##### 5. Methods of Erotic Description.

Much discussion has been aroused by the correlation Zola made between either love and death or love and aggression. Such parallels represent a consistent form of expression of eroticism, and accentuate the mystery and disquiet with which Zola surrounded carnal impulses.

From Zola's earliest works love and death are closely linked. Wilson sees as the central theme of Les Contes à Ninon the deaths of youths and their nymph lovers and comments, "if his idyllic vision of love is to be preserved, the lovers must die and perish in the first flush of passion and so achieve eternity." 1) The forest Undine Fleur-des-Eaux, as foretold, dies on receiving a kiss from Simplicie, in the tale of that name.

The theme is extended to link sexual desire with aggressive, murderous intent in Thérèse Raquin. Lapp notes, how, on the hot day of Camille's murder, Laurent's resolve to kill his lover's husband coincides with intense sexual desire. The two impulses are thus depicted as very similar. The murder for a while soothes the lovers' violent desire, "Le meurtre avait comme apaisé pour un moment les fièvres voluptueuses de leur chair." 2)

In La Fortune des Rougon the juxtapositioning of love and death is somewhat equivocal. The love of Miette and Silvère is set in the Aire St-Mittre cemetery, and it is this forbidding

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1) Angus Wilson. op. cit. p. 14. 2) Thérèse Raquin. B.C. p. 129.

place which encourages them to love, and cries out for their union. An atmosphere of death obviously hangs over the site, and Miette in particular is haunted by the inscription which they uncover, " Cy gist..Marie..morte.." 1) But the cemetery is not only a place of death; paradoxically it is the scene of great life. The dead who whisper to the boy and girl of love are the dead remembering their own loves, their own times of happiness, breathing out in fact the joy of life and the desire to live. The place itself is no longer used for burials but, abandoned to wild nature, it has become the breeding ground for the most luxurious plant life, great fertility thus growing out of death.

The cemetery gives the lovers a fascination with death which, in their inability to comprehend the new feelings which passion brings, they confuse with desire. After the kiss exchanged when the couple leave the column of Republican marchers, the newly-felt sexual desire changes into a form of death wish. The preliminaries to sexual union seem like a foretaste of death:

"..ils croyaient prendre un avant-goût du dernier sommeil, dans cette somnolence où les replongeaient la tiédeur de leurs membres et les brûlures de leurs lèvres, qui venaient encore de se rencontrer. " 2)

But then the thought of oblivion gives Miette the idea that death might prevent her from tasting the newly-felt voluptuousness and she glues her lips to Silvère's. The death wish swings back to a desire for life. In the first novel of the series the links between love and death, and the method of alternating evocations of the two forces are well established.

Both Lapp and Hemmings have seen the situation of Simplexe repeated in La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret. In the novel it is a priest who enters a forest to love the female spirit of the wild domain, and kill her through love of him. Much of the novel is concerned with the struggle between the forces of

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1) La Fortune des Rougon. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 208. 2) Ibid. p. 169.

nature urging propagation, and the sterility of Catholicism recommending death. The long-lost arbour is irrevocably connected with death, since the mysterious woman of long ago, the mate of Paradou's first owner, is buried under the tree in whose shade Serge and Albine finally consummate their love. The mortal atmosphere and the desire for oblivion is very much part of the attracting force of love, as Albine explains to Serge:

" C'est là que la morte est enterrée..C'est la joie de s'être assise là qui l'a tuée. L'arbre a une ombre dont le charme fait mourir. Moi, je mourrais volontiers ainsi. Nous nous coucherions aux bras l'un de l'autre; nous serions morts, personne ne nous trouverait plus. " 1)

Instances of sexual intercourse are often attended by death in Zola's novels. Etienne and Catherine in Germinal only make love when under the sentence of death and with Chaval's body present in the collapsed mine, itself the scene of great massacre. The heat which rouses Buteau's and Jean Macquart's desire in La Terre brings sexual initiation for Françoise, but also causes the death of the wretched, overworked Palmyre. Zola points the contrast of heat urging copulation, but bringing death too in the midst of fertile nature by describing Françoise's feelings, who, as she contemplates Palmyre's body is, " étourdie de cette mort qui tombait au milieu de sa première besogne avec l'homme." 2)

The closest correlation of murder and sex, of the desire to exterminate and the desire to create, is made in La Bête Humaine. According to the notes of his second plan Zola was seeking in this novel to express the link between these tendencies in human conduct, " Ce que je veux surtout marquer, c'est ce qu'il y a de sauvage au fond du coït, la mort dans l'amour, posséder et tuer." 3) Jules Lemaitre, in an article on this

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1) La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret.R.M.Vol.1.p.1357. 2) La Terre. R.M.Vol.4.p.576. 3) See 'Etude' to La Bête Humaine.R.M.Vol.4. p.1779. Also quoted by Martin Kanés.op.cit.p.76. ✓



novel in Le Figaro on the 8th March 1890, immediately remarked on the power and mystery Zola achieved through use of such a theme:

" Dans son dernier roman, M.Zola étudie le plus effrayant et le plus mystérieux de ces instincts primordiaux: l'instinct de la destruction et du meurtre et son obscure corrélation avec l'instinct amoureux...je ne crois pas avoir jamais vu, sur l'éternel hymen de l'amour et de la mort, de pages plus frissonnantes d'horreur et de mystère. " 1)

Jacques Lantier is the most obvious character in whom sexuality and aggression are closely linked. He manages to overcome his homicidal urges when faced with Flore's bared flesh, only by fleeing before he makes love to her. It is suggested that he does not feel the same way with Séverine because the fact that she is a murderess gives him excitement enough. The other characters experience the same dual feelings. Séverine's retelling of Grandmorin's murder, whilst she and Jacques are lying together in bed, as well as rekindling Lantier's desire to kill, also fills them both with erotic desire, and they proceed to violent love-making which excites them mutually. In this novel it is almost as if Zola could not miss the opportunity to mix eroticism with murderous aggression, for, such a combination also underlies Roubaud's action, at least the violent, possessive Roubaud of the opening of the novel. After the quarrel between husband and wife which begins the action, Séverine becomes caressing, but Roubaud repulses her. However, in his imagination he sees the two of them writhing on the bed, and it is from this erotic vision that the need for Grandmorin's death arises for Roubaud:

" Il frissonnait. L'idée de la posséder, cette image de leurs deux corps s'abattant sur le lit, venait de le traverser d'une flamme. Et, dans la nuit trouble de sa chair, au fond de son désir souillé qui saignait, brusquement se dressa la

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1) See 'Etude' to La Bête Humaine.R.M.Vol.4.Pp.1746-7.

nécessité de la mort. " 1)

The linking of love and death provides a recurrent theme in Zola's novels. Its use may have been an attempt to explore what were for Zola the disquieting, troubled depths of sexuality. Certainly this habitual treatment gives an air of mystery and foreboding to the erotic instinct. If, however, it had been caused merely by Zola's own anxious attitude towards sex, it would presumably have disappeared from his writings once Jeanne Rozerot had instilled sexual peace into him. The theme reappears with the story of Benedetta and Dario in Rome (1896); an attempt is made to consummate love in the very presence of death and the two forces are once more locked in combat.

With this theme Zola shows that life is an incessant struggle against death, in which fertility is life's greatest weapon. Philip Walker talks of Zola's 'myth of fecundity' which describes "...a godlike nature engaged in a single, perpetually self-renewing vital process in which all the elements are so inextricably involved that human life and death in the traditional sense have lost their meaning." 2) Guy Robert regards Zola's preoccupation with sex as repeated evocation of the greatest combatant life possesses in its struggle with death:

" Mais il faut voir surtout dans cette obsession de l'acte sexuel la manifestation d'une des forces essentielles qui animent son univers; un seul et éternel combat s'y déroule, celui qui mène la vie aux prises avec la mort." 3)

In the same critic's study of La Terre, he maintained that death and life were evoked together to express the ceaseless struggle of opposed forces which animate the world. La Terre, with its descriptions of sowing and reaping, and the seasons succeeding one another with pre-ordained regularity, was a particularly appropriate novel for the expression of the

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1) La Bête Humaine. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 1019. 2) Philip Walker. Prophetic Myths in Zola. P.M.L.A. 1959. p. 447. 3) Guy Robert. Emile Zola. Principes et Caractères Généraux de son Œuvre. p. 104

eternal cycle of life. Lawrence Harvey has studied the 'Cycle Myth' of this novel. He notes the juxtapositioning of Françoise's defloration with Palmyre's death, and of Fouan's burial with scenes of sowing, and concludes that all such links form part of the cyclic action of nature, the fertilization of the land, animals and women are all related:

" The earth is the source of life and the final resting place:.. ..The substance of man returns to the earth and becomes part of the wheat that grows from that same earth. This wheat in turn nourishes man, gives him his life, becomes part of him. Each generation, then, is really a reincarnation of the preceding one. Such a view accounts for the simultaneous occurrence of death and life in the novel, for the two are seen as points on the same circle of time. Presenting them together stresses the sequential necessity that links them." 1)

Henri Guillemin is troubled at times by Zola's incessant linking of love and death, and saw it as another indication of Zola's anxiety over the sexual question. Certainly it brings mystery to the sexual instinct, and the correlation with aggression accentuates its brutality, but it seems more likely that with this theme Zola was expressing, not a troubled view of the source of life, but, on the contrary, an acceptance of the whole of life.

The vocabulary and imagery Zola used for his erotic descriptions give more weight to the argument that the author felt repugnance for the physical element of love, than his obsession with the theme of love and death. Zola often depicts erotic scenes in terms of fire, flames and heat. Lanoux has discussed the extensive use made of the word 'brûler' in sexual contexts to denote desire. 2) The disappointment ensuing from Héléne Mouret's sexual experience with Deberle was expressed by a dying fire. Heat imagery is used at other times to describe her feelings. Once Deberle has avowed his love, Héléne escapes to her room in confusion; in spite of herself she feels love

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1) Lawrence.E.Harvey. The Cycle Myth in La Terre of Zola. P.Q. 1959.p.91. 2) A.Lanoux. Zola Vivant.O.C.Vol.I.p.109.

and desire increasing within herself. Zola uses the technique in this novel of painting the Parisian background in ways appropriate to his heroine's successive feelings. The Paris she contemplates, as passion burns inside her waiting to be indulged, is no longer shrouded in mist, but spreads out before her in the ardent sunlight like an ocean of flames:

" A droite, à gauche, les monuments flambaient. Les verrières du Palais de l'Industrie...étaient un lit de tisons ardents.. ..et les autres édifices,...se couronnaient de flammes, dressant à chaque carrefour des bûchers gigantesques. Le dôme des Invalides était en feu, si étincelant qu'on pouvait craindre à chaque minute de le voir s'effondrer, en couvrant le quartier des flammèches de sa charpente. " 1)

The danger of conflagration for Paris resembles the risk of passion erupting in Hélène.

Heat is a necessary ingredient for love. In the garden of Paradou Serge Mouret needs the revitalising power of the summer sunshine before he can recapture the warmth of sexual desire. On his return to the garden after forsaking Albine for the Church, the atmosphere is made wholly different, to emphasise the change that has come over him. The autumn chill makes him feel that he is wearing an icy cloak (that of his priesthood), the heat required is missing, love is impossible, and Serge simply can not respond to Albine's attempt to reclaim him.

The expression of eroticism by fire imagery is an artistic commonplace, but the heat generated for Zola's fictional love-making is rarely a purifying, ardent, flaming fire; more often it is 'tiédeur' (a favourite word in these contexts), a stifling, unpleasantly warm atmosphere, thick with sickly odours. It is this type of atmosphere which most easily arouses the brutal desires of Zola's characters, and the unwholesome setting to many of his erotic scenes only increases the distaste which one feels for the activities described. Zola's novels contain

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1) Une Page d'Amour.R.M.Vol.2.p.908.

many descriptions of the sex act but pleasant, refined portraits of a voluptuous eroticism are rare.

Surroundings are important for the rousing and satisfaction of passion. A hot, stuffy atmosphere always seems more likely to invite love-making. Satin, Nana's experienced prostitute friend, knows at which times men are likely to be roused:

" Les soirs humides, lorsque Paris mouillé exhalait une odeur fade de grande alcôve mal tenue, elle savait que ce temps mou, ✓ cette fétidité des coins louches enrageaient les hommes." 1)

Incest between Renée and Maxime is precipitated by the warm, sticky atmosphere and the exotic vegetation of the hot-house, where provocative smells and the heavy air encourage love. The miners in Germinal are especially roused by the sight of the female workers when, with their half-nude bodies glistening with sweat, they adopt crouching animal-like poses in the stifling, gas-poisoned air of the mine.

Individual sexual episodes, or perhaps more exactly, cases of attempted rape, are carried out in similar circumstances. Eugène Rougon tries to possess Clorinde Balbi in a stable where the animals have given the air an obvious bestial tang. Rougon is like an 'escaped bull', his breath comes in short, sharp pants, his face is a convulsed purple mass, sweat pours from his whole body.

× Animals, dead and alive, are present in Le Ventre de Paris when Marjolin tries to rape Lisa Macquart. The air is familiarly hot outside, " L'après-midi était tiède, des souffles passaient dans les rues étroites du pavillon." 2) When Marjolin takes his visitor into the cellars of the poultry shop, ostensibly to show her around, the unpleasant atmosphere thickens; surrounded by dead game the air Lisa breathes is suffocating, " Ce qui l'arrêtait là, plus encore que l'obscurité, c'était une odeur chaude, pénétrante, une exhalaison de bêtes vivantes, dont les alcalis

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1) Nana.R.M.Vol.2.p.1313. 2) Le Ventre de Paris.R.M.Vol.1.p.789.

la piquaient au nez et à la gorge." 1) The surroundings affect Marjolin even more; he comes to a pitch of excitement in a crescendo of sweat, throbbing nostrils and heavy breathing. When Lisa tweaks him under the chin, his instincts are finally roused and seek expression in an outburst of typical male violence," (il)..se jeta sur la belle Lisa, avec une force de taureau..Et il allait la prendre à la taille, ainsi qu'il prenait Cadine, d'une brutalité d'animal qui vole et qui s'emplit." 2) Once again a highly vitiated atmosphere rouses male instincts to full expression of animal desire, and there can be few less pleasant descriptions of an attempt at sexual intercourse.

A similar setting excites Coupeau in L'Assommoir. One June afternoon, when it is blazing hot in the open and even hotter inside the laundry, Gervaise and her fellow-workwomen take off as much clothing as is decently possible. Into the hot, sticky atmosphere of the laundry, comes Coupeau, in his cups. He is at once excited by the surroundings and wants to kiss his wife. Gervaise acquiesces, her husband becomes more aggressive, and in this case the atmosphere takes hold of the woman too, increasing her lethargy and sapping her strength to struggle:

" (Gervaise)...tendit la joue en souriant. Mais le zingueur, sans se gêner devant le monde, lui prit les seins...Il l'avait empoignée, il ne la lâchait pas. Elle s'abandonnait, étourdie par le léger vertige qui lui venait du tas de linge, sans dégoût pour l'haleine vineuse de Coupeau. Et le gros baiser qu'ils échangèrent à pleine bouche, au milieu des saletés du métier, était comme une première chute, dans le lent avachissement de leur vie. " 3)

The sickly scene is a powerful expression of the couple's slide towards disaster.

To describe the existence of his courtesan Zola repeatedly talks of 'la vie tiède de Nana', and it is the same adjective

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1) Ibid.p.791. 2) Ibid.p.795.  
3) L'Assommoir.R.M.Vol.2.p.509.

he employs to portray the backstage atmosphere of the theatre where she performs. It is here that the scene of Muffat's greatest temptation takes place. His senses are numbed by the stifling air and the odour of woman that pervades it, his resistance to Nana's magnetic attraction is broken down.

The impression Octave Mauret receives on his first entry into the house which provides the scene of the action in Pot-Bouille is sufficient indication that behind its respectable exterior the house is a hot-bed of intense sexual activity, " Mais ce qui frappa surtout Octave, ce fut en entrant, une chaleur de serre, une haleine tiède qu'une bouche lui soufflait au visage". 1)

The peasants in La Terre are perennially sensual but the intensity of their sexual activities is increased in the hot summer months. Desire reaches fever pitch on one particularly burning hot day during the August harvest. Zola emphasises the heat and the human bodies dripping with sweat from their exertions, " le bleu du ciel avait pâli d'une pâleur de voûte chauffée à blanc; et, du soleil attisé, il tombait des braises". 2) Even as they rest side by side in the siesta period sweat pours from Buteau and Françoise, " et la sueur ne cessait pas, coulait de leurs membres, sous cet air immobile et pesant de fournaise". 3) In this unpleasant state, when Buteau wakes up, his desires are roused and he tries to possess the young girl.

Heat, sweat, sickly smells, a warm stuffy atmosphere, heavy breathing and dulled senses all combine to give a feeling of intense disgust at many of the backgrounds Zola chose for his erotic scenes. It is these scenes more than anything else which leave the reader the impression that at

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1) Pot-Bouille. R.M. Vol. 3. p. 5

2) La Terre. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 568

3) Ibid. p. 569

times Zola felt that nature had arranged the generative process in a highly distasteful fashion. Descriptions of the type we have been discussing disappear from later novels, a fact which adds weight to the argument that Zola felt a basic uneasé about the sexual instinct before his fruitful liaison with Jeanne Rozerot, and that the erotic violence of many of the great novels is the literary expression of suppressed and troubled emotions. The love-making of Pierre and Marie Froment in Paris or of Mathieu and Marianne in Fécondité is not described, we rarely glimpse them even in an embrace. Children are born but silence is maintained on desire and possession. Already by Le Docteur Pascal, description of sexual activity has become less violent, more refined and discreet. Zola describes the first intimacy between Pascal and Clotilde as follows, " Ce ne fut pas une chute, la vie glorieuse les soulevait, il s'appartinrent au milieu d'une allégresse". 1) Above all the hot, unpleasant surroundings have disappeared, the background is now fittingly calm and serene, " L'air de la nuit était suave, le silence avait un calme attendri". 2) The change in description could hardly be greater.

#### 6. Conclusion to Zola's Views on Sex

The study of Zola's treatment of sexual matters is an extremely complex one. His discussion of sexuality is so broad and often a little puzzling that it has given rise to conflicting opinions in critics who have tried to find Zola's consistent attitude towards the sexual instinct. Much of the

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1) Le Docteur Pascal. R.M. Vol. 5. p.1061

2) Ibid. Pp. 1061-2



controversy stems from the highly equivocal novel La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret. The majority of critics contend that the novel expresses the rehabilitation of the copulative instinct, an acceptance of nature, which by example teaches Serge and Albine its golden rule: love and procreate. Guy Robert considers that Zola saw the act of generation as noble and great in spite of the ugliness that surrounds it. For him, La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret expressed a belief in the life-giving forces of fertile nature," les forces mauvaises qui veillent peuvent bien détruire l'amour de deux êtres éphémères, mais non la force qui fait la vie." 1) Henri Mitterand agrees that it praises the forces of natural urges:

" Mais La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret n'est pas seulement l'histoire d'un prêtre. C'est, comme on l'a dit et répété, un hymne à la toute-puissance de la nature; plus précisément de la nature végétale, identifiée comme lieu d'une provocation permanente et invincible aux plaisirs des sens, et à la génération. " 2)

Support abounds for the opinion that the book's message is aimed at the 'rehabilitation of instinct.'

An opposed critical appreciation exists however. Wilson sees in La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret the doom of natural love. It is Henri Guillemin who has most questioned Zola's attitude towards sex. When examining L'Œuvre he speaks of:

"..cette pensée d'ouvrage en ouvrage reparue: que le bonheur n'est pas dans la sexualité, que l'esprit, le cœur même réclament contre la chair. " 3)

According to this critic Zola's novels are consistently eloquent of a 'malaise' felt in regard to sexuality:

" Et il y a pire, chez Zola, nous l'avons déjà noté. Je ne sais quel retrait devant la sexualité. Le sentiment qu'il y a là un piège. Un péril en tout cas, au fond de notre être, le témoignage d'un mystérieux abaissement, d'une blessure. " 4)

Guillemin does not subscribe to the widely held interpret-

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1) Guy Robert. Emile Zola.p.97. 2) 'Etude' to La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret.R.M.Vol.1.p.1673. 3) Henri Guillemin. Présentation des Rougon-Macquart.p.275. 4) H.Guillemin. Zola, Légende et Vérité? p.108.

ation of La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret. He can not accept that the book aims to 'rehabilitate instinct', since the peasant Artauds indulge instinctively in sexual pleasure but are presented as a thoroughly unhealthy community. Guillemin underlines the unease and shame which follow the couple's consummation of love, and is also troubled by the constant juxtapositioning of love and death. As a conclusion Guillemin regards Serge Mouret as a portrayal of the two-sided Zola: sexuality is seen in part as a glorious law of human life, but at other times it is seen as the repugnant means chosen by nature to perpetuate life, in which pleasure is dangerous. Guillemin further contends that when, in Le Docteur Pascal, Zola came to review what he had written, he tried in vain to give a retrospective optimistic interpretation to La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret. Zola contended that his novel represented the triumph of life, but Guillemin is quick to remind us that the action ends in death:

"..le Paradou suinte, pour lui (Zola) le poison...C'est avec lenteur, dans des soubresauts de fuite, et comme sous la tirée fatale d'un poids, tandis que leur volonté se paralyse, qu'Albine et Serge descendent aux gestes charnels. " 1)

It is difficult to arrive at a balanced appreciation of this novel. The main mouthpiece of an anti-sexual attitude, Archangias, is the most unsympathetic and grotesque of all the characters. His hatred of women and sex stem from the perverted mind of an unfulfilled man who is simply jealous of Serge. The degradation of the Artauds arises from their inability to accept the responsibilities of parenthood or family life, although it must be admitted that they provide a far from wholesome picture of uncontrolled, blind instinct. Serge, with his feverish thoughts, his scruples and his hesitations, is for Zola the end-product of the mentally unbalanced streak in the Rougon-Macquart blood, made worse by his education in a Catholic seminary. His cure in Paradou is just as much a mental one,

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1) Ibid.p.109.

necessitated by his afflicted genes and bad environment.

The copulative forces of nature, the pleasures of carnal love and the nobility of the sexual instinct are all expressed in this novel, but it is impossible to disregard completely the disquieting factors such as Guillemin has found in the work. Nature is not solely the realm of the victorious forces of fertility. It is dominated by the same animality for which Zola shows horror in other novels. The beasts in Désirée's yard, and the animals and plants in Paradou represent life at the brute level. Mixed with the delight communion with nature brings, there is some disgust for the forces of nature which include the human sexual instinct. Zola here adopted the Biblical story of Eden, and his references to sin and 'la faute' only add to the ambivalence of his portrayal of sexuality.

Richard Grant believes that Zola himself is responsible for the mystery which surrounds La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret since he, "obscured the message of his novel by failing to integrate his symbolism into his basic meaning." 1) Hemmings, in discussing the novel's sources, establishes the borrowings from Genesis; for him, the "adaptation of the story of Eden was deliberate and carefully planned." 2) For Grant this borrowing is the cause of much confusion, since it was artificially imposed. Albine, as Eve, has to be made to feel shame, an inaccuracy which undermines the rest of Zola's portrayal, "...if Albine had been permitted to remain true to her symbolic role, there would have been a ray of hope for the future; nature would not have been ashamed of itself..But by misusing the Biblical story, Zola contaminated the purity of his ray of hope, giving the impression that human love, in procreating, was shameful." 3) Grant believes

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1) R.B.Grant. Confusion of meaning in Zola's La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret. Symposium. Fall.1959.p.285. 2) F.W.J.Hemmings. The secret sources of La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret .F.S. July.1959.p.227.  
3) R.B.Grant. Confusion of meaning.p.288.

that, once one has accepted the inaccuracies and artificialities of treatment, one must adhere to an optimistic interpretation. The 'faute' is part of a convention, not a sin, " the failure is not that of idyllic love, the evil is the sterile message of Rome." 1)

The difficulty in interpreting the single novel is only part of the difficulty in arriving at a definitive view of Zola's attitude to the erotic instinct. The urge itself he saw to be good and wholesome, but its manifestations sometimes filled him with disgust. His perplexity with sexual activities probably did not have one root cause, but, as Hemmings suggests, the reason for his horrified portrayal of physical love is likely to be found in 'a private conflict'. 2)

The young idealist may have been shocked by the crude reality of love in the peasant habits of Provence. His distaste may go yet deeper into his childhood, arising from his molesting at the hands of the Arab Mustapha. Hemmings considers that this childhood incident could be responsible for the author's horror of sexual relations shown in many of his novels up to La Bête Humaine. 3) Jean Vinchon has given a professional psychiatric view on possible effects of the incident:

" Il suffit de se reporter par la pensée à cette époque pour imaginer l'émotion de la famille Zola qui dut prolonger les effets du choc moral chez l'enfant. Il est probable que celui-ci continua pendant la puberté et l'adolescence à lutter contre les remontées plus ou moins conscientes du trouble causé par ce traumatisme psychique. " 4)

Zola's early, if not even first, sexual experience with Berthe from the Latin Quarter might also lie beneath his hesitations about sex. Claude, in La Confession de Claude, believes that the memory of Laurence will forever remain with him:

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1) Ibid.p.285. 2) F.W.J.Hemmings. Emile Zola.p.138.  
 3) F.W.J.Hemmings. The present position in Zola studies.F.S. 1956.p.103. 4) Jean Vinchon. Un psychiatre relit Zola. Présence de Zola.p.222. Discussed by Lanoux. Zola Vivant O.C.Vol.1. Pp.250ff.

"..je ne cherchais plus à comprendre, je devinais que Laurence serait à jamais un mystère pour moi, une femme faite d'ombre et de vertige: je savais qu'elle resterait dans ma vie comme un cauchemar inexplicable, une nuit fiévreuse pleine de visions monstrueuses et incompréhensibles. " 1)

Zola may well have guessed rightly; was it the haunting spectre of Berthe which coloured his later descriptions of sexual relations? Guillemin thinks that this is a probable effect of the affair:

" Quant à l'amour, l'amour physique, Zola vient d'en éprouver et l'attrait furieux et les noires délices. Une bien curieuse étude à faire sur Zola et la sexualité. Ce refus, en lui, cette crainte, ce consentement toujours contrôlé, cette étrange mauvaise conscience. Dispositions singulières et qui ne le quitteront jamais. " 2)

When Zola entered into his lasting relationship with Alexandrine he was probably the prey to conflicting ideas on sexual love. The long undisturbed years of marriage without children may only have confirmed the view that sexual love was no more than a regular, monotonous activity with no positive reward and no substance other than the biological one. J.H. Matthews reports that Dr.Toulouse found no trace of disgust in Zola with natural, bodily functions. 3) The evidence of his novels suggests that, for whatever deeply personal reason, the human procreation process can not be included amongst such physical functions.

In spite of Zola's mature views that erotic pleasure for its own sake was obscene and valueless unless indulged in specifically to create life, and in spite of the disturbed descriptions he gave of sexual habits in early works, several commentators have been able to regard the novelist as a forerunner of twentieth century erotic authors. Lanoux names his disciples:

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1) La Confession de Claude.B.C.Pp.306-7. 2) H.Guillemin. Introduction to La Confession de Claude. O.C.Vol.1.Pp.7-8.  
3) See J.H.Matthews. Les Deux Zola.p.25.

" Entre le 'chaste' Zola, et le 'cochon' Zola, deux interprétations excessives, se place le Zola vrai, précurseur des érotiques nobles du XXe siècle: Lawrence, Jules Romains, Céline, Miller. " 1)

Philip Walker is of like opinion, and he too considers Zola and Lawrence similar:

" In particular, Eros was for him the way to terrestrial salvation - a love shorn of most of the usual traditional literary and religious associations and meanings. He was one of those who have restored in our own era something of the pagan cult of the primitive sexual act in the place of Christian 'caritas', neo-Platonic idealism, romantic sentimentality, and decadent-romantic unnatural eroticism. He surrounded sex with a mystique that identified it with all the vital, regenerative forces of nature. In some respects, Zola's treatment of this subject anticipates the cult of sex of modern fascists. Or it may suggest the eroticism of a D.H.Lawrence. As for Lawrence, Zola's Eros is in some ways a substitute for divine Grace, but the virtues that it imparts are intensely pagan ones - virility, strength, courage, physical joy, ecstatic awareness of one's animality, and unity with nature. " 2)

Zola himself would probably have approved of this interpretation, for it seems that one of his self-imposed tasks was to rehabilitate the sexual urge. His literary spokesman, Sandoz, when discussing his writings and critical reactions to them, includes amongst his aims:

"...et surtout l'acte sexuel, l'origine et l'achèvement continu du monde, tiré de la honte où on le cache, remis dans sa gloire sous le soleil. " 3)

J.H.Matthews quotes a conversation between Zola and Philippe Gille in Le Figaro on the 16th November<sup>1897</sup> in which the author expressed an aim similar to Sandoz's:

" J'ai souvent déclaré que je ne comprenais pas, en art, la honte qui s'attache à l'acte de la génération, aussi ai-je le parti pris d'en parler librement, simplement comme un grand acte qui fait la vie, et je défie qu'on trouve dans mes livres une excitation au libertinage. " 4)

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1) A.Lanoux. Zola Vivant.O.C.Vol.1.p.109. 2) Philip Walker Prophetic Myths in Zola.P.M.L.A. 1959.p.447. 3) L'Œuvre R.M.Vol.4.p.190. 4) J.H.Matthews. Les Deux Zola.p.28.

In the realm of literature Zola struggled to free eroticism from hypocritical censure, and to this extent may be regarded as a liberator of the erotic instinct. The fact that he wrote so much on sexual subjects shows that he considered them a legitimate topic for artistic expression. He was radical in that he fought the obstacles, reticence and hostility which censured the literary study of sexual activity, pleasant or otherwise. But for a man who has been hailed as a prophet of the twentieth century, Zola showed a strangely conservative attitude towards the organisation of human relationships. His late view that sensual pleasure for its own sake was illegitimate, whilst it can not be said to be either right or wrong, is one which few twentieth century students of eroticism have adopted. His early descriptions of sexual relations, with their insistence on male dominance, on the male's exclusive right and duty in the organisation of a sexual union, on the failure to incorporate woman into erotic pleasure and her resultant lack of enjoyment, give a picture of relationships generally thought to be typical of the century previous to our own. An author whose most powerful evocations of the sexual instinct described it as a tyrannical human need largely expressed in an unseemly function can scarcely be compared to the great erotic writers of our own century. Spurred on by his love of life as a whole, it seems at times as if Zola had to force himself to accept the generative process as part of nature's great design. It is true that some of the pagan virtues Walker talks of are inherent in Zola's powerful, fundamental love-making but the author's methods of description, surely aimed in part at arousing distaste with violent sexual activity, can hardly be said to convey either "physical joy" or "ecstatic awareness of one's animality". Zola may well have intended to do so, but some inner motivation forced him to surround his fictional affairs of the flesh with an aura of horrified mystery.

In one instance Zola can be said to sing the beauty of physical sensation and to glorify physical love, and then not surprisingly in the novel which owed most to his own retarded experience of full erotic joy. At the beginning of Le Docteur Pascal Clotilde feels a void in her virgin existence. During her search for the "unknown", she discusses her relationship with her uncle and finds there is something inexplicable missing:

" Il manque quelque chose, dans notre tendresse. Jusqu'ici, elle a été vide et inutile, et j'ai l'irrésistible besoin de l'emplir, oh! de tout ce qu'il y a de divin et d'éternel-- Que peut-il nous manquer, si ce n'est Dieu?" 1) .

Unwittingly the innocent virgin is expressing her desire for sexual union with Pascal. Once she and her uncle have been sexually united Clotilde answers her question herself, the void has been filled not by God but by sex, " l'acte d'amour et de vie" 2), which is consequently something equally divine. Immediately after their first intimacy Clotilde feels that by the loss of her virginity she had found what she has always been looking for in religious mystery, a discovery which invests love with the greatest possible value, " N'était-ce pas la mystique vaincue, la réalité consentie, la vie glorifiée, avec l'amour enfin connu et satisfait?" 3) Sexual fulfillment brings a wonderful change in both partners, the whole world seems transformed and they taste the ecstatic heights of human happiness. Pascal loves to adorn his neice with jewels like an idol and Clotilde worships the Doctor and their love as her new god and religion. Love is continually raised to a divine level, the chapter dealing with the consummation of

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1) Le Docteur Pascal. R.M. Vol. 5. p. 994

2) Ibid. p. 1064

3) Ibid. p. 1062



their love ends thus," Et c'était la divinité en effet, l'entière possession, l'acte d'amour et de vie." 1) In this novel there is thus a quasi-divinisation of sex; for the first time two partners to a sexual union achieve full personal satisfaction in each other, with the proviso of course that their sexual activity is directed towards procreation.

An attempt to distil Zola's attitude towards the erotic instinct from the evidence of his novels provides intriguing material for speculation. E.M. Grant gives a balanced view:

"...the puritan streak in his (Zola's) character is to be explained by the combination of attraction and aversion to sex. His whole work reveals that he was both fascinated and repelled by the erotic." 2)

This is probably the best viewpoint to adopt, but Guillemin's 'bien curieuse étude à faire' will no doubt never be fully exhausted.

## 7. The Value of Marriage.

In the remarks made for La Revue Blanche in answer to some of Tolstoy's opinions, Zola included an observation on marriage:

" Le mariage n'est qu'un mot prononcé par le code...c'est de l'union qu'il s'agit. Le mariage a été organisé par la société comme toutes les lois qui réglementent les rapports des hommes entre eux...Mais l'union existe dans la nature, parce qu'il y a des sexes opposés qui sont pour l'adaptation de l'un à l'autre." 3)

This view of matrimony, with its scorn for marriage seen purely as a religious or social institution, and the belief in the natural union of partners, represents a consistent mode of thought which Zola expressed in articles, in his novels and in his own life.

Zola's most positive thoughts on marriage are to be found in his early Lettres de Jeunesse and in the late novels where he explained the ideal type of unions which would take place

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1) Ibid. p.1064. 2) Elliott.M. Grant. Emile Zola. p.104.  
3) Zola et la Question Sexuelle. L.C.N. No.20 1962. p.172.

in his new society. His views remain remarkably unchanged.

The letters which the young Zola wrote from Paris to Baille and Cézanne reveal a practical, prosaic attitude towards marriage. In a letter to Baille on the 24th June 1860 Zola is certain that true love can only be born from a long friendship, and recommends that two people, before uniting as a couple, should spend a considerable time getting to know one another thoroughly. The majority of marriages contracted in the Rougon-Macquart novels are entered into with very little consideration and inevitably, for Zola, are highly unsuccessful partnerships. The following month (4th July 1860) Zola shows that he believes neither in the sanctity and finality of marriage, nor in the value of the traditional wedding ceremony:

" Quelle loi peut forcer la femme à aimer toujours le même homme? Quelques mots balbutiés par un maire et un prêtre sur la tête de deux époux, peuvent-ils enchaîner leurs cœurs, comme ils enchaînent leurs corps? " 1)

Whilst Zola appreciates the traditional arguments in favour of marriage as a corner-stone in the stability of society, he insists that marriage in itself is no guarantee that love will last. If love dies between two partners, man-made law urges them to remain together, whereas it is Zola's contention that natural law recommends a restoration of liberty.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Zola later became an advocate of divorce in certain circumstances. In 1900 he wrote to Paul Margueritte who was enquiring into divorce:

" Je suis pour le couple dont l'amour rend l'union indissoluble, toujours, jusqu'à la mort. C'est la vérité, la beauté, et c'est le bonheur. Mais je suis pour la liberté absolue dans l'amour, et si le divorce est nécessaire, il le faut sans entraves, par le consentement mutuel et même par la volonté d'un seul. " 2)

Such a progressive view was a logical extension of Zola's

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1) Correspondance. Lettres de Jeunesse. B.C. Pp.82-3.

2) Correspondance. Les Lettres et Les Arts. B.C.p.351.

consistent claim that the only true basis of marriage is love.

In the continuation of his letter to Baille of the 4th July 1860 Zola contends that love can exist within marriage, which is a good arrangement of human relations, as long as neither partner expects too much of it, and as long as equality prevails within the marriage. Zola would reform marriage but:

"..tel qu'il est, ce mariage qu'on ne peut attaquer sans entendre hurler autour de soi les bégueules et les petits esprits, il peut devenir une source de bonheur et d'amour entre deux êtres sages, exempts de préjugés. Si l'on appelle amour la passion échevelée, certes le mariage ne le donne pas; si l'on entend par bonheur un ciel sans nuages, allez encore chercher plus loin. Mais, si vous n'êtes pas trop exigeant, si l'amour auquel vous aspirez est profond et calme, si vous entendez par bonheur des jours de soleil et des jours de pluie, mariez-vous, mes enfants, mariez-vous. " 1)

With this down-to-earth view of marriage Zola should not have been disappointed with the union he entered with Alexandrine. He concludes this letter to Baille:

" Mon mariage, je ne saurais le répéter, n'est pas cette bonne affaire que l'on nomme de ce nom. C'est un mariage à moi, un mariage d'amour, de sympathie, basé sur une réciproque connaissance de caractères..." 2)

The mature author never tired of demonstrating the social evil of regarding marriage merely as a 'bonne affaire'.

Cézanne was also the recipient of some of Zola's early thoughts on marriage. In a letter from Paris on the 16th April 1860 he reports having seen Villevielle and met the latter's delicious wife, an encounter which makes him wonder what sort of wife he and Cézanne will eventually find. According to Zola, the man has the responsibility for making a marriage work, "dans toute femme, il y a l'étoffe d'une bonne épouse, c'est au mari à disposer de cette étoffe le mieux possible." 3) Contemporary education of girls is so different from that of boys, that the

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1) Correspondance. Lettres de Jeunesse. B.C.p.86.

2) Ibid.p.87. 3) Ibid.p.208.

two sexes have contrasting mentalities, a state of affairs which must be remedied by the husband:

"Le mari a donc une grande tâche, celle de la nouvelle éducation de la femme: ce n'est pas tout de coucher ensemble pour être mariés, il faut encore penser de même: sinon, les époux ne peuvent manquer tôt ou tard de faire mauvais ménage - Voilà pourquoi l'éducation de filles me paraît si imparfaite." 1)

Zola's criticism of female education, which he started to express at this early age, also remains remarkably consistent; he censures it, not from a purely educational standpoint, but as an imperfect means of preparing girls for later life in society, especially in their relations with the opposite sex.

It is perhaps a little strange that Zola reserved literary exploitation of the drama inherent in a man's attempts to refashion his wife in marriage until the story of Marc and Geneviève Froment in his last novel Vérité. Geneviève had been educated in a convent, and a complementary religious up-bringing from her mother and grandmother had ensured that she emerged unsuited for her role as a wife and mother. Having met Marc, the two fell in love and married. At first Marc's friend and mentor, Salvan, had not hidden his anxiety at the marriage, but remained confident that Marc would succeed in refashioning Geneviève:

"...désireux de se tranquilliser un peu, avait-il simplement conclu, avec Marc, que l'homme fait la femme, dans un ménage qui s'adore. Tout mari, auquel on confie une jeune fille ignorante, n'est-il pas le maître de la refaire à sa volonté, à son image, lorsque cette jeune fille l'aime? " 2)

Zola could easily have written the same words fifty years earlier; he always believed that it was the male's duty to shape a relationship.

Marc decides to take a post as schoolmaster at Maillebois, and then the fury of the Simon affair breaks. This scandal, with its two opposed camps locked in bitter argument and struggle,

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1) Ibid.p.208. 2) Vérité.O.C.Vol.8.p.1198.

plus the fact that, in Maillebois, Geneviève is closer to her childhood surroundings and religious background, begins to open the moral gulf between the two partners. Marc regrets not having tried harder to change his wife. Blinded by love at the start of his marriage, he had not converted her completely to his ideas, and is now paying the penalty as the Church is able to influence Geneviève and bring disunion to their marriage. For a while the two live apart, but finally the anti-Simon faction's excesses revolt Geneviève's reason, she returns to Marc and the novel ends with the couple working harmoniously and effectively together. Zola had conceived the dramatic situation of his last fictional couple before he had written his first novel.

Marriage of a sort remained important for Zola. Silvère and Miette in La Fortune des Rougon always see marriage as the logical end to their love. Part of their reason for supporting the Republican cause is that they vaguely believe that the establishment of the Republican era will bring with it conditions in which their ideal marriage will be possible. But just as Imperial victory inaugurated an era of sexual squalor, so too it brought with it an age of marriages contracted for unpraiseworthy reasons.

Zola never set much store by marriage as an institution or as a religious contract. When two people stayed together they were for him, to all intents and purposes, married. In L'Œuvre Claude Lantier takes Christine on a day-trip to Bennecourt. When, at the inn where they eat, mère Faucheur asks the painter if he is now married, he replies, " Dame!..il le faut bien, puisque je suis avec ma femme." 1) Zola would no doubt have talked in the same way of Alexandrine, for between 1864 and 1870 he repeatedly called her 'ma femme' in letters, although they had not taken part in any official ceremony. Mitterand tells us

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1) L'Œuvre.R.M.Vol.4.p.142.

that such procedure was the rule rather than the exception amongst Zola's Impressionist painter friends. Marriage was entered into, if at all, after the couple had been together for a long time, and often after the birth of several children. 1)

The wedding ceremony which was not important in Zola's life, received ironic or critical treatment in his writings as a valueless exercise. For Le Petit Journal on the 6th February 1865 he wrote an account of the Russian marriage service. 2) After describing the elaborate, traditional procedure, he concludes, addressing his female readers in particular:

"..je doute que tous ces symboles donnent plus d'amour et plus de fidélité aux jeunes cœurs. Notre messe nuptiale a plus de simplicité. " 3)

The Catholic ceremony does not escape ironic treatment in Zola's novels, even if it was simpler than the Russian one. Coupeau in L'Assomoir, although he has no respect for the clergy, wants to marry Gervaise in a church service. When he goes to arrange one, it is obvious that the ecclesiastics regard weddings as purely a commercial business; on the wedding day itself, the priest is content to have done with the ceremony as quickly as possible by mumbling away in Latin for a few francs. The episode is principally intended to demonstrate the disdain of the clergy for the poor folk, but in the way it is presented it underlines the pointlessness of the wedding.

The most ironic and cleverly presented marriage is to be found in Pot-Bouille, when Berthe Josserand and Auguste Vabre are conjugally united. Bourgeois marriages throughout this novel are rarely attended by fidelity, and to stress the point, Zola surrounds the wedding episode with an aura of adultery. As Berthe is being prepared for the event, Théophile Vabre bursts in, beside

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1) See 'Etude' to L'Œuvre. R.M. Vol. 4. Pp. 1443-4.

2) Contained amongst Contes et Nouvelles O.C. Vol. 9. and entitled Un Mariage Russe. 3) Un Mariage Russe. O.C. Vol. 9. p. 243.

himself with anger, as he has found a compromising letter of his wife's. Théophile is (wrongly) convinced that the letter is from Octave Mouret, and his indignation is so great that he accosts the other man, demanding an explanation, whilst the service is in progress. Zola cleverly alternates descriptions of the ceremony with the discussion between the two men. No-one present pays much attention to the service, as they are all pre-occupied with the scandal. Even Berthe is distracted and has to be prompted in her responses, whilst the priest is also curious as to what will happen between Théophile and Octave. Those members of the congregation who are not even interested in the argument amuse themselves in other ways: the elder Vabre spends the time counting and recounting the number of candles in the church, while Bachelard wanders aimlessly around reading the Latin inscriptions on the tombs without understanding a word. It all adds up to an ironic description of a wedding, already tainted with adultery, as the marriage will later be, which emphasises what little value such a religious contract contains.

In other novels, if the ceremony is not mocked, many characters express the view that there is little object in getting married, as the mere ceremony is unlikely to increase love.

In Madeleine Férat, after the couple have been together for some time, Guillaume, in spite of vague presentiments about the future, begins to think of marriage to Madeleine. Guillaume does not set great store by marriage, "Le mariage légitimerait simplement une union qu'il regardait déjà comme éternelle." 1) When he talks to Madeleine of his plans she is even less keen:

" Pourquoi ne pas rester comme nous sommes...Je ne me plains pas, je suis heureuse..Nous ne nous aimerions pas davantage si nous étions mariés..Peut-être même dérangerions-nous notre bonheur." 2)

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1) Madeleine Férat. C.C.Vol.1.p.759. 2) Ibid.p.760.

In L'Œuvre Sandoz supports marriage as a beneficial aid to artistic production. It is left to Claude Lantier to maintain that marriage can not increase a love which already exists; in his own case, events prove that the exact opposite is true. One day, when Sandoz comes to visit the Lantier household, he asks Claude why he had never married Christine. The artist is surprised by the question:

" Mon Dieu! pourquoi? parce qu'ils n'en avaient même jamais causé, parce qu'elle ne semblait pas y tenir, et qu'ils n'en seraient certainement ni plus ni moins heureux." 1)

Eventually Claude decides to marry Christine out of pity, thinking it might make her feel more secure, but he himself has no illusions about its worth. When the wedding takes place, the ceremony is treated in typical disdainful terms, and afterwards the couple, if anything, feel colder one to the other, although it is only fair to say that the disintegration of their union had begun before the marriage. The same night they seem like strangers," L'épouse diminuait l'amante, cette formalité du mariage semblait avoir tué l'amour." 2)

Roubaud and Séverine and the terrible state of their marriage in La Bête Humaine illustrate the horror of two people irrevocably joined by man-made law when there is no love between them:

" La vie commune n'était plus que le contact obligé de deux êtres liés l'un à l'autre, passant des journées entières sans échanger une parole, allant et venant côte à côte, comme étrangers désormais, indifférents et solitaires. " 3)

Le Docteur Pascal also condemns marriage in the form of an institution. For Clotilde, being married amounts to entering into a full liaison with someone; on the morning after the consummation of her union with Pascal, the young woman exclaims to the old servant, " Martine, je ne pars pas! Maître et moi, nous nous sommes mariés." 4) Félicité Rougon is scandalised, but

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1) L'Œuvre. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 159. 2) Ibid. p. 230.

3) La Bête Humaine. R.M. Vol. 4. Pp. 1219-20.

4) Le Docteur Pascal. R.M. Vol. 5. p. 1065.



not altogether surprised by the new state of affairs. She advises Clotilde to marry Pascal for the sake of decency; the girl's ingenuous reply would be typical of many of Zola's characters," Est-ce que nous en serons plus heureux, grand'-mère?" 1)

The Rougon-Macquart novels contain much destructive criticism of marriage as it existed, but it is difficult to decide what Zola was advocating in his main series of works. Denise Baudu obviously regarded marriage as a guarantee of constancy and security, and also as a state necessary to the most effective use of her salutary schemes. In spite of Zola's mockery of marriage as an institutionalised religious sacrament, it is doubtful that he was seriously recommending some form of vague Republican mutually conceived contract of equality. In Le Ventre de Paris he describes a couple, Clémence and Charvet, two of the revolutionaries who meet at Lebigre's, who enter into such a 'free' marriage:

" Depuis plus de dix ans, Clémence et lui (Charvet) vivaient maritalement, sur des bases débattues, selon un contrat strictement observé de part et d'autre. " 2)

When conversation gets round to women, both express laudable, progressive opinions:

" La femme, déclara nettement Charvet, est l'égale de l'homme; et, à ce titre, elle ne doit pas le gêner dans la vie. Le mariage est une association..Tout par moitié, n'est-ce pas, Clémence? Evidemment, répondit la jeune femme..." 3)

But along with the rest of the wind-bag Republicans Zola tends to mock his progressive couple. A 'share-and-share-alike' marriage such as theirs requires a high degree of understanding by both partners, who also need economic independence. Charvet and Clémence each has a separate account, and each pays his own expenses. Their habits of settling up at the end of the evening gives Zola the opportunity to poke a little gentle fun. Charvet

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1) Ibid.p.1075. 2) Le Ventre de Paris.R.M.Vol.1.p.709.

3) Ibid.p.711.

professes to favour the system, but his wife earns more than he, and although he jokes about it, his laughter is tinged with bitterness. After each ridiculous Republican gathering, the couple go off always in heated discussion, never arm in arm. Zola may also be expressing the oft-felt fear that the independent woman would become somewhat masculine. Clémence rolls her own cigarettes and drinks rum like a man.

It is more easy to see exactly what Zola was positively suggesting as proper marriages in his ideal society. In Paris a new sort of marriage, based on the desire to create a harmonious family existence, emerges from Guillaume Froment's example. Guillaume had not married the woman he had had three children by, who is now dead. His brother Pierre, a priest, thinks that such a situation offends all morality. Guillaume is about to 'marry' a young girl, Marie Couturier, but is wounded in a bomb incident. He asks Pierre to tell his family that all is well, and the priest is welcomed by Marie. Pierre's contact with Guillaume's family increases and slowly he feels more and more at ease in the industrious, happy household until, with a need for life reawakened in him, he falls in love with Marie and founds a family with her, the young girl having been ceded to him by his brother. We are told of their marriage arrangement:

" Ceux-ci, (Pierre and Marie) simplement pour sauvegarder les droits sociaux de l'enfant, s'étaient épousés civilement à la mairie de Montmartre, résolus du reste à passer outre, s'ils n'avaient pas trouvé un maire qui consentît à marier un ancien prêtre. " 1)

The successive generations in Fécondité are all married and they bring up their children within wedlock. It is above all the offspring who provide the bond to unite couples in a lasting companionship. The union of the two founders of the dynasty is described as follows:

"...un bel amour, sain et fort, naquit, grandit entre les deux jeunes gens, non pas le coup de foudre qui jette les amants aux bras l'un de l'autre, mais l'estime, la tendresse, la foi

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1) Paris.O.C.Vol.7.p.1551.

la mutuelle certitude du bonheur dans le don réciproque, qui font l'indissoluble mariage. " 1)

The ideal wife which successive generations of Froments seek, is a companion, an aide and most importantly, a mother for their children. In direct contrast to the Rougon-Macquart novels, the qualities of a good wife are moral ones, concerned with her character, rather than material and social ones. Marriages are no longer arranged; usually the couple grow up together and their union becomes the natural conclusion to a long and tender friendship. When Denis marries Marthe Desvignes we are told of her attraction for him:

" Il ne voulait pas d'une fille riche qui lui aurait coûté plus cher que sa dot, il était ravi d'avoir découvert une femme jolie, très saine, très raisonnable, adroite et sensée, qui serait la compagne, l'aide et la consolation de chaque heure". 2)

Zola's most progressive and radical views on future marriage are to be found in Travail. In the ideal community of La Crêcherie free love becomes the usual practice, but does not lead to promiscuity since both men and women are content with the partner of their own choice. The old inter-class warfare which tore the Rougon-Macquart society apart is destroyed by the new generation's willingness and desire to inter-marry amongst different classes, so that finally a single-class society is achieved. There is no marriage sacrament in Travail, people obey their instinct which normally assures the stability of the partnership they enter. If the union does break down they are free to part, and any children either stay with the parent who claims them or are raised by the 'commune'.

Luc Froment does not impose his progressive ideas on the new community without some opposition from traditional

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1) Fécondité. O.C. Vol. 8. p. 28

2) Ibid. p. 403

thought. One young girl, Ma-Bleue, becomes pregnant by Achille, son of the bourgeois mayor of the old city. The question arises as to whether they should marry. The couple know that marriage will not increase their love. Achille does not want a marriage, since his father would necessarily become involved and the greatest reason for his revolt against his bourgeois background is the desire to work in La Crêcherie for the woman he has freely chosen. Opposition to their free union also comes from Sœurette, a keen supporter of Luc's new society, who cannot help clinging to some of the old ideas of morality, but Luc is able to change her mind:

"Et Luc finit par obtenir d'elle qu'elle fermât les yeux, car il sentait bien qu'avec les générations nouvelles, il faudrait peu à peu tolérer l'union libre". 1)

There can be no question of a religious wedding ceremony in La Crêcherie. Nanet and Nise are united by a simple, secular procedure. In the presence of all the workers, who are given a holiday, and surrounded by the machines, Luc and Suzanne join the hands of the bride and groom and pronounce:

" Aimez-vous de tout votre cœur, de toute votre chair, et ayez de beaux enfants, qui s'aimeront comme vous vous sèrez aimés". 2)

Love is the only possible basis for a partnership which is given no social or religious sanction.

Parental opposition can still exist towards protracted unions but third parties no longer have much influence on marriage. Bonnaire is not thrilled by his son's determination to marry Louise Mazelle, the daughter of a bourgeois family, but he will not interfere to try to impose his own will in an affair of the heart. Strongest opposition comes from Louise's

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1) Travail. O.C. Vol. 8. p. 740

2) Ibid. p. 852

parents, but they are eventually persuaded to bless the union, which represents one more step in the disintegration of a class society.

#### 8. Monogamy and the 'Theory of Impregnation'.

Zola's views on marriage for the individual changed remarkably little. In order to combat profligacy, he recommended as a young man, a monogamous existence with a chosen woman, with whom one has long been acquainted. Few characters in the Rougon-Macquart novels give up their wild love-lives for a stable, happy marriage. Only Denise Baudu is able to reform the promiscuous Octave Mouret, who in turn becomes a vehement supporter of marriage. His vehemence may only be self-justification for a complete 'volte-face' in behaviour. Are we also to believe, from a reference to Mouret in Le Docteur Pascal, that Octave was unable to sustain his enthusiasm for marriage? Pascal tells us that Mouret:

"...avait eu, vers la fin de l'hiver, un deuxième enfant de sa femme Denise Baudu, qu'il adorait, bien qu' il recommençât à se déranger un peu. " 1)

In later novels Zola expressed the opinion that monogamy would naturally become the rule in a society which accepted free unions based on love and mutual consent. Marriage in any traditional sense almost became superfluous; love was the all-important basis of human relationships.

Zola's espousal of the pseudo-scientific hypothesis known as the 'Theory of Impregnation' gave support to his plea for monogamy. The novelist took over from Dr. Prosper Lucas and Michelet the theory that a woman received an indelible imprint from the first man to possess her sexually, which was strong enough to cause a powerful attraction in her for this man, even if he returned when she felt no more love for him, and had given

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1) Le Docteur Pascal.R.M.Vol.5.p.1016.

her affection to a second man. Zola made this theory serve his artistic ends. He insists on the fatality and the irrevocability of this 'physiological marriage'. Madeleine Férat's misfortune is punishment for not having heeded a physical law, far stronger and more implacable than any social or religious sacrament. In such circumstances sexual involvement is not to be trifled with, for a moment's indiscretion can ruin a life-time.

Hemmings has rightly pointed out that the force of the 'Theory of Impregnation' as a complete motivator of human conduct is toned down in L'Assommoir, although Zola makes Gervaise's inability to control her relationship with Lantier perfectly obvious. Due both to circumstances and physiological forces, Gervaise is unable to keep her resolution to have nothing more to do physically with Lantier.

In Germinal Catherine Maheu shows mute obedience to Chaval and determines not to leave him, although he treats her badly and although (we suspect) she would have been much happier with Etienne Lantier. During the miners' rampage she explains why she stays with Chaval in spite of everything:

"Pourquoi voulait-il (Etienne) qu'elle abandonnât son homme? Chaval n'était guère gentil, bien sûr; même il la battait, des fois. Mais c'était son homme, celui qui l'avait eue le premier." 1)

After the fight between Chaval and Etienne which the latter wins, Catherine still returns to the brutal miner. She says that she prefers to be beaten than to have a succession of men, which might be taken as an acceptance, sub-consciously or otherwise, of the fatality of the 'Theory of Impregnation'. If so, it makes Catherine's plight yet more horrific, since she had had no inclination to lose her

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1) Germinal. R.M. Vol. 3. p. 1420

virginity with Chaval.

Robert sees the 'Theory of Impregnation' behind Françoise's preference for Buteau in La Terre, as the first man who approached her, without even achieving full sexual union with her. There may be some truth in this idea, but the young girl's preference is also due to a complicated set of reasons based on the peasants' views on the importance of the earth and inter-community solidarity.

The 'Theory of Impregnation' provides an important part of Zola's portrayal of the relations between the sexes. He was aware that it gave support to his recommendations for monogamy, since it gave scientific foundation to the indissolubility of marriage in the widest sense of the term. Writing about his development of the theory in Madeleine Féral for La Tribune of the 29th November 1868, he explained:

" Cette étude tend à accepter les liens du mariage comme éternels, au point de vue physiologique. La religion, la morale disent à l'homme: 'Tu vivras avec une seule femme'; et la science vient lui dire à son tour: 'Ta première épouse sera ton épouse éternelle.' " 1)

It seems that under the influence of his late sanctification of motherhood and parenthood Zola modified the theory to one of complete fertilization. The 'Theory of Impregnation' itself should have meant literal fertilization, but it was not used in this sense by Zola. Madeleine belongs physically to Jacques but was never pregnant by him. In his later work Zola altered his interpretation of the theory.

Josine in Travail is made pregnant by Luc and she tells her husband Ragu that she regards the father of her child as her true husband. Now, according to the theory, it is the man who first fertilizes a woman who has a hold over her. Luc, when he

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1) Reproduced in O.C.Vol.1.p.900.

gets to know of his impending paternity, gives the best exposition of the new hypothesis:

" Désormais, Josine était sa femme. Elle était à lui, à lui seul, puisqu'elle était enceinte d'un enfant de lui. Le seul époux était le père, le plaisir qu'on volait à une femme ne laissait rien, ne comptait pas. Un seul lien nouait le couple, solide, éternel, l'enfant, la vie propagée, un être nouveau, né de l'indissoluble union de deux êtres. " 1)

This is a direct denial of the truth of the 'Theory of Impregnation' in the form Zola had previously accepted. His new views on parenthood made it vital for him to believe his adapted scientific law. Luc tries to get Josine to come to him; the fact that she is legally married to Ragu makes no difference:

" Tu es ma femme, puisque je suis le père de ton enfant, et c'est moi que tu dois suivre. Demain, lorsque notre Cité de justice sera bâtie, il n'y aura pas d'autre loi que la loi d'amour, la libre union sera respectée de tous.." 2)

Everyone comes to accept the 'Theory of Fertilization'. When Luc is stabbed by Ragu, people find it most natural for her to instal herself at the bedside of the man by whom she is pregnant.

Zola created scientific backing for an idea he had always felt: that a true union of man and woman should be founded on love, mutual respect and understanding, and be aimed at the furtherance of the species.

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1) Travail. C.C. Vol. 8. p. 771.

2) Ibid. p. 772.



CHAPTER V : RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIETY

1. Sex in Society.

On the 25th June 1895 Zola wrote a letter to Dr.G.Saint-Paul in which he contended, " Et puis, tout ce qui touche au sexe touche à la vie sociale elle-même." 1) The descriptions of sexual practices indicate the author's attitude to a human instinct, and furthermore characterize the society he created in his novels. Zola was interested in sex for its importance in the psychology of the individual, but also as a sociologist, he was concerned with sexual behaviour since sexuality and the values and practices associated with it are useful points of approach to the study of a society. The Second Empire was, for Zola, a rotten, perverse age, and its decadence found no greater expression than in the sexual practices it fostered.

The workers' world is the realm of some of the most brutal sexual relationships. Children learn the horrors of reality at a tender age, they enjoy no period of innocence and are often even debauched before puberty. Sexual activities are governed by animality and a certain fatality since successive generations continue the workers' sordid relations from a feeling of inevitability. Zola manages to elicit sympathy for his lowly orders, however, since their degraded morals are shown to be a direct result of their hopeless social environment.

Zola's novels of working-class life contain a whole race of precociously debauched children. In Germinal Jeanlin and Lydie, in imitation of what they see around them, try to engage in sexual activity before they are physically equipped for it. In La Terre Nénesse and Delphin take turns in precocious affairs with La Trouille, daughter of Jésus-Christ. The adolescent population of the fishing village in La Joie de Vivre

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1) Correspondance. Les Lettres et Les Arts. B.C.p.362.

act in much the same way, and in Thérèse Raquin perverted boys come to gaze at dead women in the morgue.

Working-class girls accept that they will be initiated at an early age into a full sex life from which they expect little pleasure. On Etienne Lantier's first day at the mine, he asks Catherine Maheu if she has any lovers:

" Et, comme il désirait savoir si elle-même n'avait pas d'amoureux, elle répondit en plaisantant qu'elle ne voulait pas contrarier sa mère, mais que cela arriverait forcément un jour... C'est qu'on en trouve, des amoureux, quand on vit tous ensemble n'est-ce pas? " 1)

The expected event takes place that very evening when Catherine, at fifteen, and not yet a woman, resignedly has to submit to the brutal Chaval. Parents are not angered by such events, for they recognize their inevitability and remember that things were just the same when they were young. Catherine later sums up what a working-girl expects from life:

" N'était-ce pas la loi commune? Jamais elle n'avait rêvé autre chose, une violence derrière le terri, un enfant à seize ans, puis la misère dans le ménage, si son galant l'épousait." 2)

Gervaise Macquart expresses the same acceptance of fate when she explains to Mme.Boche her early relationship with Lantier which has left her the mother of two fast-growing children:

" J'avais quatorze ans et lui dix-huit, quand nous avons eu notre premier. L'autre est venu quatre ans plus tard..C'est arrivé comme ça arrive toujours, vous savez. " 3)

Girard has noticed that in Germinal sexual appetite is recurringly treated exactly as a need for food:

" La fonction sexuelle est ramenée par Zola à une espèce d'activité de la nutrition. Ayant évoqué 'les nez gourmands' de toutes les filles de Montsou', le romancier ne désigne pas autrement l'amour physique que comme le fait de 'se bourrer'. 'Se bourrer de plaisir', 'se bourrer de la seule joie qui ne coutât rien', 'se bourrer jusqu'à la gorge!' etc., le terme abject revient sans cesse comme s'il ne s'agissait réellement que d'un

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1) Germinal.R.M.Vol.3.p.1172. 2) Ibid.p.1332.

3) L'Assommoir.R.M.Vol.2.p.388.

succédané de la nourriture." 1)

The inhabitants of Montsou are starving for bread for most of the novel, and they feel an equally intense hunger for love which they seek to satisfy in leisure hours away from the mine. In fleeting moments of pleasure they seek refuge from the horrors of their existence in an activity which costs them nothing. When Etienne takes a walk after his first day's work at the mine he meets only courting pairs, engaged on their costless pleasure. Père Mouque can hardly put a foot outside of his house without stepping on a copulating couple.

Depravity among the working-classes is never a result of personal choice. The reasons for promiscuity are to be found in forces and conditions stronger than the individual, whose lot will not improve until social conditions are better. The mining community of Montsou are poorly educated as parents can not afford to allow their children to go to school; moreover they lose all conception of decency by being forced to live in close proximity one to another with no distinction of sex, so that they become almost automatically promiscuous. Zola intended the same lesson to be drawn from L'Assommoir. On the 13th February 1877 he wrote to the 'Directeur' of Le Bien Public explaining his novel and indicating that overcrowded living conditions were a direct cause of lax morals among the poorer classes:

" La question du logement est capitale; les puanteurs de la rue, l'escalier sordide, l'étroite chambre où dorment pêle-mêle les pères et les filles, les frères et les sœurs, sont la grande cause de la dépravation des faubourgs. " 2)

When Gervaise wishes to justify her morals she can use overcrowding as an excuse:

" Oui, oui, quelque chose de propre que l'homme et la femme, dans ce coin de Paris, où l'on est les uns sur les autres, à cause de la misère! " 3)

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1) Marcel Girard. L'Univers de Germinal. R.S.H. 1953. Pp. 68-9.

2) Correspondance. Les Lettres et Les Arts. B.C. p. 121.

3) L'Assommoir. R.M. Vol. 2. p. 637.

In Au Bonheur des Dames the promiscuous life led by most of Denise Baudu's fellow salesgirls is a result of working conditions in the store. The girls are forced to extract money from lovers to supplement their wages in order to live. When Denise comes to work at the store her pleasant friend, Pauline Cugnot, advises her to take a lover so that she too can make ends meet. Denise refuses to follow the usual custom, although her obstinacy involves her in privations and hardships. By remaining virtuous, she sticks out like a sore thumb against the rest of the poisoned society of the Parisian poor, where prostitution seems so obvious a means of living.

The sex lives of the peasants in the country are similar to those of the urban proletariat. The younger members of the Artaud community in La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret are as precociously sensual as the mining children in Germinal. Country children have the example of animal life, as well as that of their elders, to follow. In 1878 Zola wrote an article for the Russian periodical Vestnik Evropy which included consideration of the French peasant woman, and he was able to discuss the morals of the peasants in general:

" La vie est trop libre; elle s'écoule presque entièrement en plein air et, de ce fait, il est compréhensible que les garçons et les petites filles manquent de pudeur. Ils tiennent entre eux les propos les plus licencieux; la pudeur et la modestie leur sont inconnues; ce sont des vertus bourgeoises, nées dans les villes. Il y a longtemps que les animaux leur ont tout appris." 1)

Françoise in La Terre is educated in sexual reality by the animals; the story opens with her leading her cow to be mated with Hourdequin's bull. The mating of the cow and the bull is a fitting prelude to the human sexual activities in this novel. The peasants have a violent craving for land, money and women. Their first love is for the land, and their love of woman is

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1) Types de la femme contemporaine en France: La paysanne. Contained in Lettres de Paris. Translated and presented by Phillip.A.Duncan and Vera Erdely. p.97.

tempered by a wish not to compromise their possession of land by the birth of too many children. It is appropriate that the most brutal and avaricious member of the community, Buteau, should express the peasant attitude towards physical love:

" Et lui, alors, expliquait son idée sur la bagatelle: puisque le bon Dieu avait donné à chacun ce plaisir qui ne coûtait rien, il était permis de s'en payer tant qu'on pouvait, jusqu'aux oreilles; mais pas d'enfant, ah! pour ça, non! n'en fallait plus." 1)

At harvest time the peasants' desires are roused to fever pitch. The casual labour brought in to help with the harvest, is housed in barns with no division of the sexes, and indulges in highly promiscuous behaviour. At this time of the year Buteau becomes yet more violent, and Jacqueline, Hourdequin's mistress, can scarcely satisfy her craving for men. The urge which drives the peasant to possess woman is a primeval, powerful force, similar to the one which, from time immemorial, has led him to plough and fertilize the earth. Jean Macquart, as a stranger to the country district, never cultivates the same sexual habits; he is a sensual man but, compared to the peasants, he is refined and gentle. Françoise has finer feelings too. Jean and Françoise seem well suited, but their eventual marriage is a cold, sober attachment. The young girl, in spite of her horror of its practices, is still very much a part of the violent peasant community. When Buteau has finally raped her, she realises that she loves him, as has often been suggested by her excitement when in the presence of the man who is ceaselessly trying to violate her. Personal emotions in the close-knit peasant circle are conditioned by a feeling of family and community solidarity.

In spite of the animality and violence of working-class relationships, there is something dignified about the poor's unblushing acceptance of sex as a natural instinct which contrasts sharply with the sexual hypocrisy and perversity which grow as

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1) La Terre. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 534.

one ascends the social ladder in Zola's world. The workers' circle can also breed more idyllic love affairs. Goujet, Deloche, EtienneLantier and Catherine are all from the lower classes and all prove that the two extremes of love can exist in the lower strata of society. The love-life of the Maheu is somehow nobler than is usual in the rest of the mining community. Maheu often possesses his wife on emerging from the bath after a hard day's work at the mine. What Maheu calls his 'dessert' provides the one moment of pleasure in the whole day.

In his most idyllic affair, that between Silvère and Miette, Zola insists that their tenderness is a product of their innocent ignorance, which is only found amongst the working class:

" Les jeunes gens, jusqu'à cette nuit de trouble, avaient vécu une de ces naïves idylles qui naissent au milieu de la classe ouvrière, parmi ces déshérités, ces simples d'esprit, chez lesquels on retrouve encore parfois les amours primitives des anciens contes grecs. " 1)

Perhaps what is most pleasing about the sexual practices of the lower classes is that they are rarely indulged in for reasons of personal interest, as is common in other classes. In Au Bonheur des Dames Mme. Desforges uses the Baron Hartmann, her ex-lover, to profit her new lover, Octave Mouret, in a complicated pattern of personal interest, which is typical of Zola's society from the bourgeoisie upwards.

The male members of bourgeois circles are subject to the same excessive sexual appetite as their working-class brothers, but they forever seek to hide the indulgence of their desires behind a cloak of hypocrisy. Pot-Bouille is built around the squalid, amorous intrigues of an outwardly respectable apartment house. Here a promiscuous existence is veiled behind a façade of family respectability. Members of the professional classes profess fidelity to their wives, and censure the morals of the rest of society, whilst indulging in the most ignoble

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1) La Fortune des Rougon. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 170.

affairs with any women who will satisfy their desires. Doctor Juillerat indicates that the sexual habits of the bourgeoisie are the most obvious sign of the general decadence of a class:

"...au milieu de ses fuites d'homme médiocre, revenaient des observations justes de vieux praticien, qui connaissait à fond les dessous de son quartier. Il se lâchait sur les femmes, les unes qu'une éducation de poupée corrompait ou abêtissait, les autres dont une névrose héréditaire pervertissait les sentiments et les passions, toutes tombant salement, sottement, sans envie comme sans plaisir; d'ailleurs, il ne se montrait pas plus tendre pour les hommes, des gaillards qui achevaient de gâcher l'existence, derrière l'hypocrisie de leur belle tenue; et, dans son emportement de jacobin, sonnait le glas entêté d'une classe, la décomposition et l'écroulement de la bourgeoisie dont les états pourris craquaient d'eux-mêmes. " 1)

Above all, Pot-Bouille gives the impression of the drabness of the monotonous bourgeois involvements. Mediocre people indulge in uninspiring affairs to alleviate the boredom and uselessness of their existence. Their sexual activities have neither the powerful, foreboding hue of the lower classes, nor the gaudy splendour of high society's excesses; the affairs are painted in a colourless grey. Not all members of the middle-class are as degenerate as the Parisians of Pot-Bouille, but the indiscretions of the latter are the most excessive examples of the activities of a class Zola obviously felt had reached its decadent end.

In the higher realms of Zola's society financiers and politicians ruin themselves with courtesans, young aristocrats seek excitement with experienced society girls and the country's top administrators can forsake all for the whim of a hack actress. Sex to the upper classes is often little more than a transaction, a means of obtaining power, advancement and favour, the supreme weapon in political and financial intrigue.

Zola also demonstrated that the highest levels of society were the most perverse. On wet evenings Satin prefers to seek out

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1) Pot-Bouille. R.M. Vol. 3. p. 363.

high-class customers, but she always does so with apprehension:

" Elle avait bien un peu peur, car les plus comme il faut étaient les plus sales. Tout le vernis craquait, la bête se montrait, exigeante dans ses goûts monstrueux, raffinant sa perversion. " 1)

La Curée; the most perverse novel, was intended to show the results of a poisoned code of morality. The action takes place largely at the highest level of Imperial society. The Emperor himself is depicted as a highly corrupt man, open to influence by appeals to his sensual nature. On Renée's first visit to a court ball, the Emperor appears with an aged general to inspect the serried ranks of guests. Their attention is directed at the ladies present whom they observe like farmers at a cattle market. Because of her beauty, Renée is the type of woman the Second Empire honours, as Maxime points out to her:

" Va, ne sois pas modeste..avoue carrément que tu es une des colonnes du second Empire. Entre nous, on peut se dire de ces choses-là. Partout, aux Tuileries, chez les ministres, chez les simples millionnaires, en bas et en haut, tu règues en souveraine." 2)

This is a world in which the sexually most attractive are the strongest, but the heroine of this novel does not profit from her ascendancy. The dissipations of the newly-rich administrators and financiers of Imperial society only bore her; she needs the greater excitement of incest to satisfy her.

The two great motivators of human behaviour in Zola's society - wealth and lustful passion - are closely linked. Saccard and Laure d'Aurigny arrange to make the Duc de Rozan pay dearly for the right to be known publicly as a new official lover. Fashionable debauchery, in a world where traditional values are ignored, gives people prestige for which they are willing to pay handsomely.

Normally accepted forms of family and social conduct are disregarded in the ruling classes, usually being sacrificed to

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1) Nana.R.M.Vol.2.Pp.1313-4. 2) La Curée.R.M.Vol.1.p.324.



financial considerations. L'Abbé Faujas explains to Félicité Rougon that one of Delangre's most appealing features as a suitable candidate for the elections is his proven ability to capitalize on his wife's infidelity:

" Ce qui m'a décidé, enfin, ce sont les histoires qu'on m'a contées de sa fortune. Il aurait repris trois fois sa femme, trouvée en flagrant délit, après s'être fait donner cent mille francs chaque fois par son bonhomme de beau-père. S'il a réellement battu monnaie de cette façon, c'est un gaillard qui sera très utile à Paris pour certaines besognes. " 1)

Such a man would indeed be a fit and typical member of the Imperial governing classes whose values were entirely corrupt.

In Son Excellence Eugène Rougon the portrayal of the highest realms of Imperial society again shows a world totally lacking in decent moral standards. Richard Grant has well described the atmosphere at Compiègne where "the dinner-table conversation .... becomes quite ribald at times and an aura of seduction and sensuality pervades the dining hall". 2) At a charity sale the women flaunt themselves half naked and vie with each other to extract as much money as possible from the men folk with their attractiveness. In this instance the procedure is treated light-heartedly, but elsewhere it is more serious, since in this novel blatant use of sexuality is made to further personal or political ends. The influence which people have one on another comes from sexual contact in some form. Mme de Llorentz has de Marsy under her control because of some compromising letters he had written several years before about various illustrious personages. In order to break de Marsy, Clorinde has only to inflame Mme de Llorentz's jealousy which causes her to deliver the letters to the Emperor. Mme Bouchard comes brazenly offering herself

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1) La Conquête de Plassans. R.M. Vol. 1. Pp. 1150-1

2) Richard B. Grant. Zola's Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. p. 44

to Rougon at one stage, wielding her sexual charms to gain advancement for one of her new young lovers. The fact that the "chaste" Rougon is able to resist such temptation and that his refusals are portrayed as something unique and surprising, effectively heighten the picture given of sex being used as a weapon of influence and power in the governing and administrative ranks of the Second Empire.

Above all it is Clorinde Balbi who blatantly uses her sexuality to achieve her own ends. The influence she is able to wield satisfies her desire for power and enables her to make and break Rougon as a minister. Clorinde schemes with her mind and body, but the latter is the 'trump card' she is willing to play for the slightest favour when all else fails:

" Elle se gardait comme un argument irrésistible. Pour elle, se donner ne tirait pas à conséquence. Elle y mettait si peu de plaisir, que cela devenait une affaire pareille aux autres, un peu plus ennuyeuse peut-être". 1)

This perverted use of sexuality brings Clorinde no pleasure in itself. Her rise to a position of importance is measured by the progression of beds she has slept in. Taking her seduction as high as possible, she goes to work on the Emperor who is a susceptible target for a competent seductress. In a society obsessed with amorous intrigue, fashionable debauchery again brings prestige. Clorinde flaunts her union with the Emperor by wearing a suitably inscribed adornment around her neck and for the rest of her social circle her attraction is increased when it is known for certain that she has become the Emperor's mistress. But her seduction of the head of state is not aimed at a gain in prestige. Submission in this world always has a price, and in this case she demands the dismissal of Rougon and his replacement by

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1) Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. R.M. Vol. 2. p. 189

Clorinde's own insignificant husband.

The portrait of sexual activity as a desperate need and a source of weakness in men and conversely as a means to power but not enjoyment in women is complete at this level of society. In a male dominated society use of her sexual charms is the one way in which a strong woman such as Clorinde can express herself. Son Excellence Eugène Rougon contains a strong indictment of a society which allowed itself to be literally governed by the force of sex.

In Nana love is treated by the courtesan and by most of her lovers as a monetary transaction; a woman's favours are a commodity to be sold for money or requests granted. Nana the spendthrift is set up in a house by Muffat which she turns into a business administration. She exhibits great scorn for the man who pays and is proud to ruin a string of lovers.

In the monied world of L'Argent sex is used to further financial schemes. La Baronne Sandorff uses her bodily charms to get herself included in the profits of financial deals. The Baronne is cold in love, her main object is to extract economic tips from her succession of lovers. Saccard is counted amongst the latter but once she feels Aristide becoming cooler, and that her source of financial information is drying up, the Baronne embarks on the difficult campaign of seduction against the Jewish banker Gundermann, who is behind the moves against Saccard's bank. At his age, however, he is beyond sexual desire, the Baronne's most effective weapon does not work and Gundermann can afford to disdain her. The man who finally gains the upper hand in the financial jostling of this novel is one whose energy is not otherwise expended on compromising sexual escapades.

Consideration of Zola's portrayal of sexual practices gives valuable indications of his general views of society. As a sociologist, Zola believed that everything which concerns sex concerns society as well, and his most overtly sexual novels were

examples of serious social enquiry. The novels of this sort emphasize the degradation of the poor and the perverted morality of the higher classes, whose main concerns were lustful pleasure and money, and who dishonoured the erotic instinct in their pursuance. Sex was qualified by animality in the working-classes, hypocrisy in the bourgeoisie and the commercialisation of love in high society.

For members of the central family, excessive lustful passion is also the result of their bad hereditary background, of the poisoned Rougon-Macquart blood. Passion's wildest manifestations come from the male members of the family, but they can be traced back to the female ancestor, the mad Tante Dide, who had loved 'avec une brutalité de louve'. Apart from the limited circle of the Rougon-Macquart family, Zola saw the sexual practices of all of society as the effects of a nervous disorder. Hemmings, in writing of Zola's appreciation of a fellow novelist, Malot, quotes an article by Zola on the latter's work, published in Le Figaro on the 18th December 1866, in which Zola remarks on the nature of passion and the manner in which it is pursued and satisfied in contemporary France:

" Notre âge - je parle surtout de notre monde parisien - est secoué par un frisson nerveux qui a exalté et détraqué les facultés aimantes. La passion, chez nous, est une crise bête et folle. Nous n'avons plus l'amour tranquille et épais du sang; ce sont nos nerfs qui aiment et qui se brisent par la tension énorme que leur donnent nos fièvres chaudes. Nous vivons trop vite, et pas assez en brutes, quoi qu'on dise. Pour retrouver un pareil état d'esprit, il faut rétrograder jusqu'aux temps les plus fiévreux du mysticisme. Par une logique étrange, la science nous trouble comme la foi a troublé nos pères. " 1)

The pace of life and the wildness of appetites in the whole of society, and amongst the Rougons and the Macquarts in particular, renders love a violent, almost mad, phenomenon as it is depicted by Zola. The society which he created was a society

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1) F.W.J.Hemmings. La Critique d'un Créateur: Zola et Malot. R.H.L.F. 1967.p.58.

obsessed with sex but which, with its twisted values, or because of the bad living conditions of its lowliest orders, could find no means of channeling its sexual energies into durable, meaningful relationships. The pleasure-seeking males seized only on the most obvious aspect of a union with a woman and were incapable of sustained companionship with the opposite sex. Women, still in an inferior position in almost every sense, allowed themselves to be dominated or sought reparation in a bitter sex-war.

Zola arrives at his most effective portrayal of a society based on the twin motivations of money and sex when he combines the two and stresses the venality of love. At most levels of society sex is treated as a commodity for sale, but the commercialisation of love fittingly reaches its apogee in the world of high finance in L'Argent. Here the busy Parisian financiers pay their women monthly like an employee. Germaine Cœur moves in the circle of such financiers and of her we are told:

" Elle avait toujours été avec des boursiers, et toujours au mois, ce qui est commode pour des hommes très occupés, la tête embarrassée de chiffres, payant l'amour comme le reste, sans trouver le temps d'une vraie passion. " 1)

In a world where love is bought and sold there is scope for the 'entremetteuse', and Zola's society contains several such characters. In Une Page d'Amour Mère Fétu wheedles money out of Hélène Mouret and Doctor Deberle by encouraging and abetting their growing intimacy. The old woman is not nearly as sinister a figure as Sidonie Rougon in La Curée, who exists by arranging affairs and doing shady transactions. In this novel there are even two distinct types of 'entremetteuse', the traditional and the more modern. Sidonie and Mme. de Lauwerens are compared:

" C'était l'école classique, la femme en vieille robe noire portant des billets doux au fond de son cabas, mise en face de l'école moderne, de la grande dame qui vend ses amies dans son boudoir, en buvant une tasse de thé. " 2)

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1) L'Argent. R.M. Vol. 5. p. 85. 2) La Curée. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 424.

Society's principal standards are well shown by the way in which morality is founded on considerations of success. Vice is honoured as long as it brings success, and condemned only when it brings weakness and dissolution. Tiburce Rouillard in Madeleine Férat enters into a liaison with Hélène de Rieu in the hope that she will bring him material advancement. We are told how success and failure determine public judgement of any affair:

" Il sentait que, si cette femme ne parvenait pas à faire de lui un personnage, il serait raillé et méprisé pour avoir partagé sa couche: le succès l'aurait changé en homme habile, digne de toutes les faveurs; l'insuccès, au contraire, le coulait à jamais." 1)

The interrelationship of money and sex is embodied in the Charles in La Terre who retire to the country after making their fortune in a city brothel. Their comfortable circumstances guarantee respect from the peasants who are fully aware of the source of the money. This was a society which could accept anything as long as it brought success.

Zola's portrayal of sexual activities is an important part of his general picture of a ruined, decadent society. Lanoux, borrowing Zola's own words, sums up the author's contribution as a sociologist of sex:

" Il a vu ce Second Empire comme un immense lupanar, plein de paysannes bousculées, d'ouvrières séduites, de bourgeoises adultères, toutes soumises et provoquant 'la grimace affreuse du mâle', celle qu'il a en écrivant. Il le dit: 'Toute une société se ruant sur le cul.' " 2)

## 2. Marriage in Society.

Zola's fictional marriages are also interesting for the insight they give into the values of the society he created. The way in which marriages were contracted in the Rougon-Macquart novels reveals a world obsessed with money and undermining itself by deliberate perversion of decent standards. Zola gave a clear

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1) Madeleine Férat. O.C. Vol. 1. p. 872.

2) A. Lanoux. Zola Vivant. O.C. Vol. 1. p. 155.

indication of the types of unions likely to be found in his novels in an article he wrote in January 1876 for Vestnik Evropy, entitled Le mariage en France et ses principaux types. 1)

In the introduction to his article Zola examines love and marriage through the centuries. When he comes to review his own age he insists immediately on the venality of contemporary unions, " Au dix-neuvième siècle, l'amour est un garçon rangé, correct comme un notaire, ayant des rentes sur l'état." 2) Love is now simply, "...l'amour positif qu'on bâcle, comme un marché en Bourse." 3) Men and women marry knowing little of each other, and in the majority of cases the gulf between the two persists:

" En somme, l'homme de nos jours n'a pas le temps d'aimer, et il épouse la femme sans la connaître, sans être connu d'elle. Ce sont là deux traits distinctifs du mariage moderne. " 4)

To demonstrate these general principles in practice, Zola gives four examples of a marriage arrangement from different classes of society.

The first concerns the Count Maxime de la Roche-Mablon, an aristocrat, who has spent a carefree youth but now wants to embark on a diplomatic career. His aunt says that in order to do so, he must marry, " le mariage étant la base de toutes les carrières sérieuses." 5) Maxime's aunt sets about arranging everything. She thinks of Melle. Henriette de Salneuve, a girl of considerable fortune and nobility, and thus a thoroughly 'acceptable' partner. The formal demand is made, the complicated contract is drawn up, and when the couple are married, first in a simple civil ceremony, and then with all the pomp of a religious one, Maxime has seen Henriette just five times! The girl is completely unprepared for her wedding night; when her husband makes advances, she sobs and calls for her mother, but she has to

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1) Included in Autres Contes et Nouvelles. O.C. Vol. 9. entitled Comment on se marie. 2) Comment on se marie. O.C. Vol. 9. p. 965.  
3) Ibid. p. 965. 4) Ibid. p. 967. 5) Ibid. p. 968.

submit when he more or less rapes her. In a short time the partners find that they are incompatible and after fourteen months the husband no longer enters his wife's room. They keep up an appearance of marriage but Maxime renounces his idea of a diplomatic career and goes back to his mistress; Henriette is at first bored, then begins indulging in idle distractions and wonders if she should take a lover or not.

The second example concerns the upper realms of the bourgeoisie represented by Jules Beaugrand, the son of a famous 'avocat', who has the desire for a good position and a need of luxury. At thirty, however, he has achieved no success and his father advises marriage to redress the situation; the woman he chooses must have one quality above all others, " Prends-la riche, parce qu'une femme, dans ces conditions, coûte très cher." 1) Beaugrand senior suggests a certain Melle.Desvignes, a manufacturer's daughter about whom he knows one thing - she has a dowry of a million francs. Jules agrees to marry the girl if her father increases the dowry by two hundred thousand francs. Negotiations drag on for three months until Desvignes agrees. The marriage is decided upon, and both parties are fully aware of the business deal they are concluding. The complicated contract is drawn up with every clause scrutinised before signatures are appended. A simple civil service is followed by as luxurious a church ceremony as possible, and then by a dinner and ball. Careful negotiations are entered into over the cost of each item.

After two years of marriage indifference has come between the two. Jules is too busy to be concerned with his wife, satisfying the need for quick pleasure with other women. Margueritte is a charming wife to the outside world and a great success in society. Their home becomes a fashionable centre and ensures them a circle of influential friends. Privately each partner is indifferent to

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1) Ibid.p.972.



to the other, but in public they work for their common material advancement.

Money also plays the principal role in marriage in the modest commercial world. Louise Bodin is the daughter of a 'mercier' who has promised her a dowry of two thousand francs. The practical Louise is determined to marry only a man who has a similar amount as her dowry, so that together they would be able to set up in business. Alexandre Meunier, a clock-maker, appears on the scene. His mother has saved one thousand, five hundred francs to 'facilitate' her son's marriage. Louise insists on two thousand francs and Mme. Meunier, who approves of Louise's obstinacy, vows to raise the extra money. Meanwhile Alexandre and Louise wait patiently with never a word of love spoken between them. Mme. Meunier succeeds, the marriage is fixed, and the couple arrange to start a business. They forego a contract as it costs too much, agreeing instead to share everything equally. A simple church service follows the civil ceremony and a modest dinner is enjoyed at night. The Meuniers lead a comfortable life. Fortunately they have no children, for they are such a nuisance when one is in business. Neither partner is guilty of infidelity, but equally:

" Jamais ils ne sauront s'ils se sont aimés. Mais ils savent, à coup sûr, qu'ils sont des associés honnêtes, après à l'argent, qui continuent à coucher ensemble, pour éviter un double blanchissage de draps. " 1)

Valentin, in the last example, is a good worker from the 'Place de la Bastille' area. One day he meets Clémence, a sixteen year old florist who has already been abandoned by one lover. The young man makes advances which Clémence repulses, as she wants any future relationship to be a lasting one. After two months of attempts at her virtue, Valentin offers to marry the girl and she accepts. The formalities are finally understood and carried out in a civil ceremony only, as they can not afford a church

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1) Ibid.p.980.

wedding. Clémence is ugly by the age of thirty, deformed by the birth of three children. Valentin has taken to drink. Frequent arguments take place but the couple are basically still in love:

" Et, dans cette vie de querelles et de misère, dans la saleté du logis souvent sans feu et sans pain, dans la lente dégradation du ménage, il y a, jusqu'à la mort, sous les rideaux en guenilles du lit, des nuits où l'amour met la caresse de son battement d'ailes." 1)

Of all four marriages, the one between two working-class people is the only one in which the partners were ever in love, and remained so in spite of everything.

The portrayal of marriages in France which Zola gave to his Russian readers showed contracts being arranged as pieces of business in which love played little part. The society he created in his novels acted according to the same principles.

Madeleine Férat previews many of the marriages in the Rougon-Macquart society. Madeleine and Guillaume attempt to escape from Jacques by immersing themselves in Parisian social life, but find that they can not order their marriage in the flippant manner common to other couples:

" Ils s'efforçaient d'entendre le mariage à la façon des gens du monde qui se marient par convenance, pour arrondir leur fortune et ne pas laisser périr leur nom. Le jeune homme assoit sa position, la jeune fille conquiert sa liberté. Puis, après une nuit passée dans la même alcôve, ils font chambre à part, ils échangent plus de saluts que de paroles. Monsieur reprend sa vie de garçon, madame commence sa vie de femme adultère." 2)

In Germinal parents are almost forced to prevent their children marrying because of their precarious financial situation. Moral degradation is closely linked to economic environment. Philomène Levaque, at nineteen years of age, already has two children by Zacharie Maheu, but both parents still live at home with their families, a state of affairs which is the cause of ceaseless quarrels especially between La Maheude and La Levaque. Whilst

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1) Ibid.p.984. 2) Madeleine Férat.O.C.Vol.1.p.874.

there had been but one child even La Levaque had not insisted on a marriage since the loss of Philomène's pay would have been worse than having to feed one more tiny mouth. But with two children a marriage becomes more advantageous to her and she is forever trying to fix a wedding. La Maheude, however, resists it for as long as possible; she feels that Zacharie should help support the family before marrying and setting up a home of his own. The loss of an adult son's earning power is serious for La Maheude who has several unproductive mouths to feed, and when the marriage is finally decided on, the Maheus take in Etienne Lantier as a lodger to cover the loss. La Maheude's attitude towards her daughter is similar. She is not angered by Catherine's affair with Chaval, seeing her premature debauchment as the lot of the working-girl, but she is furious when her daughter leaves home to live with Chaval, thus denying her wages to the family. The economic undesirability of marriage is fashioned out of necessity, because of the poors' pitiful social condition.

But the workers' circle is about the only level of society where Zola seems to think a disinterested marriage can take place. In L'Assommoir Coupeau wants to marry Gervaise for herself, because he loves her. Gervaise's dowry consists of two children by another man, as the bilious Mme. Lorilleux is quick to point out, but this makes no difference to Coupeau's desire to marry Gervaise and to do his best for her. Coupeau's unselfish attitude makes a refreshing change in a society where marriages are arranged for complicated reasons of interest, but rarely from a basis of love. As in his article for the Russian journal, Zola showed that only amongst the working-classes could a spark of love animate marriage.

In the world of the small businessman marriages are already consciously arranged with an eye to material and financial profit. In Le Ventre de Paris Quenu and Lisa Macquart work side by side in Gradelle's butchery shop. When the latter dies Quenu inherits

the sum of eighty-five thousand francs. Immediately it seems natural for the couple to be married, not because of any love between the two, but to provide the best basis for a successful business. After adding up Gradelle's money we are told, "Naturellement, ils parlèrent de l'avenir, de leur mariage, sans qu'il eût jamais été question d'amour entre eux." 1) Lisa adds ten thousand francs to the inheritance, and the joining together of these two sums unites the couple more effectively than any ceremony. In higher reaches of society stakes may be higher than domestic prosperity but rarely was marriage shown to be more consciously founded on financial considerations.

In the same novel marriage between August and Augustine is arranged for an indefinite date in the future when they will have sufficient funds to set up a comfortable home and business. The long patient waiting-period takes all the romance and excitement out of marriage. A similar arrangement in Au Bonheur des Dames has a tragic outcome. Colomban and Geneviève Baudu are destined to carry on the small shopkeepers' tradition of the proprietor's daughter marrying the senior sales assistant. The marriage is delayed for so long while they wait for finances to recover that Colomban gets infatuated with a slut from the sales staff of the greatest competitor, the department store. His infidelity breaks the heart of the already sickly Geneviève, who dies unfulfilled and unsatisfied. Marriages in this particular strata of society are drab, hum-drum affairs geared to the maximum comfort and security.

In the country there are accepted standards of conduct concerning children, which make the peasant's morality rather particular. Men and women have few scruples about

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1) Le Ventre de Paris. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 651

their behaviour before marriage. A pregnancy, however, usually settles a marriage, although it may be delayed until it is absolutely necessary or until such time as it is fully advantageous. The peasants have an insatiable appetite for woman and the earth; if the two can be acquired in the same deal then so much the better. Marriage is a means of increasing holdings and also can act as an antidote to the splitting up of land by shared inheritances. In his article Types de la femme contemporaine en France Zola included some remarks on the countryman's marrying habits:

" Le paysan désire satisfaire ses sentiments et, en même temps, conclure une bonne affaire. Pourtant, il faut dire que la bonne affaire passe avant tout. J'ai rarement rencontré des idylles dans les champs". 1)

In the same article Zola observed that marriages are delayed in rural areas until a girl becomes pregnant:

" J'ai constaté que dans bien des villages, les mariages se font trop tard pour la jeune fille: c'est presque devenu une coutume que le père de l'enfant à venir en épouse la mère". 2)

But, at least in most cases, the birth of a child means marriage for the peasants; no attempt is made to deny paternity or to shirk its responsibilities.

In La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, the community of the Artauds prefigures in many ways the peasants of La Terre, whose mentality they share. Serge Mouret, the village priest, tries to sort out the affair between two of his flock, Fortuné and Rosalie, who is pregnant. The couple themselves want to marry, Fortuné's parents are in favour, but the one obstacle is Rosalie's father, Père Bambousse, who is opposed to the union because his prospective son-in-law is not of a sufficiently

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1) Lettres de Paris. Edited by Duncan and Erdely. p. 97

2) Ibid. p. 97

well-to-do family. His objection on financial grounds is obvious when Serge says that the pair should be married:

" Je garde ma fille, entendez-vous...Un gueux, ce Fortuné. Pas deux liards. Ce serait commode, si, pour épouser une jeune fille, il suffisait d'aller avec elle. Dame! entre jeunesses, on verrait des noces matin et soir." 1)

When Serge calls attention to the baby Rosalie is expecting, Bambousse reminds him that it is not yet born, but even to this intractable old peasant, the birth might make a difference:

" L'enfant? Il n'est pas là, n'est-ce pas? Il n'y sera peut-être jamais. Si elle fait le petit, nous verrons." 2)

Bambousse's commercial attitude towards the whole question of marriage is admirably summed up in his last remarks in this short interview:

" Enfin, si vous me demandiez un sac de blé, vous me donneriez de l'argent. Pourquoi voulez-vous que je laisse aller ma fille contre rien? " 3)

The third section of the novel opens with Serge marrying Rosalie and Fortuné. The local girls and the couple themselves find the ceremony a source of amusement. The baby is present in church, so obviously they have delayed the wedding until its arrival. Later at Albine's funeral we learn that Rosalie's baby has died of convulsions. Père Bambousse is beside himself with rage; he need not have given his daughter to Fortuné, he would have given a wheat field to have seen the baby die three days before the wedding. Bambousse's opinions do not give a very sympathetic portrayal of the peasant moral attitudes, but at least to him too, birth of a baby means marriage between the girl and its father.

Père Fouan in La Terre reveals a similar attitude. L'Abbé Godard tries to get Fouan to make his son Buteau marry the pregnant Lise. Godard, like Serge, refers to the expected child, and Fouan reiterates Bambousse's reaction, " Bien sûr... Seulement, il

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1) La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret. R.M. Vol. 1. p. 1243.

2) Ibid. p. 1243-4. 3) Ibid. p. 1245.

n'est pas encore fait, cet enfant." 1) Buteau does not marry Lise immediately on the birth of her child, and Robert observes that the child is not considered an obstacle to Lise's projected marriage to Jean Macquart. 2) Buteau is thus the exception to a general rule of peasant conduct, delaying his marriage to Lise until her inheritance makes it worthwhile. Even the unscrupulous Buteau has some idea of the common peasant moral standpoint. He is haunted by the thought of losing his sister-in-law's land if Françoise married Macquart. He tries to keep the two apart, afraid that Françoise might become pregnant by Jean, which would ruin his plans to keep the land by necessitating the girl's marriage to the outsider.

Fouan remains the chief spokesman for traditional peasant morality. Jean realises that his only chance of obtaining the hand of Françoise is through the doyen of the family. On being approached, however, Fouan says that he can do nothing. Jean plays a last desperate card, "Faut que je vous dise, père Fouan, c'est que nous avons couché, Françoise et moi." 3) The old man asks if she is pregnant. Jean falsely replies that it is possible and Fouan answers, "Alors, il n'y a qu'à attendre..Si elle est grosse, on verra." 4)

There is thus some sort of moral control over marriages in peasant circles but unions remain largely property transactions. As one ascends Zola's social ladder the commercialisation of marriage is accentuated.

Amongst the bourgeoisie the search for a conjugal partner amounts to little more than a refined form of prostitution. Bourgeois loveless marriages become the breeding-ground for adultery. The middle-classes also tend to surround their marriages with a false air of respectability. The Deberles in Une Page

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1) La Terre.R.M.Vol.4.p.407. 2) G.Robert. La Terre d'Emile Zola.p.309. 3) La Terre.R.M.Vol.4.p.618. 4) Ibid.p.619.

d'Amour are outwardly a happy, close-knit family. H el ene Mouret is partly attracted to the doctor by his public displays of affection for his wife and child. She is ,therefore, surprised to find that the couple are not as united as they appear.

In a tale written for his Russian public, Zola gave, in the story of the Pichon family's efforts to marry off its daughters, a comic illustration of middle-class habits of arranging marriages. 1) The most suitable place to spend their holidays is seen as the most likely venue for finding a husband for three daughters who have no dowries. They discover that the Beaudrillards, who have an eligible, rich son are going to Luc-sur-Mer. Mme.Pichon objects that it is a horrible place, but her husband is adamant: Luc-sur-Mer is the place for them. Charles Beaudrillard is an ugly man, but at the resort the campaign is waged to ensnare him. A handsome, but penniless friend of his, Jean Bergnier, arrives and the Pichon girls are attracted to him. As soon as Pichon is told that Jean has not " un sou en poche " he writes him off with a brusque reaction, " Bon, celui-ci ne compte pas." 2) The well-laid plans fail, however, and Pichon succeeds only in the pairing of his youngest daughter with the poor artist. Next year he decides to go to Trouville!

In the novels, Zola described bourgeois arranged marriages more critically. In L' Œuvre Dubuche says one day that he is unable to keep his regular Thursday evening appointment for dinner with Lantier and Sandoz as he has a prior engagement with a well-to-do family. Sandoz teases him, and shows mocking scorn for a normal middle-class preoccupation, " Est-ce que tu esp eres y carotter une dot? " 3) The joking tone rendered by the verb 'carotter' turns to a more sombre one later when Dubuche reappears in a terrifying picture of a prematurely aged, broken man,

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1) Le Parisien en vill giature et   la campagne: deux contes. Vestnik Evropy. November 1877. Contained in Lettres de Paris and in O.C.Vol.9. entitled Les Bains de Mer. 2) Lettres de Paris. p.77. O.C.Vol.9.p.1075. 3) L' Œuvre. R.M.Vol.4.p.52.



spinning out a lonely existence with his two invalid children. If Zola wished this to be the punishment for marrying money, it is indeed a severe one.

The precedent for bourgeois marriage arrangements is set in La Fortune des Rougon by Pierre Rougon. After acquiring all the family's land by denying his illegitimate brother and sister any share in the inheritance, he determines to sell it to have enough money to marry a businessman's daughter, and be accepted as a partner. His plan is coolly calculated: " C'était une façon habile de gravir un échelon, de s'élever d'un cran au dessus de sa classe." 1) He selects as a prospective partner, Félicité Puech, whose father's business is in a bad way. Puech is delighted to sell his daughter for Rougon's fifty thousand francs, in a bid to save it. Félicité, a hard-headed girl, who has promised herself that one day she will subjugate Plassans with her luxury and splendour, lends herself willingly to the marriage, since she sees in Rougon a mediocre man whom she will easily be able to dominate, and use for her own ambitions. Arranged marriages have always been a subject of literature, of French more than others perhaps, but usually opposition to parental organisation of young lives came from some quarter. In Zola's novels all parties bow to questions of mutual, material interest in the selection of marriage partners.

Mme. Chanteau, in La Joie de Vivre, has a typically bourgeois mentality. At first she arranges that her son will marry Pauline Quenu at some future date. Once the latter's fortune has been dissipated by Lazare's foolhardy enterprises, Mme.Chanteau begins to plot a union with the rich Louise Thibaudier. The ill-conceived match is pre-destined to failure, through an incompatibility of temperaments:

" Le ménage, sans en être à une rupture, souffrait des mille froissements de deux tempéraments nerveux, incapables d'équilibre

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1) La Fortune des Rougon. R.M. Vol. 1. p.53.

dans la joie et dans la douleur." 1)

Even after the birth of their child, life for the couple is only, " ..la vie misérablement gâtée de deux êtres qui ne s'entendaient pas." 2) Marriage between Lazare and any partner would probably have been difficult, but the one conceived for him out of selfish reasons, is worse than most.

Procedures used for match-making at this level of society are given fullest treatment in Pot-Bouille. They are revealed in the actions of Mme.Josserand, who wishes to marry off her daughters, but from the description of the guests at a reception she gives, we see that she is only a representative of her class:

" Du monde arrivait, des mères fortes avec des filles maigres, des pères et des oncles à peine éveillés de la somnolence du bureau, poussant devant eux des troupeaux de demoiselles à marier." 3)

The choice of vocabulary used suggests that girls will be paraded for marriage like animals for slaughter at a cattle market; such is seen to be the case as the action unfolds.

Mme.Josserand gives her daughters lessons in the refined prostitution which is aimed at landing a husband. She helps them dress provocatively and teaches them the best ways of leading men on. Her motives for wanting to marry her daughters are purely selfish; if she can find them good husbands, she herself will become the head of a smart social set and so alleviate the dissatisfaction of being married to an honest man who has been unable to realise her worldly ambitions. Berthe Josserand is finally 'knocked down' to Auguste Vabre, but the ill-arranged marriage lasts less than three months:

" Ils étaient mariés à peine depuis trois mois, et une sourde désunion grandissait entre eux. C'était le heurt de deux tempéraments, de deux éducations différentes.." 4)

Fidelity is hardly likely to be maintained. When Berthe is caught with Octave Mouret, Mme.Josserand criticizes her because

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1) La Joie de Vivre. R.M.Vol.3.p.1052. 2) Ibid.p.1110.  
3) Pot-Bouille. R.M.Vol.3.p.46. 4) Ibid. Pp.224-5.

such behaviour gives a husband an arm against his wife, and prevents her from exploiting him to the full! But Berthe rightly blames her mother, who forced her to marry a man she did not love, and whose lessons in man-baiting backfired when Berthe used them on a man other than her spouse.

The society of Pot-Bouille is made up of wives and husbands, who know of their partner's infidelities but pretend to be ignorant of them, covering themselves all the time with a hypocritical cloak of assumed virtue. They set great store by the formal contract of marriage which they ceaselessly undermine. An example for all the female characters of the novel is set by the mistress with whom Verdier (who is sought by Hortense Jossierand as a husband) has been living for fifteen years. She has become a good companion, looking after Verdier and their domestic set-up in exemplary manner, but, as she is not married, the self-righteous inhabitants of the house in the Rue de Choiseul hold only scorn for her. Even amongst the squalid relationships of Pot-Bouille the ideal is evoked in glimpses of an author's household from the second floor. A family made up of husband, wife, and two children, are seen at intervals coming and going contentedly together.

There is hardly a marriage which is meaningfully happy or complete in Zola's society. One notable exception is to be found in L'Argent. The principles of human relationships have not altered in this novel. It is the need for dowries for daughters which sends both the Comtesse de Beauvilliers and M. Dejoie scurrying to Saccard with their savings, which they hope to supplement by shares which will bring quick, profitable returns.

The Paul and Marcelle Jordan ménage provides the great exception to the general rule. Their happiness arises from the unique refusal to base the principles of their existence on financial criteria. Jordan is a struggling writer, in financial straits for most of the book, but one who retains his gaiety and

above all his love of his wife. When his parents-in-law are ruined, Paul Jordan resolves to do his best to help them financially, they who, when solvent, had never done anything to assist the struggling little household. Marcelle thinks that her parents are going to be a burden on her husband, and that, indirectly, she is a burden too. Jordan's answer to her fears shows his disinterested love of Marcelle:

"Qu'est-ce que tu nous racontes, grosse bête? Est-ce que la femme a besoin d'apporter quelque chose! Mais c'est toi que tu apportes, ta jeunesse, ta tendresse, ta belle humeur, et il n'y a pas une princesse au monde qui puisse donner davantage!" 1)

Such a pleasant, disinterested attitude is an extreme rarity in Zola's intermediate classes, where marriages are viewed from a purely commercial standpoint. Money is still the basis of marriage in the upper realms of society, but often yet more perverse reasons are responsible.

As soon as Aristide Saccard arrives in Paris, he installs his first wife, Angèle, in the Rue St-Jacques, "comme un meuble gênant dont il avait hâte de se débarrasser." 2) He also regards his children as encumbrances likely to compromise his grandiose ambitions. Yet, if his first wife is only a hindrance, Saccard does not hesitate to use marriage as a road to fame and fortune, when it is obvious that Angèle is going to die. A second marriage is arranged by the insidious Sidonie Rougon while Saccard's first wife is in her death throes.

The marriage arrangement in La Curée has a parallel in a tale called Nantas. 3) An 'entremetteuse', Melle. Chuin, arranges for the hero, Nantas, to marry Flavie, daughter of the Baron Danvilliers, to cover up her pregnancy by another man unfortunately already married. The transaction allows the girl's good name to

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1) L'Argent. R.M.Vol.5.p.349. 2) La Curée. R.M.Vol.1.p.359.

3) Contained amongst the group of tales Nais Micoulin. in O.C. Vol.9.

be preserved and gives an energetic but poor young man the necessary funds for a good start in life. Nantas, who achieves great worldly success, complicates the situation by falling in love with Flavie.

In a similar situation in La Curée, there is no question of love at any stage between Saccard and Renée. Their marriage is purely a mutually convenient deal. On emerging from her sheltered, convent upbringing, Renée is raped by a man of forty, without knowing how to defend herself, and becomes pregnant as a result. To retain respectability it is arranged to find a husband and father who will be willing to accept paternity in exchange for Renée's dowry. Sidonie realises that Saccard is just the man, and briefs her brother on all the obvious, mutual advantages of the union, whilst Saccard's first wife is still alive.

The insidiously conceived marriage, in which each partner remains indifferent to the other's well-being and activities, is merely a convention to give both parties to it a superficial security and respectability. Renée is not in the least concerned about Saccard's behaviour, and Aristide, caught up as he is in the world of finance, leaves his wife to her own devices:

" Avec un tel mari, Renée était aussi peu mariée que possible. Elle restait des semaines entières sans presque le voir." 1)

There is so little feeling between the conjugal partners that Renée betrays her husband incestuously, and Saccard is prepared to profit from his wife's lack of business knowledge to strip her of her personal wealth.

Money and speculation are everything to Saccard and he is determined to order his childrens' lives according to profit-making principles:

" Son fils n'avait pas vingt ans, qu'il songea à l'utiliser... ..Il était bien un peu jeune, mais on pouvait toujours lui chercher une femme et une dot, quitte à traîner le mariage en longueur, ou à le précipiter, selon les embarras d'argent de la maison. " 2)

The marriage between Maxime and Louise de Mareuil is arranged so that both sides profit; Saccard gets his hands on the girl's dowry, in exchange for which he undertakes to intercede with his brother Eugène Rougon on an electoral matter concerning Louise's father. In the world of financiers, money still plays the leading role in the arrangement of marriages. In the political sphere, questions of political interest also have an influence.

In Son Excellence Eugène Rougon the hero realises that marriage between himself and Clorinde Balbi is not possible as they both have strong, clashing personalities. Rougon thinks it better for Clorinde to marry a man she can dominate, and comes to offer her one of his friends, Delestang. Clorinde asks if the latter knows anything about the projected union, Rougon's reply is eloquent of the way in which high society marriages were contracted: "Non, c'est inutile. On lui expliquera ça plus tard." 1)

L'Abbé Faujas uses marriage as bait for political favours in La Conquête de Plassans. One way to get M.Rastoil's support for the Imperial candidate is to suggest to him that after the election one of his daughters, whom he has been trying to settle for years, might find a husband. Once Delangre is elected, a marriage is announced between Lucien Delangre, his son, and Angéline Rastoil, the elder of the unmarried girls. Lucien would probably have preferred the younger Aurélie, but M.Rastoil has lent his support to the election and can be allowed to be rid of his elder daughter first. This calculated marriage is conceived as the reward for a favour.

Perhaps one of the most typical of unions rife in Rougon-Macquart society, where marriage is merely a formal institution which gives respectability and security, but leaves each partner complete freedom of action, is that of the Mignons in Nana. Rose Mignon lives more with the journalist Fauchery, but allows her

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1) Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. R.M.Vol. 2. p. 125.

husband to manage her affairs. Many parties to marriage in Les Rougon-Macquart are similarly nothing more than business associates. Of Fauchery and Mignon we read:

" Après avoir rompu avec la comtesse, il (Fauchery) se trouvait aux mains de Rose, qui usait de lui comme d'un mari véritable. Mignon demeurait simplement le majordome de madame. " 1)

Just as with sexual practices, Zola uses his depictions of marriage to portray the general values and standards of society. The ways in which marriages were contracted, managed and used accentuate the picture of a decadent society which adhered to a perverted moral code. Members of Zola's world are the prisoners of their own self-interest, or of their financial circumstances, and consequently are denied the joys of happy marriage, of normal sexual relationships, and responsible parenthood.

Zola was obviously opposed to the system of arranged marriages, which divorced pleasure from marriage and family life. In a short tale, Les Nids, written for Le Figaro on the 15th May 1867, Zola compared the sparrows' world to human society:

" Je veux parler du petit peuple des moineaux. Les premières tiédeurs du printemps leur ont dit que l'heure des amours était venue, et, plus sages que les hommes, ils se sont mariés selon leur cœur, oubliant les soucis de ce monde. " 2)

The wild birds are also compared to tame, domesticated ones, but this comparison again leads to an examination of human marrying habits:

" Certes, nous avons des serins en cage qui pondent et couvent. Mais, bon Dieu! comme leurs amours sont tristes! On dirait que nos serins sont mariés devant M.le Maire; leur prison, leur nid tout fait, cette union qui les lie bêtement et fatalement est pour moi une image de notre mariage. Ils s'aiment et se caressent parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas faire autrement; ils ont des petits moroses et pâlots, qui ne donnent jamais les libres coups d'aile des enfants de l'amour.

Il faut voir les moineaux libres dans les trous des vieux murs, les hirondelles libres au faite des cheminées. Ceux-là se sont aimés et ont conçu en plein ciel; il n'y a eu, parmi eux,

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1) Nana. R.M.Vol.2.p.1456. 2) Les Nids. O.C.Vol.9.p.292.

que des mariages d'inclination. Ce sont des amants et non des époux. " 1)

The constrictions of social expediency did not allow men to contract the same free unions as birds of the air. Above all it is interest which counts in relations between the sexes. In Zola's society it seems impossible for anyone to achieve happiness with a partner of choice. In Le Rêve it is the inability of the central couple to understand or accept normal social practices which leads them to believe that their unique kind of love is possible. Angélique's love is naive and fed on romantic ideas, which make everything so simple: " On s'adore, on se marie, et c'est très simple." 2) Hubertine has to try to explain to Angélique, who can not accept that in reality marriages of love do not take place, the obstacles to a marriage between a penniless, young waif and a rich nobleman, such as Félicien d'Hauteœur.

Félicien, too, does not accept the usual social standards:

" Ah! l'orgueil du nom, la gloire de l'argent, l'entêtement dans la volonté, est-ce que cela pesait, lorsqu'il n'y avait plus que deux heureux à faire?" 3)

Too often, however, these things are the most important considerations, and, in fact, a marriage has already been arranged for him by his father, the bishop, with Claire de Voincourt. Le Rêve may be regarded as a more traditional treatment of the arranging of marriage, since in this case parental schemes meet with unusual resistance.

Zola's Roman society was very similar to the French one. The basis of marriage for the Romans is similarly only the need for security and respectability. In Rome, however, the women begin to fight the normal social practices, their wish for emancipation extends at least as far as demanding the right to marry the man of their choice, as the Abbé Froment discovers:

"..quelles tempêtes dans ces âmes muettes, où personne n'était

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1) Ibid.p.295. 2) Le Rêve. R.M.Vol.4.p.931. 3) Ibid.p.975.



descendu! quelle lente poussée de volonté parfois, sous cette obéissance passive, sous cette apparente inconscience de ce qui les entourait! Combien entendaient obstinément faire leur vie elles-mêmes, choisir l'homme qui leur plairait, l'avoir malgré le monde entier! " 1)

Love, however, still has to fight the interacting forces of ambition and interest. In Fécondité Beauchêne, a representative of the traditional mentality, who is unfaithful to his wife, expresses to Mathieu Froment a view of marriage held by most of his predecessors in the Rougon-Macquart novels: "...on n'épouse pas une femme avec l'idée d'en faire sa maîtresse.." 2) In the early novels the divorce between pleasure and marriage is complete and widely accepted, even by some of the more sympathetic characters. L'Abbé Jouve in Une Page d'Amour is an understanding man who, aware of Hélène Mouret's passion, recommends her to escape it in marriage to a good, honest fellow. He is, of course, recommending Rambaud to her as a husband, but it is significant that he regards marriage as a means of sheltering from the troubles of passion.

In Nana both the Count and Countess Muffat have never fully satisfied their desires within marriage, so that both are in a state of agitated, pent-up emotion. When their sensuality is finally roused, their more violent sexual desires have to be satisfied in extra-marital affairs, which result directly from the way in which their marriage is practised. In his 'Ebauche' to this novel, Zola showed that he desired to convey the bad social effects caused by the breakdown of marriage:

" Une société tombe, lorsque la femme mariée fait concurrence à la fille, et lorsqu'un Muffat se laisse déshonorer par sa femme, tandis que lui-même se déshonore avec une Nana." 3)

Zola used his descriptions of commercialised marriage to show that the values of his Rougon-Macquart society were based firmly on material premisses. Denise Baudu is unique in that she

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1) Rome. O.C.Vol.7.p.620. 2) Fécondité. O.C.Vol.8.p.67.

3) See 'Etude' to Nana. R.M.Vol.2. Pp.1670-1.

can not be bought. Other members of society all have a price as conjugal partners. But if marriage could be used to portray a decadent society, Zola also envisaged that it could be used to reinvigorate and reform society. In his late novels he showed the reconciliation of social classes by inter-marriage.

In the Rougon-Macquart novels hardly anybody aspires to marry outside of his class; such marriages as are contracted reveal the desire to perpetuate the rigid class system of society. Félicien and Angélique try to inter-marry the highest and lowest ranks of society, but they discover that it is only possible in illusion. The new order might just be seen to be taking shape in Au Bonheur des Dames, where Joseph, a lowly member of the department store staff, marries Melle.de Fontenailles, a survivor of the ruined aristocracy.

It was not until his penultimate novel, Travail, that Zola forcibly expressed the view that inter-marriage amongst classes would break down social differences and constitute one of the most important factors in the ideal future world. Luc Froment expresses the hope placed in inter-class relationships, when he sees Ma-Bleue, the daughter of a working-man, Morfain, exchanging a kiss with Achille Gourier, the rebel son of the bourgeois mayor:

"..un souffle caressant d'espoir lui vint de ce libre amour si doux: n'était-ce pas le demain plus heureux que préparaient ces enfants sortis de toutes les classes, et jouant entre eux, et se baisant, et enfantant la juste Cité future? " 1)

His hopes are borne out by events. Achille runs off to join Ma-Bleue in the community of La Crêcherie, and peaceful harmony is created by countless other examples of boys and girls, originally from different classes, growing up together and uniting in marriages of love.

The marriages created by Zola are an important element in his description of the relations between the sexes, both when

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1) Travail. O.C. Vol. 8. p. 648.

dealing destructively with a decadent, unprincipled society, and when positively formulating his view of an ideal new society.

### 3. Adultery.

The ill-conceived marriages of the Rougon-Macquart novels were unlikely to encourage conjugal fidelity, and adultery is, indeed, one of the prevalent evils of Zola's Second Empire society. The evidence of the novels suggests that Zola regarded extra-marital adventures as one of the greatest manifestations of social decadence. He portrays adultery as a pointless, drab activity typical of the mediocrity of his characters. His reaction to the archetype of fictional, adulterous heroines, Mme. Bovary, is predictable:

" Elle est la femme déclassée, mécontente de son sort, gâtée par une sentimentalité vague, sortie de son rôle de mère et d'épouse. Elle est encore la femme promise forcément à l'adultère. Enfin, elle est l'adultère lui-même, la faute d'abord timide, poétique, puis triomphante, grossissante. " 1)

Zola continues, in what is not intended as a criticism of Madame Bovary, with the contention that adulterous affairs, in reality, are more banal than Emma's:

" Dans la réalité seulement, le drame ne vient pas toujours dénouer ces sortes d'histoires; l'adultère, le plus souvent, meurt dans son lit, de sa mort paisible et naturelle." 2)

Even in Une Page d'Amour, where, rather unusually, adultery constitutes an understandable attempt at finding true love by two otherwise unselfish people, it is rewarded by the death of the woman's only child. Deberle returns to the loneliness of his own marriage, and Hélène enters a bleak, uninspiring union with Rambaud. The punishment is severe for the crime. Elsewhere, adultery is treated less sympathetically but often without such tangibly dire results; more often it leads, not to disaster, but simply to boredom. Zola uses this activity once more to portray the habits and standards of society in general.

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1) Les Romanciers Naturalistes. B.C.p.142. 2) Ibid.p.142.

In spite of the promiscuity of early life amongst the working-classes, adultery is not portrayed as the greatest evil in the lower realms of society. La Maheude in Germinal is faithful to her husband, although she does not pretend to be excessively virtuous as a result. The fidelity to her husband by this hard-working wife and mother is an important part of the sympathetic treatment she receives. Maheu, too, keeps away from prostitutes; the central couple in this novel, where circumstances often force human relationships to their lowest level, offer a pleasant contrast to those around them, and to other couples in many of the Rougon-Macquart novels.

Extra-marital liaisons are, of course, common in Montsou, where they provide a source of amusement for the miners. The domestic situation of the Maheus' neighbours is a continual source of mockery; La Levaque shares two men, her own husband and Bouteloup, who work different shifts at the mine, so that she has a husband by day and by night. The 'ménage à trois' is tolerated by Levaque, much to the amusement of his fellow-workmen. La Pierronne receives harsher criticism, for she prostitutes herself to a man above her class, M. Dansaert, the 'maître-porion', in exchange for small material favours and comforts. The shop-keeper's habit of exchanging credit for pleasure with a miner's wife or daughter arouses genuine indignation, which is normally impotent until the women of the community exact their own terrible vengeance. In L'Assommoir 'cocuage' again provides fuel for some typically Gallic humour, mostly from Coupeau, who is in no position to mock the misfortune of others. At least amongst the working-classes adultery is not covered in a cloak of hypocrisy and sententious moralising; it provides a source of ridicule or anger according to circumstances, but both reactions reveal that a conception of the value of fidelity in marriage existed.

In the world of the business people of Les Halles, the need for comfortable security makes adultery less common. Lisa Quenu

in Le Ventre de Paris is hostile towards anything that might prejudice her material well-being and modest prosperity. Her conjugal fidelity is unimpeached, for any extra-marital liaisons might easily impair the prosperity of the household.

In his article on contemporary women in France, Zola contended that adultery was unusual in country districts: " la violation de la fidélité conjugale est chose rare dans les campagnes." 1) To some extent he illustrated this claim in La Terre. Before marriage peasant girls have no scruples, and often no choice, about leading a promiscuous existence, but pregnancy in most cases brings immediate marriage, which turns them into hard-working peasant wives with no time for amorous affairs. The men, too, have one preoccupation - to retain, and increase if possible, their property holdings - and all their energies are directed to this end. Buteau provides a notable exception. His incessant desire to possess his sister-in-law, which is eventually aided and abetted by his own wife, is closely linked to his wish to possess her land too. As in the urban areas infidelity provides many a moment of spicy humour for the ribald Jésus-Christ.

In Zola's society adultery was above all the dominant thorn in the side of the bourgeoisie, where he portrayed it in its most drab, uninspiring colours. Middle-class arranged marriages, and the education children (especially girls) received, led married people straight to the beds of any one but their partners, in an attempt to instil some excitement into their lives, denied them by their loveless marriages.

The women of this class especially enter into adulterous relationships merely to relieve the boredom of their indolent lives. Juliette Deberle in Une Page d'Amour engages in the usual sort of dull Parisian adultery, since she has nothing to occupy her. Juliette is full of caprices; she becomes interested in

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1) Lettres de Paris. p. 97.

something for a few months, but soon the interest palls and she has to find some other pastime. Juliette turns to adultery as a means of alleviating her boredom. There is no question of her being in love with Malignon, the idea of having a lover is exciting in itself; adultery contains an element of rashness and bravado, as is shown by her feelings at her 'rendez-vous' with Malignon, "...elle goûtait le vif plaisir de son imprudence." 1) Malignon is an expert in the seduction of this type of woman; he knows that she is most likely to cede to him out of boredom, and he plays upon this weakness to gain his ends. On return from Trouville he delays pressing his advances until the end of the tedious winter season, when he knows that Juliette will be tired of the monotonous round of dinners, balls, plays, and other entertainments, and will, therefore, be more vulnerable.

Juliette's infidelity is caused by her boredom, and the wish to imitate the women of her immediate circle. Such women engage in superficial small-talk, and by their malicious criticism of the behaviour of others, appear as the very souls of virtue. It is only when she accidentally learns of Juliette's projected infidelity that Héléne Mouret realises the hypocrisy of such women, and the pointlessness of her own scruples:

" Héléne, d'un regard lent, faisait le tour du salon. Dans ce monde digne, parmi cette bourgeoisie d'apparence honnête, il n'y avait donc que des femmes coupables? Son rigorisme provincial s'étonnait des promiscuités tolérées de la vie parisienne... L'adultère s'embourgeoisait là d'une béate façon, aiguisé d'une pointe de raffinement coquet. " 2)

In Germinal Mme.Hennebeau is similar to the women in Une Page d'Amour, and not surprisingly an adulteress. Her husband is a pleasant, hard-working man, still in love with his wife in middle-age, but who has been unable to satisfy her grandiose ambitions and dreams. She has a taste for luxury and splendour

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1) Une Page d'Amour. R.M. Vol.2. p.1014. 2) Ibid. p.981.

which is not required in the mining community, although she lives very comfortably. The conditions favour adultery and Mme. Hennebeau embarks on an incestuous affair with Négrel.

The most detailed examination of adultery in the middle-classes is to be found in Pot-Bouille, which, more than just an indictment of bourgeois infidelity and hypocrisy, attempts to explain their origins, and also lays bare exactly what adultery means: a complete loss of self-respect and self-dignity in compromising humiliations, the bribing of servants, secret, shameful meetings, and the ridiculous, if not tragic, outcome of most extra-marital affairs.

The consideration of adulterous activities is extremely detailed in Pot-Bouille, and Zola even divides them into different types, giving various reasons for infidelity. Marie Pichon's fall from marital duty, for example, is due to her gross stupidity, having been kept in complete ignorance of the realities of adult life:

" Et, à cette heure encore, les regards perdus, pleine de de ces souvenirs, elle avait aux lèvres le rire d'une enfant, restée ignorante dans le mariage. " 1)

Her sheltered upbringing, designed specifically to protect her from the sordid realities of life, leads only to adultery with Octave Mouret, who realises her innocence and exploits it. Marie also illustrates the view that a wife is likely to find pleasure outside marriage if her husband is not also a passionate lover. Pichon is one such uninspiring, unexciting spouse:

" Son mari ne lui avait jamais pris les pieds dans ses deux mains pour les baiser; jamais non plus, il ne s'était agenouillé pour lui dire qu'il l'adorait. Cependant, elle l'aimait bien; mais elle s'étonnait que l'amour n'eût pas plus de douceur". 2)

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1) Pot-Bouille. R.M. Vol. 3. p. 66  
 2) Ibid. p. 72

Octave does not need to be very adept to provide her with a greater sense of pleasure.

Berthe Jossierand is also spoilt by her education, not through a lack of it, but by a contrary surfeit of perverse instruction on human relationships from her mother. The latter instils into her daughters a scorn for men and the conviction that they should treat their future partners merely as the providers of material comforts. Once she is married Berthe becomes more and more like her mother, treating Auguste as an instrument necessary to indulge her whims for luxury. When he fails to satisfy her expectations she vents her anger in continuous arguments and recriminations against him. Mouret's seduction of Berthe is purposely designed to satisfy her desire for 'little extravagances'; she treats him as a man from whom to squeeze money and presents, which he in turn willingly provides. It is not long before he exacts payment in an obvious manner. Berthe's demise can therefore be said to arise from the cult of money and luxury instilled in her by her mother, principally so that she will acquire a profitable husband, but which in turn leads to adultery.

Valérie Vabre is another woman who is not satisfied emotionally and physically by her husband. Her continual betrayal of him, in squalid, dishonestly covered affairs is also a result of a nervous disorder. When, on one occasion, Théophile discovers her infidelity, her nervous tension causes a breakdown, but the rest of the inhabitants hide her misconduct and actively connive in the duping of her husband.

The sum-total of extra-marital affairs in Pot-Bouille constitutes a damning study of adultery as the dominant evil of the middle-classes. It is shown as a ridiculous, farcical activity and the hypocritical habit of being easily scandalised adopted by those who practice it only adds to the severe



criticism of the bourgeois mentality.

Adultery is also rife in High Society where everyone accepts it perfectly naturally. There is little indignation, either genuine, as in the working classes, or simulated, as with the bourgeoisie. The Michélins in La Curée are typical. The husband willingly allows his wife to prostitute herself for his advancement at the 'Hôtel de Ville' or elsewhere in society. At successive stages in the novel we are informed of Michélin's steady rise in importance and it is easy to see the part played by his wife in his success.

The widespread adultery practiced in the society Zola created was consistently linked very closely by the author to educational customs and methods. The sexes were kept rigorously separate and young men were allowed to learn everything, whilst girls were kept ignorant on all subjects concerning their relationships with men. The deliberately cloistered upbringing of girls, whether in convents or at home did not produce innocents as it was intended to, but paved the way to an indulgence of unknown emotion, particularly in adulterous affairs, after an inexperienced woman had usually been paired off in a loveless marriage.

Zola's working classes receive little formal education, since from an early age, children are called upon to supplement the family budget by earning their living. Zola reserves most of his criticism of organised education for the convent type of education commonly given to daughters in the higher and middle realms of society. He repeatedly argued that they made girls ill-prepared for their duties as wives and mothers in adult life. In a short didactic tale Au Couvent, 1) he shows the disadvantages of a convent upbringing by directly

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1) Contained amongst Autres Contes et Nouvelles. O.C. Vol. 9. p. 927

contrasting Jeanne, a typical product, with Lucie who has been brought up in freedom by her mother and told of all realities. The latter is a healthier, more responsible young lady.

Madeleine Férat is sent to a 'pensionnat' run by women, where girls are kept ignorant but still taught how to appeal to men in polite society:

" Quand une demoiselle sortait de chez elles, elle était parfaitement ignorante, mais elle pouvait entrer dans un salon en coquette habile, armée de toutes les grâces parisiennes." 1)

Madeleine receives a false impression of men and relationships with them from whispered conversations in corners with her classmates, with the result that she gains some dangerous ideas:

" Elle conclut, des enfantillages de ses camarades, qu'il n'était pas mal d'aimer un homme, et qu'on pouvait aimer le premier venu. " 2)

The Charles in La Terre, on retirement, hand over their brothel to their daughter. In Rognes they have with them their granddaughter, Elodie, to whom they try to impart a narrow education; their attempts to conceal the profession of her mother from the young girl, and to shelter her from the coarse realities of peasant existence, provide a source of considerable humour in the novel. The Charles take the cossetting of their grand-daughter to such absurd lengths that Elodie is described as, "si comprimée d'ailleurs par son éducation de vierge innocente, qu'elle en était imbécile." 3) Zola makes the obvious comparison between this girl and the peasant children, who learn human ways largely from the animals, but who are at least enabled to accept life in all its coarseness, whilst Elodie is forever confused and embarrassed. The Charles are proud of the girl's utter ignorance. " Hein? est-ce élevé? " says the wife, " ça ne sait rien de rien!" 4)

Mme. Campardon in Pot-Bouille has the usual narrow-minded

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1) Madeleine Férat. O.C.Vol.1. Pp.708-9 2) Ibid.p.709.

3) La Terre. R.M.Vol.4.p.403. 4) Ibid.p.658.

opinions on female education, and brings her daughter up at home, but ironically it is from within the home, from the vicious maid, Lisa, that Angèle learns the crudities, which her solitary childhood was meant to obviate. In the same novel Mme. Vuillaume is proud of the way she has kept her married daughter, Marie Pichon, in a state of ignorance, the ignorance which has led directly to adultery with Mouret.

In Le Rêve Hubert and Hubertine become, if anything, over-protective when they adopt the foundling Angélique. Hubertine ensures that Angélique receives only the most restricted knowledge, but even she believes at times that they may have acted unwisely in bringing up the girl in so cloistered a home atmosphere, for the naive ideas she nurtures on love and men arise from her isolated life.

The most sensible, level-headed heroines in Zola's novels are self-taught by their own dispassionate researches into solid facts. Mme. Chanteau in La Joie de Vivre holds the well-accepted opinions on restricted female education. Her bourgeois sensitivity prevents her from informing Pauline Quenu about the onset of menstruation, and the girl's ignorance causes her some fear when she first experiences it. Pauline is left to educate herself; she takes to reading books on medicine and other scientific subjects and feels that her aunt was both unjust and silly to keep the facts from her. Zola indicates the advantages of Pauline's self-taught education by contrasting her favourably with Louise, who has been raised at boarding-school. Pauline is able to talk objectively and sensibly about the disgusting conditions of life in the village, whereas Louise can only blush when they are mentioned.

Clotilde in Le Docteur Pascal is similar to Pauline Quenu in that she is mostly self-taught by working closely with her uncle. She learns naturally about sexual matters so that, at the opening of the novel, she is waiting to make a complete

gift of herself to the man of her choice, and is aware of all that the gift entails.

The references to education and resultant human practices in the Rougon-Macquart novels are more overtly didactic than much of the rest of the material. In consideration of Pauline Quenu's education Franzen observes, " Ces scènes ont une grande et presque gênante portée didactique." 1) In the more avowedly didactic later works it was natural for education to receive widespread treatment. Amongst the reasons for the improvement in relationships between men and women in Zola's later work is a more efficient, educational system, based on the insistence that the two sexes must grow up side by side for the whole period of their development. In Luc Froment's community in Travail a fully developed, co-educational system is rigidly adhered to.

Zola's treatment of adulterous relationships point in themselves to a generally decadent society. The preferred system of education, the custom of arranged marriages for profit, the lack of consideration or passion from husbands, are all contributory factors to the most besetting sin of society, and especially of its middle core. Moreover, from the uninviting way in which Zola chose to depict it, we gain an effective impression of adultery's wasteful and tedious nature.

#### 4. Family Life.

In Zola's novels consideration of family life and the roles of parents form another part of his examination of social practices. The Rougon-Macquart series was built around the decline of a family, and one of the most remarkable characteristics of the Rougons and the Macquarts is their complete lack of family ties or sense of common solidarity. This is not to suggest that Zola had no conception of such feelings; his two last cycles, in

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1) Franzen. op.cit. p.135.

complete contrast, describe the rise and success of a different dynasty. The family was an important entity in the new society, just as the disintegration of the old order was shown in part by the decline of the family as a solid social component.

The disunion of the Rougon-Macquart family is initiated in La Fortune des Rougon by Pierre Rougon, who subordinates personal ties to selfish interest. Once he discovers that his brother and sister are illegitimate, Pierre thinks that they are merely compromising his rightful inheritance. He, therefore, embarks on a campaign to ensure that no-one but himself is left with anything. Rougon persecutes his mother and successfully removes his brother and sister from the scene. When Rougon marries and has children of his own, his attitude does not change. The last two born are girls and, therefore, are unwelcome additions to the family, since they are embarrassments when it is necessary to provide them with dowries. Pierre's opinions of his children resemble those he held for other relatives. He picturesquely describes Aristide and his wife who live with him as, "cette vermine qui lui suçait le sang." 1)

It is hardly surprising that Aristide, in turn, becomes an extremely bad husband and father. The loose relationship between Saccard, Renée, and Maxime in La Curée is one of the direct causes of the incestuous affair which disunites the three. Zola tells us of the unrestrained basis of their life together:

"L'idée de famille était remplacée chez eux par celle d'une sorte de commandite où les bénéfices sont partagés à parts égales; chacun tirait à lui sa part de plaisir, et il était entendu tacitement que chacun mangerait cette part comme il l'entendrait." 2)

Maxime's vicious nature is encouraged by his father's shameful connivance in his wild life. Saccard's preoccupation with money persuades him to disregard his wife's misconduct, and the greatest punishment he can think of is to extort as much money as possible.

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1) La Fortune des Rougon. R.M. Vol.1. p.65.  
2) La Curée. R.M. Vol.1. p.426.

from her. At the end of the novel he is fully reconciled with the son who has betrayed him. Greed and lust, the mainsprings of action in society as a whole, here cause the breakdown of society's smaller unit, the family.

Zola's belief in the family can be seen in a negative way in La Conquête de Plassans where a description of the slow disintegration of a household most effectively depicts the insidious effects of the Abbé Faujas's intrigues on the society of Plassans. At the beginning of the action the Mourets are shown to enjoy a humdrum but peaceful and happy family life. The opening picture is of Marthe carefully looking after her unfortunate, half-witted daughter Désirée, as a good mother, the keeper of the household. Octave, Serge, and the father, Mouret, arrive to complete a scene of happy domesticity. On Mouret's instigation, Faujas enters this close-knit circle and undermines the whole family structure, mainly by causing the wife and mother to neglect her duties. Désirée is left to her own devices and gets habitually filthy, clothes are no longer mended, the house is full of dust and meal times become, at best, erratic. Mouret loses his authority as the 'paterfamilias' to such an extent that even the servant, Rose, can order him about. Zola underlines the importance of the male role as head of the family by showing, as Faujas's first preoccupation, the desire to undermine the father's authority. The husband is partly to blame also; Marthe's revolt is at male dominance which is misdirected. She has undergone twenty years of servitude, during which Mouret has treated her as an ordinary employee in the business through which he has made a modest fortune. Even in the initial outwardly united household the husband had been a selfish, cruelly mocking man, and his actions had germinated a latent antagonism in his wife, which the priest has only to kindle to spread disunion within the family. Mouret's lack of consideration for his wife is severely punished by the loss of his home, family, and

finally, of his sanity.

The worst excesses of family disunion are to be found in La Terre where the old peasant Fouan is ruined, and finally even murdered, by the ferocity and greed of his children. Once the head of the family abdicates his patriarchal power and divides up his land amongst his heirs, they treat him as a mere encumbrance, and exploit him to the best of their ability. His wife, Rose, dies as the result of the endless quarrels over money amongst her children. La Grande, the powerful matriarchal figure of this novel, loves to ferment trouble within the family, a procedure which helps to safeguard the authority she wields in the community.

Fouan's loss of family affection culminates when the tiny Jules, who has been his only friend in old age, also becomes hostile towards him. The hunger to possess the land stresses the importance of the inheritance system and breeds rivalry among children. Fouan's treatment would be yet more horrific if we were not told that, in the same situation, he would have behaved in a way similar to the children who torment him:

" Un vieux, ça ne sert à rien et ça coûte. Lui-même avait souhaité la fin de son père. Si, à leur tour, ses enfants désiraient la sienne, il n'en ressentait ni étonnement ni chagrin. Ça devait être. " 1)

Yet, in spite of the struggles waged between relatives in La Terre, the peasants still hold some sort of family mystique. Lise and Françoise are two sisters who grow apart because of arguments over their inheritance. Buteau rapes Françoise with Lise's help and a fight ensues between the two women, which ends with Lise slashing her sister with a sickle which later causes her death. But for reasons of family solidarity, Françoise will not denounce her sister, nor will she sign over her possessions to her husband Jean, who is an outsider in the peasant community. She prefers to keep the land within a family which has treated her so execrably during her lifetime.

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1) La Terre. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 734.

In L'Assommoir the urban working-classes are also split by family strife. Mme. Lorilleux, the sister of Coupeau, has no sense of family solidarity, and is especially severe towards Gervaise. Mme. Coupeau mère is thought to be a burden by all but Gervaise, who is not a direct member of the family. In the preface to this novel Zola made his intentions perfectly clear:

" J'ai voulu peindre la déchéance fatale d'une famille ouvrière, dans le milieu empesté de nos faubourgs. " 1)

The greatest victim of the Coupeaus' decline into drunkenness and degradation is their daughter, Nana, whose precocious debauchery and sordid upbringing prepare her for her role as the extravagant heroine of a later novel. The young girl is driven from home by her two drunken parents, and by a father who beats her and sets her off on her vicious path. Zola, however, excuses Coupeau for being a bad father. He makes him at least try to bring Nana back to the family fold, and insists that drink is to blame for his ultimate failure in paternal duty:

" Coupeau grognait, n'ayant même plus l'idée d'allonger des claques. Il perdait la boule, complètement. Et, vraiment, il n'y avait pas à le traiter de père sans moralité, car la boisson lui ôtait toute conscience du bien et du mal. " 2)

Her mother's conduct with Lantier, witnessed by Nana, is also hardly a good example to set a precocious daughter, but is likewise excusable to a certain extent. The two novels, Nana and L'Assommoir, are linked in the figure of the young girl, who represents the terrible product of a poisoned family background, giving another negative example of Zola's belief in the stabilising social effect of good family relations.

The miners in Germinal, and the Maheus in particular, enjoy much greater family solidarity. Old Bonnemort is not rejected, simply because he can no longer work, and the children are cared for to the best of the parents' ability in extremely difficult circumstances. When Jeanlin is buried in a pit accident,

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1) Preface to L'Assommoir. R.M. Vol.2. p.373.

2) L'Assommoir. R.M. Vol.2. p.744.



Maheu makes the frantic efforts of a father, intent on saving his son, to get him out. Family ties in adversity prove very strong; Catherine, although she lives apart with Chaval, is concerned at the deprivation caused amongst the Maheus by the strike. When the young girl is herself buried in the sabotaged mine, her brother, Zacharie, kills himself by exposing light to gas in an effort to speed up the rescue operations.

Such feelings amongst relatives are rare in the Rougon-Macquart novels. Of the central family Hemmings justifiably remarks that, "It is a family without any solidarity, whose particles, in fact, act on each other by repulsion." 1) The lack of family spirit in Zola's society expresses once more the disrespect shown for human values in it. A common disinterest in family affairs is shown by the desire, amongst the peasants and the bourgeoisie in particular, to avoid having children, who are regarded merely as compromising nuisances to prosperity.

In the later novels Zola still used a disorganised, disunited family to typify a vicious, perverse society, in contrast to his more ideal heroes. In Paris, in the city where the two main preoccupations are still money and lust, the Duvillard family is described as follows:

" Il lui (Pierre) semblait entendre un craquement formidable, la famille bourgeoise qui s'effondrait: le père chez une fille, la mère au bras d'un amant, le frère et la sœur sachant tout, l'un glissant aux perversités imbéciles, l'autre enragée, rêvant de voler cet amant à sa mère pour en faire un mari. " 2)

In a more positive way, the ideal society, set up by the central characters of the later novels, is based largely on the family as its essential component. The life-giving mother is exalted as the regenerating force of the new humanity, and, as such, fertile woman receives unbounded praise and admiration. Zola had often dealt with motherhood and child rearing in the Rougon-Macquart too, and amongst the working-classes he created

1) F.W.J.Hemmings.Emile Zola.p.45. 2) Paris.O.C.Vol.7.p.1239.

a martyred mother-figure, the symbol of an exhausted humanity.

Zola created much of the sympathy for his poor mothers, who struggled in the face of adversity to fulfil their maternal role, by the obsessive image of a child giving suck. Ernest Vizetelly tells of the interest Zola showed in breast-feeding whilst writing Fécondité in exile:

" But what he (Zola) dwelt on still more was the absolute physical incapacity of so many English mothers to suckle their own offspring...In three or four generations the women of a family in which the practice of suckling has ceased, are altogether unable to give the breast; and the 'bottle' ensues, with its thousand evils and a gradual deterioration of the race." 1)

For Zola such matters had direct social significance:

"..M.Zola, I found, held the view that for a race to be healthy its womenfolk should be willing and able to discharge the primary duties of Nature. When he discovered that so many Englishwomen would not or could not suckle their babes, he remarked that England had started on the same downward course as France. " 2)

No doubt Zola's interest in such matters had not always been as 'technical' as the documentation of Fécondité demanded. However, the image of a woman giving suck had been used regularly from his earliest works, and became a significant part of his picture of the social condition and the suffering of humanity, symbolised by the mother.

Zola himself pointed to one possible interpretation of the recurring image. The last novel in the Rougon-Macquart cycle ends with Clotilde feeding her son by the late Doctor Pascal, and the author explains the significance of his final scene: " Une mère qui allaite, n'est-ce pas l'image du monde continué et sauvé? " 3) The child at Clotilde's breast, the last of a perverse family with poisoned genes, represents a hope for the future after the many dark pages of previous novels. Hope and belief in

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1) E.Vizetelly. With Zola in England. Chatto and Windus. 1899 p.166. 2) Ibid. p.167. 3) Le Docteur Pascal. R.M.Vol.5.p.1220. Zola used the same terms in a letter to Van Santen Kolff. See Letters to J.Van Santen Kolff (R.J.Niess. Editor.) p.50

the future are symbolised by new-born children. Although they play no part in the novel, we are told in Le Docteur Pascal of the children Jean Macquart is raising. Even in the most pessimistic novel, La Joie de Vivre, a woman with a child is used to give an optimistic ending. Pauline Quenu and Lazare Chanteau's puny child by Louise express, after so much gloom, a belief in life and the future. Zola's use of a woman and child scene is much more explicit in Fécondité. When he describes Marianne with her latest son we are told:

" Il n'était pas d'épanouissement plus glorieux, de symbole plus sacré de l'éternité vivante: l'enfant au sein de la mère." 1)

In other scenes of women with children the emphasis is placed on the mother rather than the child. Zola finds that the most effective way of expressing the pitiful plight of whole families turned into refugees before the Prussians in La Débâcle, is to show the women giving suck to their babies as they move out from their homes. The misery of the Roman proletariat is admirably symbolised by La Pierina's mother in Rome, who tries to feed her latest suckling from a withered, dried-up breast. In Paris, when Pierre Froment wants to convey the misery of the Parisian lower classes, the same image comes to mind, "...des mères aux mamelles tarries promenant des poupons qui hurlaient." 2)

Erich Auerbach chose to include in Mimesis the description in Germinal of Kermess time at the 'bal du Bon-Joyeux', where the women of the mining community quite naturally feed their young from huge, pendant breasts in the midst of the merry-making:

"...et les mères ne se gênaient plus, sortaient des mamelles longues et blondes comme des sacs d'avoine, barbouillaient de lait les poupons joufflus." 3)

The womens' lack of inhibition in displaying their ugly breasts heightens their dignity as mothers. It is notable that

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1) Fécondité. O.C. Vol. 8. p. 171. 2) Paris. O.C. Vol. 7. p. 1248.

3) Germinal. R.M. Vol. 3. p. 1271. E. Auerbach. Mimesis. p. 447.

the childless La Pierronne, exceptionally for a miner's wife, still has firm, finely-rounded breasts, which make her attractive to potential lovers, even from the upper classes. In spite of their ugliness, Zola arouses sympathy for the working-class mothers of Germinal. This portrayal of motherhood is reminiscent of Renoir's 'Maternité' (1885) in which a simple woman, with one breast bared, is shown feeding her suckling child. Renoir does not idealize the mother who offers her breast almost absent-mindedly but naturally, but the painting has an air of serenity and dignity.

Of all of Zola's characters, the prime example of the martyred-mother figure is La Maheude in Germinal. At the age of thirty-nine, she has been transformed into an ugly woman by the seven children she has had, who have exhausted her breasts of milk. Yet, whenever she appears, she almost always does so with Estelle, her last-born, hanging from her huge breast, and accentuating the general air of misery by bawling to be fed. La Maheude is the epitome of a good working-class mother trying desperately to feed and care for her family, with the pittance they receive for wages. The mother's martyrdom is increased by what happens to her family; her husband is shot during a riot, Jeanlin is crippled in a pit-fall, Alzire the little invalid dies of hunger. When Catherine is buried in the mine, La Maheude sits outside the pit all day with Estelle in her arms, waiting to see if her daughter will survive. One day her son Zacharie is brought out dead, killed in his zeal to save his sister, and Catherine, when they break through, is also dead. Finally, the aging mother is forced back down the mine to support her remaining dependants.

Zola also elicits sympathy for motherhood in his descriptions of child-birth. In La Terre the comedy of Lise's confinement is rendered by juxtaposing the birth of her second child with that of a calf. As the time for delivery approaches Buteau decides to

send for a vet to help La Coliche, but considers that a doctor for his wife would be plain extravagance. The working-classes in general seem to treat pregnancy and child-birth with some gaiety. When climbing the Vendôme column on the day of Gervaise's wedding, the characters of L'Assommoir never tire of teasing the pregnant Mme.Gaudron, asking her at repeated intervals if she is stuck in the narrow space. All through the wedding episode she is the object of friendly humour. Gervaise gives birth to Nana on the floor, having refused to stop work until the last moment. Coupeau, in his own jargon, expresses sympathy for the woman's lot:

" Ces crapoussins-là, quand ça vient au monde, ça ne se doute guère du mal que ça fait. Vrai, ça doit être comme si on vous ouvrait les reins. " 1)

When the family appear to see the new-born Nana, they indulge in a dispute over various superstitions. Lorilleux maintains that, to ensure the birth of a boy, the head of the bed must be turned towards the north, but Mme.Lerat says that it suffices to put under the mattress, " une poignée d'orties fraîches, cueillies au soleil. " 2)

The gaiety evaporates in other scenes of child-birth. In Pot-Bouille Adèle, a servant-girl, becomes pregnant and, terrified by the education she received in her village, she hides her state, and gives birth alone in her room in the most horrible of circumstances. In La Joie de Vivre Louise suffers a terrible confinement which is complicated by the prudery and embarrassment instilled in her at school.

Zola's attitude towards child-birth may well have been similar to his views on sex. The horror which he used in at least two descriptions goes beyond the desire to portray scientific fact, and suggests a slight disgust at the way in which human functions were ordained. Zola perhaps felt revulsion, at times, for

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1) L'Assommoir. R.M.Vol.2.p.471. 2) Ibid.p.470.

something he most revered. As Doctor Cazenove tries to deliver Louise's baby, we read:

" On lui obéissait, cette nudité avait aussi disparu pour eux. Ils n'en voyaient que la misère pitoyable, ce drame d'une naissance disputée, qui tuait l'idée de l'amour." 1)

In Fécondité Doctor Bouton expresses the view that suffering in child-birth is inevitable, if not even necessary, and Marianne accepts this, seeing her pain as payment for the joy her children bring her.

The family, with the fertile mother-figure, were essential elements of the new society created, especially in Fécondité. In the earlier novels Zola had shown the breakdown of Imperial society through the decline of one large family, and of smaller family circles in individual novels. His reverence for the mother is foreshadowed by the sympathy he aroused for struggling working-class mothers, and the very process of giving birth.

##### 5. Respective Roles of the Sexes in Society.

Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum, in her thesis on the women in Zola's work, notes the guarded attitude which the author adopted towards emancipation, but can still regard Zola as a forerunner of twentieth-century feminists.

In Fécondité the respective roles of the sexes are clearly defined. Matthieu, the father, decides to support his family by actively reclaiming an area of barren land. When he begins the long and arduous task, Marianne comes to watch with her latest baby. A short dialogue shows the work expected of each partner, and the acceptance of their vocation by man and wife:

" Veux-tu donner le premier coup de pioche? demanda..Matthieu  
Mais elle montra son nourrisson.  
Non,non! j'ai ma besogne..Donne le,toi. Tu es le père." 2)

We would perhaps not expect woman literally to dig and till

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1) La Joie de Vivre. R.M. Vol.3. p.1096.  
2) Fécondité. O.C. Vol.8. p.229.

the soil, but if taken symbolically, this short scene represents the recognition of the male as the creator with the female preoccupied with her maternal duties which she accepts.

Fécondité shows the system being put into practice. Woman in this novel is not required to be active other than as a wife and mother. The cult of the Mother reaches its zenith, since the future of humanity is assured if all women have as many children as possible, and care for them personally. Woman is revered, loved and respected as the regenerating force of humanity, but it is man who is called upon to create the new society. Matthieu transforms the barren land into an ever increasingly fertile tract, and it is he who creates the life to people it. Woman, like Mother-Earth, is the means by which man accomplishes his supreme task.

Marianne is, by choice, entirely occupied by her children:

" Elle, si sage, si gaie, mettait sa fierté à tout obtenir de ses enfants par la douceur et la grâce. Il lui suffisait de leur plaire, elle était écoutée, obéie, entourée d'un culte, parce qu' elle était très belle, très bonne et très aimée." 1)

Her life is a never-ending succession of pregnancies, births, periods of weaning and returns to being fit and ready to be fertilized once more. When surrounded by their descendants at the end of the novel, a review of the couple's work is given, in which the respective roles of the male as creator, and the female as a mother and aide, are made perfectly clear:

" Lui, dans l'adoration de sa femme, n'avait pas connu d'autre joie que cette passion de créer, regardant l'œuvre à faire, l'œuvre faite, comme son unique raison d'être, son devoir et sa récompense. Elle, dans l'adoration de son mari, s'était simplement efforcée d'être la compagne, l'épouse et la mère, bonne pondeuse, bonne éleveuse, selon le mot de Boutan, puis bonne conseillère surtout, douée d'un jugement délicat qui dénouait les difficultés. " 2)

In Travail Luc Froment creates his new community through, and

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1) Ibid.p.296. 2) Ibid.p.489.

for, woman, but the society, over which he reigns as a sort of enlightened patriarch, remains a paternalist one. Women can work alongside the men on the machines but most choose marriage and family life.

In Vérité Marc and Geneviève return finally to Jonville and the wife helps her husband in his educational life-work by running a school for girls next to Marc's school for boys. In this case the partners work in concert towards a common goal.

It seems, however, that Zola did not foresee, and did not recommend, the considerable overlapping of activities assumed by both sexes in our own century, and the adoption by both of roles which were previously considered separate. He did not conceive that women would be able to combine an active professional and social life with their maternal duties. Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum rightly points out that Zola's suspicion of the feminist movement lies in the fact that he envisaged that, if women adopted any of the traditional male roles, the family and home life would suffer.

The same critic observes that the late heroines are more passive, allowing themselves to be protected by men, than their predecessors in Zola's main cycle:

" Elles savent qu'elles ont encore bien des choses à apprendre et sont tout heureuses de trouver un maître dans l'époux aimé." 1)

To attain the ideal system of relationships, the male must not abuse his authority:

" Dans la cité idéale il n'y aura ni oppression, ni domination de la femme. Belle et digne, elle assumera avec joie son rôle de compagne et de mère. " 2)

The male is largely responsible for the existing sex-war:

"..La vie, le mouvement, la défense du faible est pour lui (Zola) un but. Il s'indigne du sort fait par les plus forts aux

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1) Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum. op.cit. p.216.

2) Ibid. p.65.



plus faibles, par l'homme à la femme. " 1)

It is wrong to suggest that men were solely to blame for the antagonism which existed between the sexes in the Rougon-Macquart novels. The sex-war described in them was two-sided, and woman most often expiated her distrust of the male by the abuse of her sexual charms. Zola himself, in Le Ventre de Paris, ranged society into camps which he picturesquely termed the 'Fat' and the 'Thin', the exploiters of the Imperial régime, versus the exploited. Each warring faction has members of both sexes; in Le Ventre de Paris itself it is a man, the 'thin' Florent, who is specifically depicted as the victim of the 'fat' women of Les Halles:

" Alors, recommença, contre ce maigre, la lutte des ventres énormes, des gorges prodigieuses. Il fut perdu de nouveau dans les jupes, dans les corsages pleins à crever, qui roulaient furieusement autour de ses épaules pointues. " 2)

The most active role a woman was expected to fulfil in Zola's ideal society, apart from her maternal functioning, was to act as a calming, refining agent on the more virile male principle. It seems that Zola regarded this as woman's task at an earlier stage in his career too. In his article on different types of women in France, he concludes his examination of peasant woman thus:

" Dans nos villages, le rôle de la femme est jusqu'à présent réduit à la procréation et au travail. Elle n'a pas d'autre tâche. Superstitieuse, elle observe strictement les règles de la religion mais ne sait contribuer à adoucir les mœurs des siens. Si les paysans se développent aussi lentement, c'est que leurs femmes ne remplissent pas leur rôle civilisateur." 3)

The harshness of life in La Terre might thus be said to be due in part to the fact that the women had not learnt to play the part she was called upon to fulfil in Les Quatre Evangiles.

In the Rougon-Macquart novels the structure of society ensures that ambitious women can often only work in a negative destructive way, since Second Empire society is still very much

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1) Ibid. p.18. 2) Le Ventre de Paris. R.M. Vol.1. p.842.  
3) Lettres de Paris. p.100.

a man's world, in which he arrogantly clings to his dominance. Woman's frustrated energy and man's lack of consideration clash to produce a deep antagonism. It is the men who organise society; Eugène Rougon in the political field, his brother Aristide in the financial one, and Octave Mouret, the businessman, are three of the most energetic characters in Zola's works. Often their actions are misguided, even criminal, but Zola seems to have had an admiration for the energy they exhibited. Alexis was of the opinion that Eugène was a portrayal of Zola as he would liked to have been, had he been a politician. Even Aristide Saccard, for all his shady dealings and unscrupulous behaviour, can elicit sympathy from Mme. Caroline for the vitality he displays in his whirlwind career. All three (including Mouret for most of the time) disregard and even despise women, and make no attempt to incorporate them in their work. Women are mostly content to allow men to play the dominant social role whilst they fill their idle lives with amorous intrigues. Sometimes, however, an energetic woman envies the male dominance, but finds that the only way to express her individuality is through a man, and usually to destructive effect.

In April 1880 Zola wrote a tale entitled Madame Sourdís for Vestnik Evropy, which might be taken to express Zola's ideas on the roles of men and women in society. Ferdinand Sourdís, a painter, enjoys some success at the 'Salon' and begins to gain a reputation when he becomes artistically more and more impotent due to the life of debauchery he has adopted. His wife, Adèle, an artist herself in a small way, who had found it very difficult to achieve recognition from the 'Salon', begins to act as Ferdinand's substitute, helping with paintings which he signs. Soon, she has to do more and more of the painting from her husband's ideas. Success is achieved again at the 'Salon', a success due to Adèle, but, in order to gain it, she has to relegate herself to the background.

Another painter, Rennequin, who recognizes that Ferdinand's works are getting less virile, one day discovers the truth about their creation. He sees that Adèle will probably stop Ferdinand falling to the depths of impotence, but she will also prevent him rising to the heights of genius:

" Encore un de nettoyé! Elle l'empêchera de descendre trop bas, mais jamais elle ne le laissera s'élever très haut. Il est foutu! " 1)

Ferdinand's paintings become pleasant, but not brilliant, as though Zola wishes to contend that masculinity is the essence of genius, and that women bring a mediocre element to creativity. Adèle never tries to take any glory for herself, since she recognises that the masculine-biased society favours the work of men:

" Adèle, avec un tact supérieur, avait compris qu'elle ne devait pas supprimer son mari ouvertement; il gardait la signature, il était comme un roi constitutionnel qui régnait sans gouverner. Les œuvres de Mme.Sourdis n'auraient pris personne, tandis que les œuvres de Ferdinand Sourdis conservaient toute leur force sur la critique et sur le public. " 2)

This tale reveals two important ideas on the roles of men and women in society. Firstly, women find it difficult to express themselves directly in society, even women of energy and talent have no alternative but to work behind the scenes and through men. Secondly, women, whilst they may be gifted with reason, common-sense, and a feeling for order, lack the wild disorder and the spark of true genius. Their biggest contribution is to harness masculine energy and direct it to worth-while ends.

Denise Baudu and Pauline Quenu act as calming agents on two entirely different men, but, unfortunately, many women in the early novels were unwilling to follow the unselfish, effacing attitude of Mme.Sourdis. Clorinde Balbi, a woman of great energy, uses it in a purely destructive way to ruin a man of equal energy, by using other men to bring her schemes to fruition, since she

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1) Madame Sourdis. O.C. Vol.9. p.1138. 2) Ibid. p.1140.

has no way of expressing her personality in a positive manner. The influence of woman is necessarily indirect and underhand.

The prototype for scheming women in the main cycle of novels is Félicité Rougon, whose insidious influence is felt in La Fortune des Rougon, La Conquête de Plassans and Le Docteur Pascal. She wants to share in the success of the Imperial 'coup d'état' in Plassans, but, as a woman, she has to proceed cautiously and approach the task obliquely through the husband she despises. Félicité is an ambitious woman whose appetite for authority is sharpened by years of frustrated searching for success. She had accepted Pierre as a husband, since he was a weak man she could easily fashion to her own desires, which she sees as woman's rightful task," Elle pensait que la femme doit faire l'homme." 1) Félicité is piqued, therefore, when Pierre refuses to confide in her the developments in Imperial intrigue. She thinks only of exacting vengeance from her husband for this insult to her pride, in any way that will not damage their common cause. Her antagonism towards Pierre is increased by the public success which he gains from the events of the 'coup d'état', and which she, as a woman, can not share. When Rougon returns 'victorious' from the Town Hall his superiority increases her need for revenge:

" Mais il lui (Félicité) vint une de ces rages sourdes, qu'elle éprouvait quand son mari l'écrasait de sa supériorité. Elle se promet de nouveau, lorsque l'heure serait venue, quelque vengeance exquise qui lui livrerait le bonhomme pieds et poings liés. " 2)

The mocking tone of 'le bonhomme' renders perfectly the latent antagonism which characterises this couple's relationship.

Félicité learns that the 'coup d'état' has succeeded but keeps the news from Rougon and pretends that all is lost. Pierre loses control, blames everyone but himself and begs his wife to think of something, but Félicité reminds him that he has often told her she knows nothing about politics. She enjoys her taunting,

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1) La Fortune des Rougon. R.M.Vol.1.p.57. 2) Ibid.p.232.

and finally makes him swear that he will never again refuse to take her into his confidence. The bad relationship between man and wife in this novel is caused partly by the man's arrogant dismissal of the woman as unworthy of consideration in social matters, and partly by the woman's relegation to a scheming role, in which her energies are diverted to purely negative ends.

In Le Ventre de Paris Lisa Macquart manages to control her husband and govern the household in a more subtle way by fostering in Quenu the illusion that he is the strong head of the family. When she discovers that Quenu is compromising himself at the political meetings held in the café Lebigre, she does not openly forbid him from going to them. One morning, however, after a long session at Lebigre's, Quenu finds his wife sorting out their papers, in order, as she tells him, to prevent the police finding any evidence when they come to search. She flatters him into thinking that he is master of the situation:

" Tu le sais, je te laisse absolument libre...je ne veux pas porter les culottes, comme on dit...Tu es le maître, tu peux risquer ta situation, compromettre notre crédit, ruiner la maison.. .Moi, je n'aurai plus tard qu'à sauvegarder les intérêts de Pauline. " 1)

Lisa cleverly appeals to his duties as a husband and father to stop his meddling in politics. Quenu goes no more to revolutionary meetings. She uses the same process of flattering Quenu's importance as a father and husband to convince him of the need for Florent's denunciation. Lisa is the complete ruler of the Quenu household, but to retain her power, she finds it expedient to pretend that the male keeps his authority.

Félicité Rougon reappears as the aide to Faujas's scheming in La Conquête de Plassans. It is she who tells the priest to conquer Plassans through its women, showing once more that the influence of women on society is an indirect one but remains significant. In the rigging of the election Faujas uses many

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1) Le Ventre de Paris. R.M. Vol.1. p.756.

women, but finds that the attractive Mme. de Condamin is particularly effective in insinuating herself into a position of authority with influential males.

Denise Baudu in Au Bonheur des Dames works in a similar manner but her motives are more praiseworthy. She understands perfectly the changes taking place in the world of commerce, but the role she chooses to adopt in the organisation of the new system is consciously an indirect one. The most effective way of influencing the conditions of work in the department store is to marry Mouret and exert a salutary female influence on the male who is the undisputed head of the organisation. In an ideal situation men and women work together, with man the creator, willing to act in association with woman, his counsellor. Woman does not assume the creative role; she merely learns to play her supporting role more purposefully.

The roles recommended in later novels are foreshadowed in Au Bonheur des Dames. The sensible, uncalculating love of Denise for Octave makes a better man of him; the man who, until his encounter with Denise, had only known how to speculate on woman's instincts and passions, begins to fulfil his social function less selfishly, to the general advantage of all. Woman's task is to change her man, not the social set-up directly.

Although Zola obviously felt concern for woman's fate in society, it is difficult to agree entirely with Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum's view of the novelist as an early feminist. Woman's lot was considerably improved in the establishment of the new society, and the description of Rougon-Macquart society often revealed her abject condition, but it is still hard to agree that:

" A l'époque où la femme était encore en plein asservissement il (Zola) tenait le langage des plus fervents sociologues féministes modernes. " 1)

For other critics Zola's work has even been characterised by

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1) Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum. op.cit. p.33.

slight anti-feminism. Jared Wenger sees Zola's influence on a portion of modern fiction in which woman remains subservient:

" Oddly enough, in the Zolaesque system, woman remains on a lower level, a bit of tribute offered to man; and so she has remained in Naturalistic fiction to this day: Zola, Steinbeck, and Hemingway are in their creation resolutely monosexual." 1)

For Michèle Cazaux, Zola's lack of interest in female emancipation explained the small amount of currency his work enjoyed in contemporary Sweden:

" Et encore faut-il noter que certains problèmes essentiels aux yeux des scandinaves: l'émancipation de la femme - l'individu contre la société - ne préoccupent guère Zola, qui s'attache uniquement à la peinture d'une société pourrie. " 2)

It is obvious from a reading of the Rougon-Macquart novels that Zola considered woman's place in society had to be altered before society could be reinvigorated. When introducing his article on types of women in contemporary France, Zola revealed his interest in women and their place in French life:

" On a dit, avec raison, que la femme est l'axe autour duquel gravite la civilisation. Je la prends dans toutes les classes sociales, dans ses attitudes les plus diverses, depuis sa naissance jusqu'à sa mort. Même si je n'arrive pas à en donner une caractéristique complète, je présenterai tout au moins une série d'esquisses qui décriront suffisamment la femme française de la deuxième moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. A mon avis, il est difficile de trouver un sujet plus intéressant. " 3)

In this context Zola is speaking specifically of the aims and intentions of his article, but no doubt the same interest was responsible for many of the female portraits to be found in the novels.

In situations of working-class misery it is the women who suffer most from the bad social conditions. In L'Assommoir they have to bear the over-crowded living arrangements and the habitual drunkenness of the male population. Zola describes pathetic scenes where the women await their partners on pay-days in an attempt to prevent low wages being squandered on drink. Women also have to submit to violence engendered by alcoholism. Bijard

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1) Jared. Wenger. Character-types of Scott, Balzac, Dickens, Zola. P.M.L.A.1947.p.232. 2) M.Cazaux. Zola en Suède.R.L.C. 1953.p.429. 3) Lettres de Paris.p.93.

satisfies his need for brutality on the weaker members of the family: " Quand il revenait soûl, il lui fallait des femmes à massacrer." 1) He kills his wife with a kick and subsequently horribly mis-treats his eight-year old daughter, Lalie. In Germinal, the women, who try gamely to keep their families on meagre funds, feel most strongly the privations and hardships caused by the prolonged strike.

But, particularly in novels depicting the higher realms of French life, Zola also gave a picture of the dangers women posed for society's stability through their coquetry, their taste for luxury, and their immodesty, which in its intensity can rarely have been equalled. The organisation of society kept men busy but women were left to an idle life of pleasure, which they often turned to destructive ends. Men were partly to blame for this situation by jealously guarding their monopoly of social affairs, which accentuated their partners' frivolous existences. In the tale Lili the author addresses Ninon and recognises that man has made a mistake in encouraging woman's idleness:

" Je me rappelle ton cri de l'autre jour: 'Vraiment une femme est bien oisive'. J'ai songé jusqu'au soir à cet aveu. L'homme a pris tout le travail, et vous a laissé la rêverie dangereuse. La faute est au bout des longues songeries. A quoi penser quand on brode la journée entière? On bâtit des châteaux où l'on s'endort comme la Belle au bois dormant, dans l'attente des baisers du premier chevalier qui passera sur la route". 2)

Zola obviously believed that woman should make a larger contribution to her own and corporate destiny but he did not recommend a matriarchal society, for, while it must be admitted that his male characters make a very bad job of running society, in small slices of it where women are unusually dominant, things are certainly no better.

In Pot-Bouille it is Eléonore Jossérand who wields full power in the household. Like Félicité Rougon she had married

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1) L'Assommoir. R.M. Vol. 2. p. 689

2) Nouveaux Contes à Ninon. O.C. Vol. 9. Pp. 385-6



to achieve success but had been frustrated in her ambition and thus despises her husband, who is a pleasant, modest but acquiescent man. An aggressive, quarrelsome woman, she subdues her husband and directs the family affairs, but succeeds only in involving her husband in debts and her daughters in unsuitable marriages.

Zola demonstrated some admiration for his strong, energetic male characters, but there is little indication that he felt the same way about the women who reigned over a section of society. Lisa Macquart in Le Ventre de Paris is more active than her husband in the efficient running of their butchery business but Zola has little sympathy for her selfish desire for comfortable prosperity which dominates her thoughts and actions.

In La Terre, the novel in which man is most brutish, the peasant community is significantly ruled by the terrifying old woman, La Grande, who keeps the members of her family and others in an iron grip of authority. The respect in which she is held by the peasants arises from her obstinacy in clinging to every piece of property she possesses, in direct contrast to Fouan, who, as she tells him, stupidly abdicates his patriarchal authority by prematurely dividing his land between his children. Whenever she appears La Grande carries her stick as a symbol of authority. The old peasant woman incarnates the cruelty, avarice and insensitivity which the whole of peasant society manifests at times.

Although men are the more active of the two sexes in Zola's society, women, once they espouse a cause or action, are often more ferociously keen on its pursuit. In L'Argent the women take some persuasion to invest in Saccard's bank but once they have done so they hold on to their shares more tenaciously in the hope that a financial collapse might be avoided.

Women can also at times outdo men in violence. At Fouan's terrible murder in La Terre Lise is even more brutal than the monster Buteau. Hemmings 1) has discussed the symbolism of an episode in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon where a stag is thrown to the hounds and torn apart by them, at which:

" Des dames se penchaient, très excitées, avec de petits battements aux coins des lèvres, le cœur tout gonflé du besoin de voir les chiens manger". 2)

The women are just as keen as men, if not more so, to participate in the rush for Imperial spoils. At the beginning of Germinal La Maheude and the other women of the mining community are not fervent supporters of the strike, but once they have realised the justice of the revolt, they are more steadfast in a policy of non-surrender than the men. During the march of the miners and in the episode where soldiers are called in, it is the women who incite the men to violence. In the rampage through the mining areas the women are by far the more ferocious and their rage culminates in the emasculation of Maigrat.

Women, according to Zola, feel a much greater need for success than men once they set out on a campaign to achieve something. The actions of both Félicité Rougon and Eléonore Josserand are motivated by the disappointed ambition they have placed in their respective husbands. Even Christine in L'Œuvre, who has to share Claude Lantier's disappointments, is more affected by failure than her unstable husband:

" A chaque tableau refusé, elle montrait une douleur plus vive, blessée dans son amour-propre de femme, ayant cet orgueil du succès qu'elles ont toutes". 3)

In the existing social set-up, women of energy and ambition had no means of positively pursuing success and most

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1) See Hemmings. Emile Zola. p. 57

2) Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. R.M. Vol. 2. p.184

3) L'Œuvre. R.M. Vol. 4. p. 208

often took to destructive intrigue.

In the later novels human relationships are more harmonious, a state of affairs which is achieved in part by the restoration of woman's liberty. Through improved education woman gains an equality of opportunity with man, but mostly does not exploit it, restricting her ambitions to the home and family. In Paris Marie teasingly explains the new education for girls to Guillaume's sons:

" .... tous ces programmes très chargés, toute cette science qu'on exige aux examens est certainement une émancipation de la jeune fille, une marche à la femme future, à la société future, que vous appelez cependant de tous vos vœux, n'est-ce pas? les enfants". 1)

Zola's heroine continues by giving her own views of woman's rightful tasks in terms which do not suggest the force of the demands women were soon to make for emancipation:

" Vous savez que je suis une simple, moi et que je n'en demande pas tant que vous. Ah! les revendications, les droits de la femme! C'est bien clair, elle les a tous, elle est l'égale de l'homme, autant que la nature y consent. Et l'unique affaire, la difficulté éternelle est de s'entendre et de s'aimer". 2)

Through his description of Marie, Zola suggests that too much emancipation was likely to rob woman of her femininity:

" Et le miracle, avec toute cette science entassée un peu au hasard, était qu'elle fût restée très femme, très tendre, sans rien de dur ni de viril. Elle n'était que libre, loyale et charmante". 3)

It is significant that Zola considers Marie's lack of masculinisation as nothing short of a miracle.

In Travail part of Luc Froment's mission in the establishment of his ideal city is to save woman, incarnate in Josine, who is mistreated by Ragu:

1) Paris. O.C. Vol. 7. p. 1416

2) Ibid. p. 1416

3) Ibid. p. 1424

" Elle (Josine) était la femme, la femme misérable, l'esclave, la chair à travail et à plaisir, dont il avait rêvé d'être le sauveur". 1)

Ragu continues to ill-treat his wife in *La Crêcherie*, and for Luc, as long as Josine is not happy, the city is not working well. In this novel the ideal society is based firmly on the desire to improve woman's status, and Luc, in his work to save humanity feels the need for a woman to aid him.

In Vérité, woman is shown to be in need of emancipation not from man, but from the church which bases its power on the ability to sow discord between men and women. Vérité positively asserts the lesson inherent in La Conquête de Plassans that women must be freed from the clutches of priests, for whom they were merely instruments of social and political conquest. Woman must be educated to give her her rightful place as man's equal companion. Only by freeing woman from the church would man be liberated, since the sex-war, consciously encouraged by the church would be calmed:

" Tant que la femme, dans son antique querelle avec l'homme, au sujet des injustes lois et des mœurs iniques, resterait ainsi la propriété, l'arme de l'Église, le bonheur social était impossible, la guerre s'éterniserait entre les deux sexes désunis. Et la femme ne serait enfin la libre créature, la libre compagne de l'homme, ne disposerait d'elle, de son bonheur, pour le bonheur de l'époux et de l'enfant, que le jour où elle cesserait d'appartenir au prêtre, son maître actuel, désorganisateur et corrupteur". 2)

Zola's last novel ends with an interesting event which throws light on some of the earlier ones. A couple, François and Thérèse, are disunited by the male ceding to a rush of passion and temporarily leaving his wife. This rift saddens Marc Froment who realises that trouble between the sexes

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1) Travail. O.C. Vol. 8. p. 703

2) Vérité. O.C. Vol. 8. p. 1132

will never be completely eradicated. However, the situation could be improved by the emancipation of woman, who would then have no need to use sex as a means of revenge, proof that Zola regarded sexual attractiveness as woman's most commonly used weapon, when in a subservient position:

" Seulement, ne pouvait-on espérer que la femme affranchie, haussée à l'égal de l'homme, rendrait moins âpre la lutte sexuelle, y apporterait un peu de calme dignité. " 1)

The positive message of the late works and the less overt one of the Rougon-Macquart novels show Zola as sufficiently concerned with the improvement of woman's state for us to agree in part with Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum's view of Zola as a feminist, but, at the same time, he was very much a part of the society which failed to envisage the economic, legal, intellectual, and sexual independence that woman, for better or worse, has been able to acquire in this century. He believed that both sexes had its own rigid domain, and did not conceive of a situation in which activities and duties would overlap to any great extent. In Pot-Bouille Octave Mouret at one stage congratulates Mme. Hédouin for not having any children, who, according to him, ruin a woman's beauty. She explains that her reason for not having children was not to retain beauty, but that she was simply too busy. Zola would hardly have applauded either sentiment, but he seemed to agree that a woman, who led an active life, could not combine a career with her maternal functions. Anna Krakowski-Feygenbaum rightly points out that Zola insists that outside activities must not interfere with a woman's duties in the home, and that his fear that full emancipation might prejudice her social and biological functions amounts to a slight mistrust of the feminist movement.

The strife of human relationships in the Rougon-Macquart novels reveals the need for a change of attitude by both sexes,

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1) Ibid.p.1484.

and the late novels show how such a change could lead to rewarding personal unions. On a social level it was one of the early novels, Au Bonheur des Dames, which showed in what way men and women should work together for the benefit of the community. Franzen has admirably expressed the arrangement arrived at by Octave Mouret and Denise Baudu, which Zola gives as the ideal organisation of the roles of the sexes in society:

" Octave Mouret, l'arriviste cynique, l'homme qui réussit, n'est point le porte-parole de Zola. Mais Mouret et (Franzen thus stresses the co-operation) Denise Baudu le sont, ensemble, de concert. Tous les deux représentent les forces invincibles du Siècle: lui, par sa brutale et téméraire puissance créatrice qui façonne la réalité sans épargner les plus faibles; elle comme le correctif nécessaire du droit du plus fort." 1)

In Zola's world there was less need for either sex to be emancipated from the tyranny of the other, than for a general improvement in the relations between the sexes, which could be achieved by a change in attitude and behaviour on both sides.

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1) N.Franzen. op.cit. p.199.

CHAPTER VI : RELATIONSHIPS AND THE ART OF THE NOVEL.

1. Psychological Interest.

Zola has always been considered a weak 'psychological' novelist in the traditional sense of the term. Jules Lemaitre, an early critic of the novelist's work, observed in it the lack of complicated motivation for human behaviour and the fatality which governed personal actions. Writing of La Bête Humaine in Le Figaro on the 8th March 1890, Lemaitre described the characters as follows:

" Ici, plus encore que dans L'Assommoir ou Germinal, les personnages sont purement passifs, absolument soumis, d'une part, à la fatalité intime de leur tempérament, de l'autre, à la pression des objets et des circonstances extérieures. Ils n'agissent que par des impulsions irrésistibles. Ils ne se gouvernent pas... Ces personnages ne sont point des caractères, ce sont des instincts qui parlent, qui marchent, qui se meuvent." 1)

The same remarks have been made about Zola's characters by a succession of critics, so that he is generally accepted as the creator of a world made up of uncomplicated personalities. Everything that has been said of Zola's individuals applies equally well to his descriptions of the behaviour of couples.

Zola's break with traditional psychological treatment was entirely deliberate. His criminal investigator, M. Denizet in La Bête Humaine, is a prototype of Robbe-Grillet's Wallas, for both characters indicate their creator's mistrust of subtle theorising about human behaviour. Denizet is incapable of perceiving the simple facts behind Grandmorin's murder; he imputes motives to other characters, constructs a complicated version of the incident, and is convinced of the veracity of his postulation. The facts of the murder case are much simpler than the version created by Denizet's refined reasoning.

Denizet might have found the truth if he had been a doctor, or in some way scientifically trained, for Zola's universe and

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1) See 'Etude' to La Bête Humaine. R.M. Vol.4. p.1747.

the people in it are explicable by scientific fact. There are two principal agents which determine human action in the Rougon-Macquart novels: heredity and environment. Zola's characters are simple since they are usually dominated by one basic trait which affects their every movement and makes their actions perfectly explicable. Above all, Zola insisted that human beings were governed, not solely by the mind, but by every organ of their being. No function of his 'physiological' man was ignored. The author himself, for example, explained that Lisa Macquart's behaviour, including her treatment of Quenu and Florent, was determined more by her stomach than by her head.

The relations between men and women are affected by the author's depiction of human behaviour in general. One novel, Le Rêve, and the love story it contains, describe the struggle of heredity and environment, reacting one against the other, in a young member of the Rougon family. Angélique, the daughter of Sidonie Rougon, has inherited many of the family's characteristics: pride, greed, avarice, passion. She is adopted, however, by a childless couple and transposed into the peaceful, saintly atmosphere of their home, adjacent to a cathedral. The novel's purpose is to show what happens to her in this environment, particularly when she falls in love with an aristocrat, the bishop's son. The tranquil atmosphere, her adopted parents' love, her learning of Saints' legends, all work towards a change in the young girl, but her inherited ills, especially at the beginning, sometimes reassert themselves.

In the struggle between these opposed forces environment plays the role of divine grace, saving Angélique from the devil of her inherited ills. The battle culminates in the scene where Angélique almost elopes with Félicien. The voice of instinct fills Angélique with excitement at the prospect of elopement. However, just as they are about to leave, she turns to have a last look at her room, and the whiteness of it (opposed to



hereditary fires) fills her with regret. Environment overcomes instinct, her milieu has so influenced Angélique that she is unable to carry out her plan to leave:

" Les murs blancs surtout, la grande blancheur du plafond mansardé, l'enveloppaient d'une robe de candeur, dont elle ne se serait dévêtue qu'avec des larmes. Désormais, tout cela faisait partie de son être, le milieu était entré en elle... Chaque jour, la petite maison fraîche des brodeurs, la vie active et pure qu'elle y menait, à l'écart du monde, avaient refait un peu du sang de ses veines. " 1)

Environment or grace, in this instance, wins against sin or heredity, but the victory is not thoroughly approved of. Angélique so completely identifies herself with her surroundings that she is unable to live otherwise than in her imagination. Her self-projection into saintly legend causes her to reject reality, for the world and life are not as she imagined.

The forces of heredity and 'milieu', which so overtly influenced the affair between Félicien and Angélique, are the ones which affect other relationships between men and women in Zola's novels. An inherited murderous tendency causes Séverine to die at the hands of Jacques Lantier; the men ruined by Nana owe their fate to the girl's family and social background; Serge Mouret's anti-sexuality and Claude Lantier's frustrated genius are both manifestations of the family's mental instability, and both men, as a result, bring misery to the women they become involved with.

The relative simplicity of human behaviour made the affairs between couples more straightforward than had often been the case in fiction. Zola's preconceptions of human action made it impossible for him to write a novel describing the complicated mental reactions of a character to a particular woman, as Constant had so successfully done in Adolphe. Nor was he likely to emulate Le Rouge et Le Noir which contains two enigmatic affairs between the hero and two very different partners. We know exactly why

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1) Le Rêve. R.M. Vol.4. p.969.

Jacques Lantier kills Séverine, but the motivation of Julien Sorel's shooting of Mme. de Rênal is more complex. Nana's actions are in no way mysterious, whereas Manon Lescaut remains a tantalisingly enigmatic figure.

Zola's reactions to more traditional novelists are interesting. In his critical writings he showed that he appreciated Stendhal's work but considered that he concentrated too exclusively on the inner workings of the mind. His comments on one of the masters of the French psychological novel reveal his own preferences and theories. Zola expresses his conviction that man was not simply a mind: " Pour Stendhal, l'homme est uniquement composé d'un cerveau, les autres organes ne comptent pas." 1) Zola also stresses the importance of environment: " En outre, il tient rarement compte du milieu, j'entends de l'air dans lequel trempe son personnage." 2) The relationship between Julien and Mme. de Rênal was found to be unnatural and unconvincing:

" Sans doute, l'homme est plein d'inconséquences; seulement, cette danse du personnage, cette vie du cerveau notée minute à minute, et dans les plus petits détails, nuit, selon moi, au train plus large et plus bonhomme de la vie. On est presque toujours là dans l'exception. C'est ainsi que les amours de madame de Rênal et de Julien, surtout dans le rôle joué par ce dernier, ont à chaque page des grincements de machine, des raideurs de système dont les rouages n'obéissent pas suffisamment." 3)

The more complicated affair between the hero and Mathilde de la Mole is even less satisfactory:

" Il ne suffisait pas à Stendhal d'avoir créé un Julien, cette mécanique cérébrale si exceptionnelle; il a voulu créer la femelle de ce mâle, il a inventé Mlle. de la Mole, autre mécanique cérébrale pour le moins aussi surprenante." 4)

Zola's relationships are more straightforward than Stendhal's since they are easily explicable. At times, however, when Zola intrudes into the work to explain why the characters act in the way they do, the reader might wish the author to have curbed his desire to be explicit.

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1) Les Romanciers Naturalistes. B.C.p.83. 2) Ibid.p.84.

3) Ibid.p.98. 4) Ibid.p.102.

In Nana, Fauchery's article for Le Figaro is somewhat artificially interposed to illuminate Zola's central theme of a young girl from a generation of drunks, raised on the streets of Paris, who rises to infect the ranks of the aristocracy by enslaving its men-folk. Fauchery's comparison with a fly poisoning the men on which she alights is very apt and has some justification within the novel since it makes Muffat reflect on his relationship with Nana, but the article remains largely an explanatory detail of the author's central thesis. Zola feels obliged to underline his intentions by making Nana and Satin discuss their origins over dinner one evening. An assiduous reader of Zola might wish to form his own opinion of the relevance of L'Assommoir to Nana.

Incest in La Curée has none of the mysterious power of Phèdre, for Zola takes pains to describe its origins in clear terms. Renée is not subject to the hesitations, fears and scruples which traditionally no doubt a similar character would have experienced before indulging in incest. The relationship between Maxime and Renée is shown to be the inevitable result of circumstances:

" L'étrange éducation que la jeune femme donnait à l'enfant; les familiarités qui firent d'eux des camarades; plus tard, l'audace rieuse de leurs confidences; toute cette promiscuité périlleuse finit par les attacher d'un singulier lien, où les joies de l'amitié devenaient presque des satisfactions charnelles.. .. Dans le monde affolé où ils vivaient, leur faute avait poussé comme sur un fumier gras de sucS équivoques; elle s'était développée avec d'étranges raffinements, au milieu de particulières conditions de débauche. " 1)

A desire to elucidate is even more noticeable when Zola treats a scientific law, such as the 'Theory of Impregnation', in literary form. Madeleine Féral suffers from its reliance on this scientific tenet which renders physical impulses stronger than mental ones, and gives a terrifying picture of man's helplessness when subjected to 'physiological fatality'; from a literary

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1) La Curée. R.M. Vol.1. p.481.

point of view, the characters, robbed of any free will, are too passive to be either fascinating or sympathetic. The theories which Zola adopted as the basis of behaviour all give rise to a rigid determinism which rules out moral conflict, the essence of traditional psychological drama, in his novels. When Jacques returns in Madeleine Férat the heroine has much less feeling for him than for his successor, Guillaume, but she succumbs to a powerful physical attraction in spite of herself; former concepts of reason, will, or even inclination, have no place in Zola's system.

In Madeleine Férat, the construction of a plot exclusively around the 'Theory of Impregnation' has unfortunate results. There are inevitably a great number of portentous coincidences, chance meetings and unlikely happenings. Worse still, Zola feels a compunction to explain the theory at regular intervals. From the beginning the reader is not allowed to forget the imprint Jacques has left on the heroine. The frequency of explanatory passages shows the difficulty Zola must have experienced in trying to make credible a woman, who is not portrayed as promiscuous, and yet who cedes to a man for whom she feels no love, without continuing to repeat the theory:

" Lorsque Madeleine s'était oubliée dans les bras de Jacques, sa chair vierge avait pris l'empreinte ineffaçable du jeune homme. Il y eut alors mariage intime, indestructible. " 1)

Hemmings justifiably criticises the author for such overt elucidation :

" Unluckily he (Zola) fell into the error of explaining, point by point, the heroine's passions, surrenders, and revolts, in the light of the special theory he had adopted." 2)

Zola had other recurring methods of treatment, which apply particularly to his couples, which also tend to give rise to unsatisfactory characterisation. In two different sets of circumstances he showed a predilection for the pairing of

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1) Madeleine Férat. O.C. Vol. 1. p. 812.

2) F.W.J. Hemmings. Emile Zola. p. 26.

diametrically opposed male and female characters.

On occasion, Zola used antithetical, symbolic male and female figures to reveal the conflict between two opposed ideas or philosophies. In Le Ventre de Paris Lisa Macquart, representing the 'Fat', is ranged against Florent, one of the 'Thin', to express the struggle between the self-satisfied profiteers from the Imperial régime, whose support was rewarded with favour, and the unfortunate opponents of it, who were mercilessly removed from the scene. To represent the warring factions of society, Zola not only conceived the symbolism of the 'Fat' and the 'Thin', but in every way - physically, morally, intellectually - he made Florent the exact opposite of Lisa. The latter's denunciation and defeat of Florent is more than the outcome of a personal rivalry, it symbolises the victory of Imperial values and principles over hostile ones. In order to fulfil his intentions, Zola had to create two opposed characters and cause them to meet, stay for a while in close proximity, and subsequently fall violently apart.

The conflict in La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret is less the story of two different personalities than a debate between natural instinct and Catholic abstinence. The priest's initiation into sexual participation by the wild young girl, whose only education has come from the example of nature, and his final rejection of Albine in favour of the Church, illustrates a traditional theme of instinctive indulgement of sexual energy opposed to a reasoned preference for denying basic human urges. The struggle between vibrant life and sterile death has a dual climax. In Paradou Albine and life gain the first victory, but success is short-lived once Archangias infiltrates the realm of nature to recapture Serge. Battle is waged once more when Albine sallies forth in a bid to lead the priest back into Paradou, but the surroundings are now hostile; the climactical scene between Serge and Albine takes place in the church, which for the latter is difficult terrain. Although the ideological discussion is woven into a story

of man and woman, the two central characters have little depth as literary figures. Zola has to resort to a rather artificial way of bringing his opposed personalities together; the priest is stricken with a fever, whereupon Doctor Pascal has him lifted out of his ecclesiastical surroundings and transported to Paradou and Albine's tender care, to enable his recovery.

In Le Docteur Pascal Zola, for a time, uses the two principal figures to promote a discussion of ideas. Before they realize they are in love, Pascal and Clotilde symbolize a philosophical argument between religious mysticism, with its clinging adherence to the supernatural, and scientific positivism, which denies its existence. Clotilde feels a need for the concept of mystery and irrationality offered by religion. Pascal, on the other hand, believes that science is capable of slowly unravelling the mystery of the human condition, and of working steadily towards its betterment. In this novel the theoretical debate is incorporated into later events, since, on achieving sexual fulfilment with Pascal, Clotilde feels that the void in her being has been filled. Pascal changes somewhat, too, under the new experience. He comes to have greater respect for the mysteries of life, and now believes that it is imprudent to have ambitions to change the natural order through science. The debate between abstract ideas in this novel is more closely related to the emotional development of the characters.

The best example of a man and woman being used to express a philosophical debate is to be found in La Joie de Vivre, with Pauline Quenu and Lazare Chanteau. The two are complete opposites. The happy young girl accepts life with its joys and its sorrows, devoting herself to altruistic deeds for the public good; Pauline represents the love of life. Lazare, on the other hand, comes to hate life under the influence of his inherent pessimism and the fact that all his schemes come to nothing. The novel poses a fundamental question: is life, which is ugly, cruel, and full of

unhappiness and suffering, worth living? The story of Pauline and Lazare is conceived to pose this question. The characters, as Franzen demonstrates are symbolic of opposed ideas: "La Joie de Vivre est, au fond, un roman à thèse: ses personnages sont porteurs d'une idée." 1) The same critic observes the antithetical natures of the male and female protagonists, for, of Pauline, he writes: "telle que nous la rencontrons dans le roman, elle est, pour l'essentiel, l'antithèse de Lazare." 2)

La Joie de Vivre is also a highly subjective novel, for Lazare and Pauline may be taken as representatives of Zola's dual personality; they symbolize, not only the joys and sorrows of the human condition, but also the author's own optimism and pessimism, which, at times, were equally strong. Franzen refers to the novel as: "un grand dialogue où les deux protagonistes représentent deux tendances opposées du moi de Zola." 3) Henri Mitterand contends that:

" Il n'est pas déraisonnable d'interpréter la mise en présence de Pauline et de Lazare, comme une confrontation des deux Zola, l'un tentant d'exorciser les démons familiers de l'autre." 4)

Mitterand notes that for much of the period of creation of the Rougon-Macquart cycle Zola himself was intensely conscious of the pleasure and pain of life. Lazare Chanteau and Pauline Quenu express the anguish of an optimist in a world of disorder and distress, who, until he himself created life, tended perhaps to believe that the forces of death more often outfought those of life.

Zola's habit of using a man and woman to depict widely different ideas or conditions is important in a consideration of the psychology of his relationships. The characters themselves suffered through being used symbolically, and often have no great interest as human beings. The desire to express complete opposites in

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1) Franzen. op.cit. p.10. 2) Ibid.p.135. 3) Ibid.p.209.

4) See 'Etude' to La Joie de Vivre. R.M. Vol.3. p.1741.

this way demanded that men and women who were poles apart had to be forced together which created a slight lack of verisimilitude of action.

The opposed partners we have already discussed, except for Pascal and Clotilde, remained complete opposites. Neither was able to change the other, and the problems they illustrated were never solved by compromise, or to mutual satisfaction. Zola also liked to throw two completely different characters together, and then watch them react in a period of sustained contact. Such a process provides some of the few cases in which Zola's characters develop as the action unfolds, and the development is almost invariably caused by the influence of a second person of the opposite sex. The influence can be corrupting, as with Nana and Muffat, mutually damaging for a couple such as Thérèse and Laurent, or salutary, as in the case of Octave Mouret and Denise Baudu. Conversely, a complete failure to influence, or even understand, one's partner is illustrated by La Confession de Claude.

Of the early novels, Thérèse Raquin is the best example of a study in interreacting temperaments. Here, the cause of adultery rises from within the characters rather than from external factors. Thérèse is a latently passionate and sensual woman whose life with an insipid husband, spent in the dull surroundings of a small shop, is full of the boredom which, in later novels, led women of her standing straight into adulterous relationships. In this case, however, Thérèse does not think of betraying her husband until the virile Laurent rouses her dormant sensuality. Thérèse Raquin might be considered as an example of a traditional 'psychological' novel, although, in general, the novel deals with the effects of passion rather than its causes.

The novel illustrates the thesis that a man and woman of conflicting temperaments will react upon each other when they live in close proximity. Laurent brings out the beast in Thérèse but he, in turn, contracts some of Thérèse's nervous disposition.



The brutality of passion brought into the liaison by Laurent makes the couple lovers, and then murderers, but, in the closing stages, Thérèse's nervous strain causes the remorse both feel, and the maddened form it takes.

It is perhaps significant that La Bête Humaine, which more than any of the other later novels describes basic, primitive impulses as stronger motivators of human action than environmental influences, is the most similar to Thérèse Raquin in the treatment of conflicting temperaments. M. and Mme. de Lachsnaye are a rather unpleasant couple who would like to contest Grandmorin's will to prevent Séverine from acquiring the house she has inherited. Zola portrays their nasty natures as the result of the complementary corruptive effect they have on each other:

" En quelques mois de ménage, leur mauvaise grâce, leur sécheresse à tous deux s'étaient communiquées et exagérées. Ils se gâtaient ensemble, c'était lui qui l'avait jetée sur Séverine, au point que pour ravoire la maison, elle l'aurait fait arrêter sur l'heure. " 1)

The central couple in the same novel are somewhat reminiscent of Thérèse and Laurent. Séverine, before her encounter with Jacques Lantier, is a docile creature, willing to submit to men with little personal pleasure. Like Laurent, Jacques is able to excite her dormant sensuality and she becomes a much more energetic, powerful personality:

" La créature d'amour, simplement docile autrefois, aimait à cette heure, et se donnait sans réserve, et gardait du plaisir une reconnaissance brûlante. " 2)

There are other examples of interacting male and female characters in Zola's novels. Nana ruins Muffat who is open to her influence because of a lack of experience of excitement in youth. Denise saves Octave Mouret from his own indulgence, and alleviates conditions in a department store in the process. In La Terre the worsening of Lise's character is brought about partly

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1) La Bête Humaine. R.M. Vol.4. p.1086. 2) Ibid. p.1193.

by contact with her husband Buteau, who imparts to her his brutality and greed, so that Lise herself becomes a cruel tyrant, devoid of feeling for her sister, or even for her children.

Zola's widespread use of opposed men and women as symbols for the expression of abstract problems, added to a marked preference for creating couples made up of extremely different partners, led to a certain lack of verisimilitude in the generally accepted terms of the 'psychological' novel. But if the processes he adopted for the description of human behaviour resulted in a change in the fictional portrayal of such behaviour, Zola did at least show himself capable of writing a more traditional story if he so desired.

R.J.Niess, in his discussion of possible resemblances between Zola's Thérèse Raquin and Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, reminds us that both have a psychological interest:

" It would appear that the chief of these (resemblances between the two novels) lies in the fact that both novels are strictly psychological novels in the accepted nineteenth-century sense, that is, that they are principal (sic) concerned, not with the details of an intrigue, not with social mores or social criticism, but with the changes that take place in their characters' souls as the consequence of a specific act, in each case a crime." 1)

An even more complete example of a traditional story of man and woman is provided by Une Page d'Amour, with its analysis of love and passion in particular. The triangular situation of a woman who falls in love with a married man and subsequently becomes his mistress is an extremely banal one, but the interest centres on the analysis of the heroine's emotions, and of her daughter's jealousy. As Hélène falls in love with Deberle, she reveals that passion is made up of pride, tenderness and fear, as well as the same desire which normally sweeps away Zola's characters. In the action which culminates in adultery it is the woman's emotions which are most closely scrutinised. There are

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1) R.J.Niess. Hawthorne and Zola - An Influence? R.L.C. 1953. p. 449.

obstacles to her love, but the greatest of these are her own timidities and fear, so that the struggle of love becomes a struggle with the self, one of the usual ingredients of psychological drama. Zola also treats his reader to an examination of the birth of love and desire; more often for him it just exists as a physical impulse.

The novel opens with the widowed H el ene Mouret living a tranquil undisturbed existence intent only on caring for her delicate daughter Jeanne. One of the latter's health crises brings her mother into contact with a married doctor, to whom she is at once attracted. At first it is only indirectly suggested that her feelings for Deberle are more than friendly ones. One day, for example, H el ene is enjoying a turn on a garden swing when the doctor appears, and, embarrassed by the slightly indecorous position in which he has caught her, she jumps off and injures herself. She is reluctant to let Deberle treat her, but sends for Doctor Bodin instead. The violence of her refusal to consider marriage to the uninspiring M. Rambaud, as advocated by l'Abb e Jouve, also suggests that she might already be in love with the doctor.

The fact that the feeling is mutual is seen when Jeanne unwittingly reveals M. Rambaud's suit in front of the Deberles and the doctor is agitated by the thought that H el ene might marry. This incident troubles the tranquillity of a relationship in which love was sensed by both but never openly acknowledged.

Deberle is the first to proceed to an avowal of love, which causes great confusion in H el ene. She flees to her room to muse on this latest development, at which stage the novel resembles the most traditional of psychological novels. As H el ene looks out over Paris she carries on a dialogue with herself, laying bare her innermost thoughts at successive stages of her affair with Deberle, with a degree of introspection which is rare for one of Zola's characters. As she reviews the emptiness of her

past life, and projects herself into the future which now affords the chance of happiness, the main question she has to ask herself is whether to submit to Deberle's advances or not. In this debate reason and duty are opposed to passion and the new-found joy of love, whose awakening within her causes a revolt against the prosaic, rational existence she has tasted for so long. The age-old battle between reason and passion are well expressed in H el ene's soul-searching:

" Non, non, c' etait assez, elle voulait vivre! Et une raillerie terrible lui venait contre sa raison. Sa raison! en v erit e, elle lui faisait piti e, cette raison qui, dans une vie d ej a longue, ne lui avait pas apport e une somme de joie comparable   la joie qu'elle go tait depuis une heure, .... Toute sa r evolte aboutissait   ce d esir imp erieux. Oh! dispara tre dans une  treinte, vivre en une minute tout ce qu'elle n'avait pas v ecu!" 1)

Realization and acceptance of her love do not bring H el ene to an immediate, sexual involvement with Deberle. She thinks she will be able to taste the joy of being loved without ever avowing her reciprocal feelings and without submitting physically to the doctor. Like Emma Bovary she seeks refuge in religion which for a time affords her some degree of peace.

When Jeanne undergoes a new and serious crisis, Deberle comes every day, and does everything in his power to cure the young girl. H el ene proves herself to be a devoted mother but the doctor's effort at saving Jeanne plunges him deeper and deeper into the mother's heart. H el ene cannot prevent herself from avowing her love once the doctor has saved her daughter from this particularly severe attack. Her passion and her maternal feelings are joined and combine in an outburst of love for the man she loves and for the doctor who has saved her child. Once the latter is cured, however, her jealousy of Deberle

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1) Une Page d'Amour. R.M. Vol. 2. Pp. 906-7.

grows so that she can not bear him to be with her mother, and H el ene now becomes subject to opposed amorous and maternal emotions. It is tragically ironic that the act of saving Jeanne, and the intimacy it prepares between the two adults, are the ultimate causes of the daughter's death. H el ene's love of her daughter and of the man who saved her are unfortunately not compatible. The child who initially brings the couple together, later forces them irrevocably apart. Jeanne's death is no solution, and from this fact Henri Mitterand makes a comparison between Zola's novel and what is sometimes considered as the prototype of all French psychological novels, La Princesse de Cl eves:

" par sa mort, le personnage dont la seule existence mettait obstacle   l'amour des deux autres, bien loin de leur laisser la libert e de s'unir, les s epare pour jamais. " 1)

Once love has been consummated, the novel passes quickly to its tragic 'd enouement'. The most important part of the story concerns the study of the birth and growth of love, which allows Une Page d'Amour to be counted amongst more conventional examples of French psychological fiction. Passion, in this case, is not, for Zola, a mere animal sensuality, for consideration is given to the workings of the mind as well as the body. Concepts of shame, duty, reason, and apprehension are given an important place in this description of a relationship between a man and a woman.

The emotions and actions of the central couple in Au Bonheur des Dames are never quite so explicitly treated as in many of Zola's novels. Denise Baudu's growing love for Mouret is not analysed, she merely experiences strange feelings which are unknown to her, and which she is unable to explain. The same is true of Mouret. He is amazed to find himself concerned and troubled by this, the most unlikely of girls.

The mystery of their feelings continues as love grows. In

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1) See 'Etude' to Une Page d'Amour. R.M. Vol.2. p.1609.

the defence of her virtue Denise has to combat Mouret and his persistence, but also herself, for there is always a chance that she might meet his demands. Neither she nor the reader knows why she refuses to acquiesce, her stubbornness is merely seen as fundamental to her nature. It is not an idea of virtue that stops her but some vague, deep-felt conviction that to cede is not the way to happiness. Denise does not consciously try to persuade Mouret to marry her; it takes her friend, Pauline, to guess the truth, and tell Denise so, in order to make the girl realize her own intentions. It was important for Denise not to pursue a calculated marriage, so that a pleasant heroine might illustrate by contrast the normally accepted customs of the bourgeoisie, but, at times, she is too unaware of what she feels and does, to be a very convincing character.

Mouret's characterization is surprising for a reader who has already encountered him in Pot-Bouille. Octave becomes increasingly haunted by Denise and disgusted at his own impotence and infatuation. There comes a stage when he can no longer forget her by immersing himself in work. Evenings spent away from Denise are full of torment: "Le soir, quand il se retrouvait seul, des larmes lui gonflaient les paupières." 1) Zola perhaps went a little far in reducing Mouret to tears, for the reader who remembers the brutal profligate of Pot-Bouille is hardly convinced by them. Nor is he convinced by the author's creation of a man, who had exploited women mercilessly to make his fortune, and who is then conquered by a girl, who does so with no calculation or intention.

Neither of the central pair in this novel is as interesting or as expertly drawn as H el ene and Deberle; the interest lies, not in a relationship of a man and woman, but in an illustration of the changing pattern of commerce. However, there is one

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1) Au Bonheur des Dames. R.M. Vol.3. p.712.

particular episode in Au Bonheur des Dames which is well handled by Zola. Mme.Desforges is hurt by Mouret's interest in Denise, and she arranges a confrontation between the three of them at her home, but her attempts to humiliate the girl in Mouret's presence only increases his love for Denise. The most satisfactory figure in this triangle is Mme.Desforges. The desperation of a jealous woman causes her to carry her cruel treatment of Denise too far, so that she defeats her object by increasing Mouret's love and pity for his sales-girl. Mme.Desforges' jealousy is also incorporated into the action of the novel since it brings her to pledge support for Bouthemont's plan to set up a rival store to compete with Mouret's 'Au Bonheur des Dames'.

In Le Docteur Pascal the traditional combat of love versus reason takes place, not, as in Une Page d'Amour, before sexual intimacy, but after it. In this case it is the male who feels most scruples about the significance of the relationship. Pascal's feelings are analysed more closely than Clotilde's; this is entirely natural if we remember the autobiographical content of the novel, for Zola, through his liaison with Jeanne Rozerot, was well acquainted with a situation such as Pascal's. Zola describes in some detail his scientist's desire for a young woman. Once he knows that Clotilde feels a reciprocal love, their union is consummated with no obstacles. It is only afterwards that Pascal begins to feel pangs of conscience and to have ideas of betrayed duty. The novel turns more and more into a traditional psychological drama. Pascal thinks that he is keeping his neice from the duty she owes her sick brother in Paris, and, more importantly, from a full life as the partner to a young man whose children she could bear (this is before Clotilde is pregnant by him). He resolves to make her leave for Paris, but does not do so without having to overcome his own intense love in favour of what he conceives as his duty.

It is only Pascal who believes that Clotilde and her future

are being compromised by the love they share. For Clotilde, things are very simple: she loves Pascal and should, therefore, stay with him. Clotilde is not subject to a debate between love and duty, she is in the enviable position where both amount to the same thing, as she herself explains: " Mon seul devoir est où est mon cœur." 1) The scruples and heart-ache Pascal experiences are no doubt expressions of similar emotions Zola felt, as the elder partner to his liaison with Jeanne, which was complicated by the existence of a wife who deserved at least his respect and consideration. The degree of emotional conflict was likely to be greater in the male partner in a fictional description of his own personal relationship. Once again, with the debate between love and duty, Zola created a situation similar to some of the more traditional, fictional relationships.

It might also be argued that Zola's treatment of human behaviour improved in its motivation in later work. This can be seen from those instances in which a novel dealt with a theme or situation similar to one already treated in a previous work.

The great change which came over Octave Mouret in the space of two successive novels was an improbable transformation. We have already noted how, in Le Docteur Pascal, Zola included a vague reference to his earlier hero, which suggested that, after a few years of marriage to Denise, the philanderer was returning to his old ways. Did Zola himself feel that the change he had wrought in this character was too stark to be convincing? Certainly, a reader who remembers Pot-Bouille is not surprised at the thought of Octave becoming restless in married life.

In many ways, Pauline Quenu and Mme. Caroline in L'Argent are similar characters, but the latter, who was conceived at a later date, is the more complex and satisfactory of the two. Pauline's kindness and generosity are a little exaggerated, and her continued support for such an utter failure as Lazare is

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1) Le Docteur Pascal. R.M. Vol.5. p.1137.



senseless rather than noble. The heroine of La Joie de Vivre suffers from being self-immolation incarnate, and also from the fact that she is made to react with a man who is so completely her opposite. Mme. Caroline's characterization is helped by the fact that she becomes involved with a man whose own personality is more complex. Aristide Saccard, in La Curée, had been a relatively shadowy character, but when he re-enters the scene in L'Argent, he becomes himself one of the central couple, an energetic, interesting man. His passion for money is still intense, but it is Mme. Caroline who acknowledges and demonstrates that the results of Saccard's actions are not all corrupt.

The best improvement in two similar novels can be found in a comparison between Madeleine Féral and L'Assommoir, which are both concerned with the 'Theory of Impregnation'. In the early novel tragedy is caused uniquely by Jacques' physical hold over the heroine, but the fall of Gervaise and her family is due to many interacting factors. The effects of the previous lover's return are not disregarded. Lantier's reappearance still causes a burning sensation in Gervaise's stomach, and she resumes her past life with him in spite of repeated protestations that she will never do so. Physical impulses still defeat the mind in L'Assommoir, and cause a slight irrationality of behaviour. Gervaise feels no tenderness for Lantier but she still betrays her husband and the man who adores her, Goujet.

However, Lantier's physical hold over Gervaise is not the only reason for the fall of the Coupeau household. The husband's drunkenness is one important factor, In this case alcoholism is not inherited; Coupeau is not from the Rougon-Macquart line, and he only takes to drink after an accident renders him incapable of work for a long time. The sordid environment of a city tenement has much to do with the family's eventual downfall, and parts of Gervaise's own character also affect their destiny. At times, she can be a very industrious woman, but her nature also contains

a lazy, indolent streak and a weakness for little luxuries. Once things start to go badly she does little to fight the slide. She resolves strongly not to cede to Lantier, but once she has done so, Gervaise accepts and excuses her fall, feeling less shame than Madeleine Férat. Her reactions to Lantier's return are treated with some subtlety. Lantier's own reappearance is heralded by the return of Virginie, who evokes the past and tells Gervaise what has happened to her former lover. Gervaise is secretly glad that he and Adèle, the girl for whom she was deserted, have not found happiness together. When Lantier returns to the neighbourhood he opens a campaign of seduction, directed not solely at Gervaise, but at the whole district. His smooth-talking is captivating, and soon his presence is accepted by all, even Gervaise slowly comes to regard his continual visits as not unnatural. Coupeau's own welcoming of Lantier plays a large part in Gervaise's acceptance of him, and her husband's duplicity allows the soft streak in her character the excuse and justification it needs. The 'Theory of Impregnation' is not completely forgotten. After her 'fall' Gervaise at first feels slight disgust and remorse at being shared by two men, but quickly becomes used to the situation, finding excuses both in her husband's insobriety and in the idea that a natural law justifies her action:

" Elle allait plus loin, elle laissait entendre que Lantier était son mari autant que Coupeau, peut-être même davantage. Est-ce qu'elle ne l'avait pas connu à quatorze ans? Est-ce qu'elle n'avait pas deux enfants de lui? Eh bien! dans ces conditions, tout se pardonnait, personne ne pouvait lui jeter la pierre. Elle se disait dans la loi de la nature." 1)

Physical impulses are still important in the action of L'Assommoir, but it is also governed by a more complex system of interrelated conditions. Zola came to portray behaviour as not motivated by single forces; the reasons for actions in later novels are not so simple as in the early ones. Lanoux sees

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1) L'Assommoir. R.M. Vol.2. p.637.

Gervaise Macquart as Zola's most complete and successful character, describing her as, " le seul être dont la psychologie soit d'une incontestable et profonde subtilité." 1)

## 2. Literary Interest.

In spite of the improvements Zola made in the behaviour of his characters, he never succeeded in creating a relationship between a man and a woman of sufficient subtlety or complexity to rival those conceived by the authors of the best French 'psychological' novels. By adopting the assumptions and theories current in his own age, which now seem dated, Zola committed his characters either to the fatality of brute instincts or to that of their environment, or at most a combination of the two. This does not necessarily brand Zola as a bad psychologist, merely as a different one. Lukacs is of the opinion that the concentration on physiology displayed by Zola was just as extreme as that which other novelists showed for psychology in the narrow sense of a study of mental processes, both procedures distort reality and prejudice a balanced portrayal of the complexity of human conflicts. Zola obviously thought that traditional 'psychological' novelists gave too narrow a perspective, and he at least showed that human motivation was more detailed than was previously acknowledged, by incorporating contemporary theories into his fictions. Although the more fanciful of such theories have long been proved erroneous, it seems that psychologists in the post-Freudian era are reverting to ideas on behaviour which are reminiscent of the ones expressed by Zola. The co-authors of a recent work on the social aspect of sexual affairs contest the widely accepted view that actions are 'mentally' motivated:

"..in spite of everything that has been done to popularize psychological knowledge the majority of people still cling to

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1) A.Lanoux. Zola Vivant. O.C. Vol.1. p.141.

the idea that feelings and emotions are essentially 'mental' phenomena. They are not. They are states of being, involving every aspect of the relationship between the individual and his environment. They affect every organ, every muscle, every tissue, every cell. " 1)

Although single works may suffer from being too explicit an explanation of a particular scientific theory, in their totality, Zola's novels are of some interest simply as a reflection of the ideas on human behaviour current at a given time. Harry Levin talks of Zola's:

" ..earnest effort to reexamine fiction against the changing conditions of knowledge and society, and thereby to reformulate the problem of literary expression for an increasingly scientific age. " 2)

Hemmings contends that Zola is not a bad psychologist, but a different one. When discussing Professor Saurat's charge that: " Ses (i.e. Zola's) personnages n'ont pas d'intérieur", the English critic replies as follows:

" If it is difficult to refute the charge, it is possible to question the seriousness of the fault, by pleading that Zola's psychological analysis is not necessarily inferior to, but simply of a different order from that of other novelists - being group psychology rather than individual psychology; that, given his aims, Zola had perhaps no room for the study of the inner world of his characters." 3)

The 'group psychology' aspect of Zola's work, alluded to by Hemmings, provides the main interest of the relations between the sexes. Some individual duels of opposed personalities, such as that between Eugène Rougon and Clorinde Balbi, are fascinating in themselves, but there are few instances in Zola's novels of a story concerning the interaction of a man and woman in isolation from exterior forces. The interest which Robert finds in the characters of La Terre might apply to all of Zola's individuals and couples:

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1) K.Walker and P.Fletcher. Sex and Society. p.136.

2) Harry Levin. The Gates of Horn. p.306.

3) F.W.J.Hemmings. The present position in Zola studies.F.S. 1956. p.111.

"..il reste que, pas plus dans ce roman que dans ses autres œuvres, Zola n'est un grand créateur d'êtres vivants. Son domaine propre se trouve dans la représentation de la vie collective ou dans l'évocation des forces profondes qui animent son univers de poète. " 1)

The couples in Zola's novels illustrate the creation of a collective rather than an individual life, and express the idea that, the more modern society develops, the less isolated individuals become one from another. Zola demonstrates that personal fates depend on life in society, but, at the same time, can have repercussions on social organisation. In a system where private and collective life were so closely bound together, characters tend to merge to become part of the crowd. Zola produced few, if any, love stories as such, where two people were allowed to exist as if in a vacuum. Even in Une Page d'Amour, the forces which bring about the dénouement do not rise solely from within the two central characters. The principal interest of relations between the sexes in the Rougon-Macquart novels is to be found, not in the couples themselves, but in the forces that fashion and oppress their unions. The causes of bad relations, which outnumber the good ones, are found beyond the man and woman, in the structure and values of society itself, and the poisoned relationships Zola portrayed form an integral part of the indictment of a decadent age. Stories of individual couples are important in the wider context in which they are set, and Zola put an end to what Hemmings picturesquely describes as , " private catastrophes and closet dramas." 2) Love affairs are taken outside of the family circle and are made to be conducted in the society and the state.

In La Fortune des Rougon love and liberty are inextricably linked in the fate of the central couple and the republican ideal. Miette and Silvère are forever described as seeking true love and a general liberty which it is impossible to separate:

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1) Guy Robert. La Terre d'Emile Zola. p.360.

2) F.W.J.Hemmings. Emile Zola. p.34.

" Le souffle d'épopée qui emportait Miette et Silvère, ces grands enfants avides d'amour et de liberté, traversait avec une générosité sainte les honteuses comédies des Macquart et des Rougon. " 1)

When Miette is dead, Silvère mourns, not only his beloved, but the hopes he had placed in the Republic too:

" C'était la République qui dormait avec Miette, dans un pan du drapeau rouge. Ah! misère, elles étaient mortes toutes les deux." 2)

The central love story is not important, simply as the description of a pleasant, idyllic affair, but is used symbolically to represent an attempt at social reform. It also has relevance to the succeeding parts of the series; the defeat of Republicanism brings the establishment of the Imperial régime with the corrupt principles which fashioned human relations in the years to come. Had the new society been created, Miette and Silvère could have lived and loved in their way, but the Second Empire was to encourage the vicious bourgeois of Pot-Bouille, and the continued degradation of Germinal instead. The defeat of the Republican male by the female supporter of the Imperial cause in Le Ventre de Paris underlines the victory gained in the previous novel.

In Au Bonheur des Dames a little corner of society is affected by the union of a man and woman, rather than vice-versa, but the love story is still interwoven into the social context. The main interest lies in the economic question of the struggle waged between the small shopkeeper and the big stores. Denise has a foot in both camps, but she understands the economic climate sufficiently to realize that the larger organisations will win the battle. She has no time for an idyllic affair with Deloche, who is devoted to her, but prefers to play her own part in the shaping of the new commercial world by marriage to Mouret. The organisation of the store and the eventual working-conditions of its employees are determined by the marriage of its director with a woman who feels the need for reform. Zola's society was still based, to a

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1) La Fortune des Rougon. R.M. Vol.1.p.162. 2) Ibid.p.311.

large extent, on human relationships and all their consequences.

The effects of the structure of society on relationships within it are shown from novel to novel. The degradation of the miners' lives in Germinal is caused by the capitalist system, which holds them in subjugation, and profits from them to pay for the luxuries of the property classes. The place and the people who control the mine, and the lives of the men who work it, make up an impersonal 'là-bas', which is difficult to influence. When Etienne Lantier first arrives at Montsou he asks Bonnemort, the old miner, who owns the mine, and he replies: "Hein? à qui tout ça? On n'en sait rien. A des gens." 1) One wonders who these people are. Readers of Zola will remember the speculators of La Curée, the managers of big-business who sought favour in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, and the countless shareholders who led dissolute lives in many of the novels of upper-class life. Even M.Grégoire criticises the corruption of some of the mining company's shareholders:

"C'est comme ce grand seigneur que je ne nommerai pas, un duc, le plus fort de nos actionnaires, dont la vie est un scandale de prodigalité, millions jetés à la rue en femmes, en bombances, en luxe inutile." 2)

Such a figure is reminiscent of the sort of men who flocked around Nana, and squandered their fortunes through their enslavement to her. The reader may well remember Steiner, a speculator in shares, who engages in many financial deals in a bid to retain the courtesan's favour. Nana's rapacity has wide repercussions due to the capitalist system. At one stage, in connection with Steiner's transactions, we are told:

"..il y avait là-bas, dans un coin de province, des ouvriers noirs de charbon, trempés de sueur, qui, nuit et jour, raidissaient leurs muscles et entendaient craquer leurs os, pour suffire aux plaisirs de Nana." 3)

The workers in question work in a forge in Alsace, not in a

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1) Germinal. R.M. Vol.3.p.1141. 2) Ibid.p.1314.

3) Nana. R.M. Vol.2. p.1455.

mine, but an assiduous reader of Zola, who has returned to Nana after Germinal, can hardly fail to remember the miners of Montsou in this context. One realises that, whilst La Maheude is trying to feed her starving children on the pittance her hard-working family receives from the mine, Nana is enjoying herself on the money gained by the shareholders of the mine or similar enterprises. Nana's exaggerated greed, and the ruin it brings to the monied classes, when seen in the wider context of the cycle, and its criticism of Second Empire society, represent the hordes of courtesans, who can indulge their corruption by their ability to live off the oppressed working-classes. To appreciate the significance of some of Zola's relationships, a reader needs to show an awareness of the relevance of one part of the main cycle to the whole. The total pattern takes shape from within the individual works, which are linked, not so much by the reappearance of common characters, but by recurring and interrelating ideas. The fate of La Maheude will not change until Nana stops fleecing her admirers, or finds that she is in no position to do so. Zola realised that the problem of human relations was not an isolated one which could be dissociated from the social whole, which shared the same manifold causes of corruption.

In early novels, where Zola had produced stories of two individuals as the main interest of the work, his characterization was often weak because of . . . too close an adaptation of scientific theories. When he entwined individual fates with social factors he created works of greater significance and interest. Lukacs, however, denies that Zola successfully combined his characters with their background. When discussing what he calls the 'totality of objects', the critic writes:

" Every reader will remember, for instance, Zola's markets, stock exchanges, underworld haunts, theatres, racetracks etc. So far as the encyclopaedic character of his contents and the artistic quality of his descriptions is concerned, Zola, too, possessed this 'totality of objects'. But these objects have a being entirely independent of the fate of the characters. They



form a mighty but indifferent background to human destinies with which they have no real connection; at best they are the more or less accidental scenery among which these human destinies are enacted. " 1)

In some cases, as far as Zola's couples are concerned, this view must be upheld. The attempt to find happiness in adultery, described in Une Page d'Amour, takes place in the very midst of Paris, but the fate of Deberle and H el ene is affected by a small group of people, rather than the influence of the city, which looks on as a silent observer. Zola does attempt to incorporate the capital into his heroine's feelings by a complicated anthropomorphization of the surroundings, in conjunction with emotional developments, but the long descriptive passages on Paris are tedious and have little bearing on the central action.

In La B ete Humaine a small slice of humanity is quite effectively portrayed as caught up in the cogs of the railway network, but the central drama between Jacques, S everine and Roubaud could have existed in different surroundings. In this novel Zola concentrates on hereditary impulses, but in novels where the emphasis is on environmental influences the settings necessarily have greater repercussions on the characters' destinies.

The stout, self-satisfied Lisa Macquart is thoroughly conditioned by the district of Les Halles. The opposition which grows between her and Florent arises precisely from the fact that he, who has suffered the privations of exile, is so ill at ease in such surroundings. Lisa, on home ground, wins the battle; it is difficult to see the conflict being more suitably expressed in a different setting. The degraded relationships in working-class novels were the direct result of bad living conditions and sordid surroundings. Conversely, much of the perversity of high society was due to the flashy, luxurious environment in which the Imperial 'arriv es' moved. It is impossible to divorce the affair between Octave Mouret and Denise Baudu from the context of the department

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1) G.Lukacs. Studies in European Realism. p.152.

store. The conflict between Eugène Rougon and Clorinde Balbi is conditioned by, and in turn brings a development in, the political organisation of the Imperial régime. The mine and the working conditions it fosters are responsible for the brutality of life as experienced by Chaval and Catherine, and are also important for an appreciation of the timid affair between Maheu's daughter and Etienne Lantier, since this relationship exists as a direct contrast to those which commonly grew up peculiar to the mining district.

Far from being divorced from their settings, the relationships which Zola portrayed only have relevance when viewed in the perspective of the backgrounds which fashioned them. The greatest interest to be derived from the novels arises from a consideration of the interaction of people with their environment, for the way in which individuals are forced to order their lives reveals the standards, conditions and values of their surroundings.

Individual relationships may have interest in themselves, but often they represent typical behaviour in a particular slice of society. Renée and Maxime set the ultimate example of upper-class perversity, the couples in Pot-Bouille reveal the bad marriages and widespread adultery common to the bourgeoisie, whilst the story of Coupeau and Gervaise demonstrates the degradation of human life in typical working-class surroundings.

If Zola was at all the prophet of a future age, his foresight is to be found in the recognition that individualism was destined to be swallowed up in the complexity of modern society, and it is this visionary aspect of his writings which, for Hemmings, makes Zola the forerunner of a new age:

Zola was the prophet of a new age of mass-psychology, mass-analysis, mass-education, and mass-entertainment, an age in which the part is never greater than the whole. " 1)

Zola dealt with human affairs more as a sociologist than as

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1) F.W.J.Hemmings. Emile Zola. p.291.

a psychologist; he created situations in which character and action had to be explained from the outside, and required from the reader a willingness to look beyond individuals or couples to the forces which controlled them.

### 3. Didactic Interest.

One of the insights into Zola's ideas which Ernest Vizetelly gained from contact with the author he so admired, during the latter's exile in England, was that Zola held the opinion that "mere essays on sociology .... fail to reach and impress the masses in the same way as a story may do." 1) It would seem from this that the novelist set out consciously to write sociological tracts in fictional form, full of didactic intent, which he considered would be effective in stimulating thought on social affairs. At this stage of his literary career, Zola was engaged on the production of his later novels, which expressed his ideas for the ideal society. To fulfil such an objective his novels were understandably and avowedly didactic. On the 15th October 1899 he wrote to Paul Brulat explaining and justifying his late work in an almost apologetic manner:

".... n'ai-je pas le droit, après quarante ans d'analyse, de finir dans un peu de synthèse? L'hypothèse, l'utopie, est un des droits du poète." 2)

The desire to create a new society led Zola to excess as Hemmings indicates:

"In the Evangelies Zola openly posed as the Messiah of the twentieth century, even to the extent of giving to the heroes of each of the four books the names of the authors of the Christian Gospels." 3)

The desire to be positive in the postulation of a new society and pose as its saviour is perhaps understandable in a man who had for so long been so utterly destructive in the

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1) E. Vizetelly. op. cit. p. 118

2) Correspondance. Les Lettres et Les Arts. B.C. Pp. 345-6

3) F.W.J.Hemmings. Emile Zola. p. 282

criticism of an old order; the new-found joy he experienced with Jeanne Rozerot no doubt did much to change the orientation of his thought from an essentially pessimistic viewpoint to an optimistic one. However, for all the personal fervour of hope with which he animated his new universe and in spite of the insight into his thought which the later overtly didactic novels give, the general opinion amongst critics is that, as works of art, the later novels suffer from the undisguised moralising they contain. The characters are little more than mouthpieces for Zola's visions and their stories are designed only to illustrate the beneficial effect of the new system.

Many of the recommendations for the "hypothesised utopia" take the form of proposed changes in the relations between the sexes, most of which we have already discussed. The proper channel for sexual energy was found in the ever present desire to create life which represented progress. Man's essential rôle was as the creator both of human life and social prosperity and development. Woman was revered as the means to this creation and exalted as the fertile mother figure. Her rôle was confined to the production and succour of large families and to giving encouragement to her mate in his life-work by her calm counsel.

At times, specific improvements in human relationships were recommended. Marriage must become a contract of personal choice, devoid of ulterior motives, and based on a long and exploratory acquaintanceship. In Travail especially, inter-class marriages were seen as a means of attaining a classless, harmonious society.

In Travail and Vérité co-education and a general mixing of the sexes from an early age were pre-requisite to the formation of worthwhile adult relationships. Marc Froment's school was a secular one; the fate of relations between the

sexes also depended on the rejection of the Catholic religion with its reverence for chastity and virginity, and the destruction of the Church's influence, since it maintained its mastery by fomenting discord between men and women, in particular manipulating the latter as its unsuspecting allies. Men and women themselves could help towards the disappearance of the sex-war; the male was required to become less brutal, to respect his female companion, and incorporate her to a limited degree into his creative ambitions. Greater consideration from the male would alleviate antagonism, and woman would no longer need to express resentment by abusing the sexual authority she wielded.

The strength of the family, the duties of responsible parenthood, and the importance of filial respect were all portrayed, in Fecondité and Paris in particular.

As with most Utopian visions, Zola's recommendations were at times absurdly naive. Few of them have gained widespread adherence in twentieth century reality, praiseworthy as they are in theory. In some instances, particularly in regard to woman's rôle and capabilities, human relationships have taken opposite paths without, as yet, causing a breakdown in society, as we conceive it. In itself the ideas of Zola's late overt didacticism have little relevance or interest, and can even be said to impair literary appreciation of the novels in which they are contained. However, not all the moralising in the later works is positive. In most of these novels Zola uses a process of contrasting what he recommends, with a system based on completely opposed principles and ideas. In Lourdes and Rome, for example, Pierre Froment's attempt to recapture his faith and the principles of early Christianity are thwarted by the corruption of the Church, so that by Paris he has lost his faith altogether. In the latter novel, the widespread, corrupt personal relationships of Parisian society, represented

mostly by the various members of the Duvillard family, are contrasted with the happy family life created by Pierre's brother, Guillaume. Once the priest's loss of faith is complete, and he determines to marry and found a family, the type of relationship he forges is a secular one as exemplified by his brother. In order to accentuate the contrast, the personal lives of the typical Parisian family are, if anything, more perverse and unnatural than had often been the case in the Rougon-Macquart novels.

A similar degeneracy afflicts all the couples who surround the Froments in Fécondité. The process of contrasting an ideal situation with its opposite here receives perhaps its ultimate expression, for this novel is little more than a description of the battle waged between the advocates of creative fertility and the irresponsible supporters of sterility. In Travail, the pleasant, satisfactory relationships which flourish in the newly established community of La Crêcherie are easily compared with those which continue to exist in the old city.

The message of the later novels is thus proclaimed by a dual procedure of negative and positive didacticism. A short résumé of much of what we have noted concerning relations between the sexes in the Rougon-Macquart series of novels will convince us that this procedure was used over the whole of Zola's work, in the sense that the Rougon-Macquart novels contain the negative counterpart to the positive message of the two later cycles. Nothing Zola constructively advocated for the ordering of private lives in his new society was not inherent in the destructive picture he had already given of a decadent society. His views, therefore, did not radically change in later life, or under the influence of his liaison with Jeanne Rozerot, it was only the emphasis which altered. A severe criticism of society, such as Zola had established in his main cycle, presupposes suggestions for a different and better society.

Rigorous objectivity was one of the claims of the Naturalist

novel, whose avowed purpose was to portray the truth and reality as it was, with no modifications, and no attempt made to justify or criticize reality. In such a system, literature was not concerned with any moralising intention, and the call for impartiality necessitated a show of hostility towards didacticism. The aim to produce a thorough picture of reality also allowed the Naturalist authors to indulge in considerable literary audacity, which resulted in the portrayal of events and scenes of unprecedented realism. To combat the inevitable accusations of pornography, the authors could always turn to their aim to be objective, as an excuse.

However, when adverse criticism became intense, Zola was not beyond abandoning any claims of objectivity, and turning to the old justification to defend his works, that, by giving a terrible, deterring example, they were really designed with a moral purpose in view. In his preface to L'Assommoir Zola felt obliged to indicate his didactic objectives: " C'est de la morale en action, simplement." 1) When Pot-Bouille was published in instalment form, a magistrate named Duverdy brought an action against Zola, claiming that the author had used him as the model for a character of the same name in the work. On the 9th February 1882 Zola wrote to de Cyon discussing the case, and the novel in general. Of Marie Pichon, he admits that she yields to a lover, but contends that the fact itself is of little importance, a responsible reader should be more concerned with her reasons for doing so. In this letter Zola is consistently on the defensive; he defends the novel in general by strongly insisting on its moral intent: " Pas une page, pas une ligne de Pot-Bouille n'a été écrite par moi sans que ma volonté fût d'y mettre une intention morale. " 2)

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1) Preface to L'Assommoir. R.M. Vol.2. p.373.

2) Correspondance. Les Lettres et Les Arts. B.C. p.204.

The squalor of most of Zola's scabrous relationships can be said to contain the same moral intent. Too often, relationships arose from purely selfish motives. Venality controlled many of the sexual, marital, and adulterous affairs of Second Empire society. Loosely contracted marriages led only to the breakdown of partnerships, and then usually to adultery. The lack of solid bonds between men and women also caused the disappearance of family and filial feelings. The unfortunate Jacques Lantier junior, son of the central couple in L'Œuvre, suffers and dies from parental neglect. When Christine becomes pregnant, both partners are amazed, never having taken parenthood into account as a possible result of their relationship. Christine's attention is solely concentrated on attempts to retain Claude's love, and the child is neglected. Claude is no better as a father as he is too preoccupied with his art to be concerned about his child. Jacques is disregarded since, for his father, he is no more than a subject to be painted, and, for Christine, he is the nuisance who divides her attention from Claude.

Bad parents abound in the Rougon-Macquart series. Pierre and Félicité Rougon treat their offspring as investments; Aristide Saccard encourages his son in vicious practices by his own example; the upbringing given to Nana by Gervaise and Coupeau leads to her later debauchery. Children, in turn, have little feeling for their parents. Nana wishes Coupeau would die as quickly as possible, when his alcoholism reaches its peak; Fouan is ruined and murdered by his children's rapacity. The impressive exaltation of happy, united family life as an important basis of society in the later works, is already implicit in the Rougon-Macquart novels, which deal extensively with the disastrous effects of broken, disrupted homes. The fact that Zola chose to depict the ravages of an Imperial agent through the disintegration of a family circle, in La Conquête de Plassans, shows an indirect belief in the value of family life.



In L'Assommoir the change which overcomes Gervaise and Coupeau is most obvious in their loss of parental responsibility and the disruption of their home life. Before his accident and his slide into alcoholism, Coupeau is a good husband and father. He is disinterestedly in love with Gervaise, and is overjoyed when she becomes pregnant. On Nana's birth he reveres his wife for the gift she has made him, and is full of pity for the suffering it has caused her. Coupeau is also aware of the responsibilities of parenthood, which he is determined to carry out: " Ça ne lui semblait pas malin de savoir faire un enfant; le mérite, pas vrai? c'était de le nourrir." 1) Coupeau does not fulfil his intentions, and Zola insists strongly on the dissolution of the family as the worst product of the parents' decadence:

" La bonne chaleur des pères, des mères et des enfants, lorsque ce petit monde se tient serré, en tas, se retirait d'eux, les laissait grelottants, chacun dans son coin. Tous les trois, Coupeau, Gervaise, Nana, restaient pareils à des crins, s'avalant pour un mot, avec de la haine plein les yeux; et il semblait que quelque chose avait cassé, le grand ressort de la famille, la mécanique, qui, chez les gens heureux, fait battre les cœurs ensemble. " 2)

In his broad treatment of sexual affairs in the Rougon-Macquart series Zola did not expressly state that indulgence of desire, without a view to procreation, was wrong, but the wild affairs of characters, who sought carnal pleasure for its own sake showed such behaviour to be a destructive, wasteful activity. The whole of society needed either the will or the opportunity to turn its sexual drive to constructive ends. What better example of a man needing a useful outlet for his sexual energy could one find than Octave Mouret? Au Bonheur des Dames at least proved that a change was possible.

Long before the secondary characters of Fécondité, many in the principal cycle had espoused sterility, or shown an

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1) L'Assommoir. R.M. Vol.2. p.472. 2) Ibid. p.685.

extremely flippant attitude towards sexual activity. Children, especially in circles above the working-classes, were simply not wanted, as they represented a threat to prosperity and independence. Class differences are well expressed when La Maheude visits the Grégoires, solliciting aid. The bourgeois who dote on their one daughter are amazed when told that the miner's wife has seven children; they find the creation of such a long family 'imprudent'. Everyone is relieved when Renée, in La Curée, has a miscarriage. Lise in La Terre has a crude abortion to avoid having a third child.

Nana, as one might expect, has a particularly flippant view of sex, the ultimate attitude of an age which espoused carnal pleasure for its own sake. Muffat arrives one day to be told that Nana has had a miscarriage. She has hidden her condition because: " Cela lui semblait un accident ridicule, quelque chose qui la diminuait et dont on l'aurait plaisantée." 1) Nana is annoyed because maternity is senselessly combined with pleasure. Zola is obviously treating what he regards as a stupid, ignorant attitude:

" Et elle avait une continuelle surprise, comme dérangée dans son sexe; ça faisait donc des enfants, même lorsqu'on ne voulait plus et qu'on employait ça à d'autres affaires? La nature l'exaspérait, cette maternité grave qui se levait dans son plaisir, cette vie donnée au milieu de toutes les morts qu'elle semait autour d'elle. Est-ce qu'on n'aurait pas dû disposer de soi à sa fantaisie, sans tant d'histoires? Ainsi, d'où tombait-il ce mioche? Elle ne pouvait seulement le dire. Ah! Dieu! celui qui l'avait fait, aurait eu une riche idée en le gardant pour lui, car personne ne le réclamait, il gênait tout le monde, et il n'aurait bien sûr pas beaucoup de bonheur dans l'existence." 2)

The men of Nana's entourage show just as much irresponsibility; any one of them might be the father of the child, but all show an equal indifference to its fate, or to the well-being of Nana.

Many more of the ideas for better human relationships contained in the late novels, are inherent in the Rougon-Macquart

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1) Nana. R.M. Vol.2. p.1411. 2) Ibid. p.1412.

cycle. The perfidious influence of the Church on relations between the sexes is shown through its dogma in La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, and its practice of purposely disuniting couples in La Conquête de Plassans. A man's refusal to incorporate his partner in his work, and her resultant bitter scheming, are shown in La Fortune des Rougon. Male scorn for woman, and the satisfaction of the antagonism it gives rise to, by use of her sexual power, is demonstrated by Son Excellence Eugène Rougon. Many novels express the bad effects of segregated education in general, and cloistered female education in particular, on relations between the sexes. The solutions offered by the late work were for emotional and social problems, already posed in the Rougon-Macquart series.

The change which occurred in Zola's ideas, as opposed to his personal life, under the influence of Jeanne Rozerot, should perhaps not be over-emphasised. Lanoux indicates a major transformation:

" La présence d'une Jeanne pourtant des plus discrètes va accuser l'orientation de l'œuvre du romancier loin du naturalisme, vers l'idéalisme qui en est le contrepoint...il retourne ses positions idéologiques et littéraires...Rarement une vie d'homme offre l'exemple d'une révolution aussi radicale." 1)

Zola's late idealism, far from being the opposite of his naturalism, was, in content if not in form, the logical extension of it. In Wilson's terminology, " the black poet changed to a naive propagandist." 2) However, the positive, naive propaganda was already implicit in the 'black poet's' negative criticism. If we accept Wilson's description of the work of Zola's later years as, " a somewhat ludicrous monument to the moral greatness of his character" (3), then the Rougon-Macquart series must be viewed as a powerful and noble monument to the same character.

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1) A.Lanoux. Zola Vivant. G.C. Vol.1.p.204.

2) Angus Wilson. cp.cit. p.50. 3) Ibid. p.120.

There exists within the major cycle some overt didacticism. The best example concerning the relations between the sexes is provided by Au Bonheur des Dames, which gives Zola's vision of the things that could be achieved through the co-operation of a man and woman, if society was not plagued by a bitter sex-war. The gentle, benevolent hand of a woman was already seen as a healthy influence on the energetic male creator. The negative didacticism of most of the other novels is more effective. It is a didacticism by implication, by which the author exposes things as they are, with the obvious need for change, and allows the reader to judge for himself, whilst at the same time, making his own attitudes reasonably clear. It is difficult to cure hereditary ills, but social environment could at least be improved, and Zola had shown in Le Rêve how a better 'milieu' could even offset some of the effects of heredity. Meditation on the great social scourges represents an interest in, and the first step towards, their remedy. Zola's apparent 'impassibilité' in the Rougon-Macquart cycle was more effective than the direct personal intervention he practised in later novels.

CONCLUSION.

The stories of men and women which Zola created are not the most important or most interesting feature of his work. He never succeeded in writing of a relationship which, by its complexity or poignancy, could of itself provide the sole interest of a novel. The author's aim was to include his descriptions of relations between the sexes in a wider context.

Zola obviously felt that there was great room for improvement in the way in which the sexes ordered their lives together in his own age. The warring pairs of characters in his novels form an integral part of the general depiction of a wild, perverse epoch, which can itself be judged from the causes of the absence of worthwhile relationships between its men and women. Zola exposed the wrongs which split the sexes, and suggested his own means of righting them. Human relationships have not now been solved. The reciprocal attitudes between the sexes have evolved in a different way to the one envisaged or desired by Zola. Developments in scientific knowledge, changes in the social structure, and above all the rapid emancipation of woman, which has opened the door to many new fields of activity for her, have solved some of the problems discussed by Zola, and, in turn, created others which had no relevance to the author's own age. The roles Zola assigned to the respective sexes in their own domain have little validity in modern society. His greatest contribution, however, was to demonstrate that the age had passed when men and women could order their relations oblivious to external forces, other than the narrow family circle, and the organisation of society at a specific time. He was convinced that any improvement in human relationships depended on, and would follow from, an all-round improvement in the social structure and conditions.

In literary terms, the novels which demonstrated what was amiss within a large family and Imperial society as a whole, are

more satisfying than those which postulated on what bases a new and durable society might be founded. As early as January 1859, the young man aspiring to be an author, wrote from Paris to his friend Baille, long before he had created any of his works, telling of his intentions and aspirations in the literary field. In the desire to emulate Michelet, whom he greatly admired at this time, he spoke of one ambition thus:

" Une tâche grande et belle, une tâche que Michelet a entreprise, une tâche que j'ose parfois envisager, est de faire revenir l'homme à la femme. " 1)

Looking backwards at the works produced in the four or five decades which succeeded the writing of this letter, we might congratulate the author for fulfilling his ambition, even if he did so in a vastly different manner to the one he was at the time contemplating. The novels of the Rougon-Macquart series, which accentuated the estrangement of the sexes, were powerful stimulants to a study and consideration of more worthwhile relations between the sexes.

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1) Correspondance. Lettres de Jeunesse. B.C. p.4.

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