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S O M E F E M A L E T Y P E S
I N T H E N O V E L S
O F E M I L E Z O L A

by

Sinikka Murto, B. A.

A Thesis

submitted in conformity with the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

in Waterloo Lutheran University

1968

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F O R E W O R D

The purpose of this thesis is to attempt to group under certain classifications some of the most interesting and typical of the many female characters that appear in Zola's Rougon-Macquart series.

For this study thirteen novels published between 1871-1893 and including all the major works of Les Rougon-Macquart series have been chosen. In background and choice of character they include the great city, the village and the farm, the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and the peasant. In this way it is hoped to present some of the most striking and unusual women who illustrate this great panorama of the Second Empire.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Dawson for inspiring me through his lectures to study Zola, and for devoting his time and energy in advising and helping me with this thesis.

LIST OF ZOLA'S NOVELS USED IN THIS THESIS:

The following thirteen novels were chosen:

LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON, published in 1871

LA CURÉE, published in 1871

L'ASSOMMOIR, published in 1877

UNE PAGE D'AMOUR, published in 1877

NANA, published in 1880

AU BONHEUR DES DAMES, published in 1883

LA JOIE DE VIVRE, published in 1884

GERMINAL, published in 1885

LA TERRE, published in 1887

LE RÊVE, published in 1888

LA BÊTE HUMAINE, published in 1890

LA DÉBÂCLE, published in 1892

LE DOCTEUR PASCAL, published in 1893

NOTE:

E. P. in the footnotes refers to the Pléiade edition
of Les Rougon-Macquart

L de P refers to Livre de Poche edition

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Since Zola, in his Rougon-Macquart series, is painting the picture of the life during the Second Empire, his female characters represent women from all walks of French life. There are working women in the slums of Paris, the peasants of the Beauce plain, the women who work in the coal mines, the salesladies in a big Parisian department store, the upper bourgeoisie ladies in the social life of the Empire. In addition, we have others who fall in between these groups, like the courtesans, the demi-mondaines and all the servants. There are the proud and ambitious, the bored high-society ladies, the gentle and kind, the hard and cold-hearted women, the selfish and unselfish, and the courageous and self-sacrificing women. Some are personifications of purity itself, some of virtue, and others of vice. Zola's hobby, photography,¹ and his careful documentation enabled him to describe minutely the physical appearance, dress and manners of different types of women. Naturally, the women with whom he was closely connected; namely, his mother, his wife and his mistress, have served as models for some of his characters.²

¹Denise Le Blond-Zola, Emile Zola, raconté par sa fille, Paris, Fasquelle Editeurs, 11, Rue de Grenelle, 11, [1931], p. 172.

²Angus Wilson, Emile Zola, An Introductory Study of his Novels, New York, William Morrow & Company, [1952], p. 4 and pp. 43-44, and Le Blond-Zola, p. 194.

On studying Zola's novels, the reader perceives that his characters do not stand out from the rest of the novel, but help to constitute the total picture together with the social milieu in which they live. Marc Bernard writes that Zola shows:

... que l'homme n'est pas un être autonome, un mystère individuel, le produit de hasards, mais l'aboutissement d'un ensemble de phénomènes, et qu'il suffit de bien étudier ceux-ci pour le comprendre et pour en faire une peinture exacte.¹

For this reason it would be difficult and even a little absurd to remove from the setting a female character and to try to study her as such, ignoring completely the milieu in which she lives and the possible hereditary factors, because these are often the main and most important reasons resulting in the creation of the person that Zola presents to his readers. According to John Lapp there are various elements that characterize the majority of Zola's women:

Vigour and health accompany innocence and naturalness; they originate in a rural scene. Perversion and precocity are linked; frequently found in the young, they flourish in the schools. Woman is an instrument of Satan, the Eternal Courtesan, born to deceive man. ...²

These elements in various combinations are found especially in Denise Mouret, Pauline Quenu and Nana. One critic, how-

¹Marc Bernard, Zola, par lui-même, "Ecrivains de Toujours", Aux éditions du Seuil, [1962], p. 36.

²John C. Lapp, Zola before the Rougon-Macquart, University of Toronto Press, [1964], p. 9.

ever, argues that Zola repeats his characters, and that while he uses many different names, he has only few original characters.¹

¹Guy Robert, Emile Zola: Principes et caractères généraux de son oeuvre, Société d'Édition les Belles Lettres, 95, Boulevard Raspail, Paris, [1952], p. 119.

I TWO KEY CHARACTERS

The key character who should be looked at first is Adélaïde Fouque (tante Dide), the trunk of the Rougon-Macquart family tree, the main source of the virtues and defects of the family. The daughter of the richest market-gardener of Plasans, she became an orphan at the age of eighteen, and married her gardener, Rougon, although she was a well sought-after heiress because of her big inheritance. People could not understand this, and they thought that she must have inherited her "father's head" also. Zola describes her in her youth:

Cette enfant, dont le père mourut fou, était une grande créature, mince, pâle, aux regards effarés, d'une singularité d'allures qu'on put prendre pour de la sauvagerie tant qu'elle resta petite fille. Mais, en grandissant, elle devint plus bizarre encore; elle commit certains actions que les plus fortes têtes du faubourg ne purent raisonnablement expliquer et, dès lors, le bruit courut qu'elle avait le cerveau fêlé comme son père.¹

Her husband died shortly after their son, Pierre, was born. And then, hardly a year later, to the scandal of the whole neighbourhood, she took a lover: "ce gueux de Macquart", a drunkard, by whom she had a boy and a girl. On becoming a woman, she still stayed the same strange girl that she had been before, not that she was mad, but:

¹Emile Zola, La Fortune des Rougon, v. I of Les Rougon-Macquart: Histoire Naturelle et Sociale d'une Famille sous le Second Empire, E. P., p. 41.

il y avait en elle un manque d'équilibre entre le sang et les nerfs, une sorte de détraquement du cerveau et du coeur, qui la faisait vivre en dehors de la vie ordinaire, autrement que tout le monde. Elle était certainement très naturelle, très logique avec elle-même; seulement sa logique devenait de la démence aux yeux des voisins. Elle semblait vouloir s'afficher, chercher méchamment à ce que tout, chez elle, allât de mal en pis, lorsqu'elle obéissait avec une grande naïveté aux seules poussées de son tempérament.¹

If we were to classify her under the headings where the other characters are grouped, she would most certainly fall under that of the exploited women: exploited by her own children, especially by her legitimate son, exploited by her lover who like a magnet drew her to him, and a victim of her nervous attacks. She was preyed on by her eldest son, who, when he became older, realized the situation at home and decided to revenge his father. He held his mother completely under his control just by looking at her; and his looks were worse for her than beatings would have been. She trembled under her son's gaze, for:

... elle sentait ses regards, froids et aigus comme des lames d'acier, qui la poignardaient, longuement, sans pitié. L'attitude sévère et silencieuse de Pierre, de cet enfant d'un homme qu'elle avait vite oublié, troublait étrangement son pauvre cerveau malade.²

The roles had changed, for Pierre was punishing his mother as if she were a child. She was hardly forty-two years old, but

¹Ibid., p. 44.

²Ibid., p. 49.

already had the appearance of an old woman who had fallen back to childhood. When her lover was killed for smuggling, she inherited from him and moved into his house, where she lived her isolated life. Pierre had got rid of the "bastards" by sending his brother, Antoine, to the army and by marrying off his sister, Ursule, to François Mouret who was willing to take her without a dowry. Then Pierre sold the family property and, with the money, helped to save from bankruptcy his father-in-law's business.

At the time the first novel, La Fortune des Rougon, opens, Adélaïde, or "tante Dide", is in her late seventies, and is slowly dying physically and morally, with nothing but emptiness left in her:

C'était un renoncement absolu, une lente mort physique et morale, qui avait fait peu à peu de l'amoureuse détraquée une matrone grave. Quand ses yeux se fixaient, machinalement, regardant sans voir, on apercevait par ces trous clairs et profonds un grand vide intérieur. Rien ne restait de ses anciennes ardeurs voluptueuses qu'un amollissement des chairs, un tremblement sénile des mains. Elle avait aimé avec une brutalité de louve, et de son pauvre être usé, assez décomposé déjà pour le cercueil, ne s'exhalait plus qu'une senteur fade de feuille sèche.¹

When she takes her grandson Silvère to live with her, after his parents died, the little child in his childish gaiety brings her back to earth. He reassures her against death, without changing her existence too much, and she has for him "une tendresse ineffable". This is how Zola describes her

¹Ibid., pp. 134-135.

new stage in her life:

... elle qui avait dans sa jeunesse oublié d'être mère pour être amante, éprouvait les voluptés divines d'une nouvelle accouchée, à le débarbouiller, à l'habiller, à veiller sans cesse sur sa frêle existence. Ce fut un réveil d'amour, une dernière passion adoucie que le ciel accordait à cette femme toute dévastée par le besoin d'aimer. Touchante agonie de ce coeur qui avait vécu dans les désirs les plus âpres et qui se mourait dans l'affection d'un enfant.¹

But when she sees Silvère being shot by the soldiers, the shock is too much for her feeble mind and she goes completely mad. Then she spends the rest of her life in the asylum, where she dies at the age of one hundred and four, when she sees Charles, the fifth generation of the Rougons, bleed to death right in front of her eyes.

So this is the woman who is the main trunk of the family tree. Her neurosis combined with the healthy peasant Rougon stock form the major characteristics of the members of the legitimate branch. Whereas her neurosis combined with the alcoholic tendencies of Macquart produce the various offspring of the illegitimate branch of the Rougon-Macquart family tree.

Next we should consider Félicité, the wife of Pierre Rougon, the mother and one of the sources of the legitimate branch. She seems to be one of the most dominating woman characters in Zola's novels. By his skillful description, Zola

¹Ibid., p. 136.

gives an excellent picture of her physical appearance, and at the same time he describes her character so vividly that the reader can clearly picture her:

Félicité était une petite femme noire, comme on en voit en Provence. On eût dit une de ces cigales brunes, sèches, stridentes, aux vols brusques, qui se cognent la tête dans les amandiers. Maigre, la gorge plate, les épaules pointues, le visage en museau de fouine, singulièrement fouillé et accentué, elle n'avait pas d'âge;... Il y avait une ruse de chatte au fond de ses yeux noirs, étroits, pareils à des trous de vrille. Son front bas et bombé; son nez légèrement déprimé à la racine, et dont les narines s'évasaient ensuite, fines et frémissantes, comme pour mieux goûter les odeurs; la mince ligne rouge de ses lèvres, la proéminence de son menton qui se rattachait aux joues par des creux étranges; toute cette physionomie de naine futée était comme le masque vivant de l'intrigue, de l'ambition active et envieuse.¹

Her great ambition in life is to become rich and to obtain a prominent position in the town, because she wants everyone to envy her some day. Her intelligence is far superior to that of most of the girls of her class and education, supporting the insinuation that she might be the illegitimate daughter of le marquis de Carnavant, and not just the daughter of an oil merchant. In her marriage to Rougon, her father sees only the money which will help to save his business from bankruptcy, but she sees further, she sees in Rougon the man that she needs to realize her dreams:

Ses calculs étaient faits, elle choisissait Rougon en fille qui prend un mari comme on prend un complice. ... Elle regardait au loin dans l'avenir,

¹Ibid., pp. 55-56.

et elle se sentait le besoin d'un homme bien portant, un peu rustre même, derrière lequel elle pût se cacher et dont elle fit aller à son gré les bras et les jambes. ... Sans la moindre dot, désespérant d'épouser le fils d'un gros négociant, elle préférerait mille fois un paysan qu'elle comptait employer comme un instrument passif, à quelque maigre bachelier qui l'écraserait de sa supériorité de collégien et la traînerait misérablement toute la vie à la recherche de vanités creuses. Elle pensait que la femme doit faire l'homme. Elle se croyait de force à tailler un ministre dans un vacher.¹

They have five children: three boys and two girls, but the girls are not too welcome, because: "les filles, quand les dots manquent, deviennent de terribles embarras."² However she does not consider her children as a cause for ruin, and she has very ambitious dreams for her sons' future. But when her sons are forced to come back to live in Plassans, after receiving their education in Paris, she is disappointed and bitter; her sons have ruined her:

... ils ne lui servaient pas les intérêts du capital qu'ils représentaient. Ce dernier coup de la destinée lui fut d'autant plus sensible qu'il l'atteignait à la fois dans ses ambitions de femme et dans ses vanités de mère.³

But she is rewarded later on: her son Eugène becomes a minister, her youngest son Aristide is a prominent figure in the world of high finance, and her son Pascal is a doctor and scientist.

¹Ibid., pp. 56-57.

²Ibid., p. 59.

³Ibid., p. 61.

Her own fortune seems to be slow in taking form. When Pierre and Félicité retire from business, they are able to move into more fashionable part of the town, to the threshold of her coveted "ville neuve". Yet this apartment is not the luxury that she has dreamed of, for she still desires an important position for Pierre. At the time of the events of 1848, her "salon jaune" becomes a political centre for the Bonapartists. Before the coup d'état of 1851, she is so curious to know about her husband's secret correspondance with Eugène in Paris, that she takes letters and reads them in secret because Pierre will not show them to her. This secrecy between Pierre and Eugène hurts the feelings of the ambitious woman, because: "L'idée de réussir, de voir toute sa famille arriver à la fortune, était devenue une monomanie chez Félicité."¹ Their active involvement in suppressing the rebellion of the Republicans in Plassans finally brings them the success so long yearned for. Pierre is hailed as the saviour of Plassans, and Félicité is overjoyed at their triumph:

Félicité, à sa fenêtre, humait avec délices ces bruits, ces voix élogieuses et reconnaissantes qui montaient de la ville. Tout Plassans, à cette heure, s'occupait de son mari; elle sentait les deux quartiers, sous elle, qui frémissaient, qui lui envoyaient l'espérance d'un prochain triomphe. Ah! comme elle allait écraser cette ville qu'elle mettait si tard sous ses talons! Tous ses griefs lui revinrent, ses amertumes passées redoublèrent ses appétits de jouissance immédiate.²

¹Ibid., pp. 95-96.

²Ibid., p. 241.

Pierre is appointed as the successor to the "receveur particulier", who had been killed in the uprising. Félicité now is able to move into the house that she has so long coveted from her window.

Félicité appears also in the other novels of the series exercising her power and influence. Angus Wilson describes her in this way:

... the terrifying figure of Félicité Rougon, whose energetic ambition strikes like a brutal whip across so many of the Rougon-Macquart novels, and who finally, in Le Docteur Pascal destroys, in her worldly ambition, the very things that her son - ... - held most dear.¹

In Le Docteur Pascal she is in her eighties and very agile and active, almost like a young girl; and her main concern or ambition now is to keep the Rougon name and reputation clean and pure from anything that might stain it. The biggest obstacle in her way is the records that Pascal keeps for each member of their family tree, because he is interested in studying their heredity; and she wants to destroy these notes. She is relieved of the several "black spots" to the family reputation, when her brother-in-law, Antoine Macquart, burns to death, when Charles, the illegitimate son of her grandson Maxime, bleeds to death, and when tante Dide finally dies. And now she is more anxious than ever to destroy the "dossiers", which she is able to do after Pascal has just died. She destroys every-

¹Angus Wilson, Emile Zola, An Introductory Study of his Novels, p. 4.

thing even his scientific writings, everything except the family tree which lay on the table unnoticed. Thus the family's reputation is saved for the future generations, and at the end of the book she is laying the cornerstone for l'Asile Rougon, an asylum for the old, into which she has put the family fortune.

Thus these two women are the key persons of the family, a family whose history Zola describes in twenty volumes; and in a way the two women are similar, for he writes of them:

La race des Rougon devait s'épurer par les femmes. Adélaïde avait fait de Pierre un esprit moyen, apte aux ambitions basses; Félicité venait de donner à ses fils des intelligences plus hautes capables de grands vices et de grandes vertus.¹

¹Zola, La Fortune des Rougon, pp. 61-62.

II PRECOCIOUS CHILDREN

One could say that these young girls are products of their society or of the environment in which they grow up and of the "education" they receive. Often their parents try to raise them to be good, respectable citizens, as in case of Elodie in La Terre and in that of Nana in L'Assommoir, but because of their environment and of the things they see and hear around them, the result is altogether different.

In describing Augustine, the young apprentice in Ger- vaise's laundry shop in L'Assommoir, Zola does not waste his words when he writes of her: "... ce petit louchon d'Augustine, laide comme un derrière de pauvre homme".¹ And this squint- eyed Augustine has "un chant de poule, la bouche ouverte, suf- foquant."² She is a typical example of a girl raised on the streets in a Parisian slum area. Every day in the shop she is exposed to things especially from Clémence that she should not really hear, at her age. And if Clémence is angry, she vents her anger on Augustine. The latter knows, however, how to get even with Clémence: "Mais Augustine, hargneuse, d'une méchanceté sournoise de monstre et de souffre-douleur, cracha par derrière sur sa robe, sans qu'on la vit, pour se venger."³

¹Zola, L'Assommoir, v. II of Les Rougon-Macquart, p.502.

²Ibid., p. 507.

³Ibid., p. 505.

When they talk about something not appropriate for her to hear, she: "... faisait celle qui ne comprend pas, ouvrait de grandes oreilles de petite fille vicieuse."¹ Sometimes, when they almost forget that she is there, they talk about something that most certainly she should not hear, but because of her "education" on the streets she understands them perfectly well and: "... ce louchon d'Augustine, dont les gaietés partaient toutes seules, sans qu'on sût jamais pourquoi, lâcha le gloussement de poule qui était son rire à elle."²

From a child in the Parisian slums we come to Elodie Vaucogne, a girl in the country, not a peasant, but one who has received a sheltered education in a convent school. Her grandparents, M. and Mme Charles, retired bawdy-house proprietors, try to do everything to keep her pure and innocent, and by no means would want her to know the true source of her parents' income: a brothel in the nearby town. When visiting her grandparents on her vacations, she hangs around her grandmother's skirts most of the time. Zola describes her apparent timidity:

... se serrant contre elle, sa petite-fille Elodie, ..., la suivait, dans son effarement de timidité gauche. Mangée de chlorose, trop grande pour ses douze ans, elle avait la laideur molle et bouffie,

¹Ibid., p. 507.

²Ibid., p. 547.

les cheveux rares et décolorés de son sang pauvre, si comprimée d'ailleurs par son éducation de vierge innocente, qu'elle en était imbécile.¹

What a shock it is to them, when at the end of the novel she declares that she has known for some time of the nature of her parents' business, because a maid had told her all about it. Since her friend Nénesse wants her as well as the house, she is willing to take over the management of the establishment, to the shock and delight of her grandparents. Yet she is so shy and innocent that, when Nénesse was proposing to her she got all flustered and hid her face in her grandmother's bosom and gave her answer only by nodding her head. When the question of the house arises, she comes out of hiding and talks about it very calmly and naturally. She says that because they have worked so hard, so: "est-ce que ça doit sortir de la famille?"² Still they doubt her, thinking that she is making a sacrifice, but she insists:

- Si, si, laissez-moi suivre mon idée... Je veux être comme maman. Ce qu'elle a fait, je peux le faire. Il n'y a pas de déshonneur, puisque vous l'avez fait vous-même... Ça me plaît beaucoup, je vous assure. Et vous verrez si j'aiderai mon cousin, si nous relèverons promptement la maison, à nous deux! Il faudra que ça marche, on ne me connaît pas!³

The grandparents' logical conclusion is: "Sans doute, ils ne

¹Zola, La Terre, I de P, p. 47.

²Ibid., p. 474.

³Ibid.

l'avaient pas élevée dans cette idée; seulement, que faire, quand le sang parle? Ils reconnaissaient le cri de la vocation."¹ And to sum up Elodie, with what could be the moral of her story: "L'éducation ne signifiait rien, c'était l'intelligence qui décidait de tout."²

From Elodie we jump to Nana in L'Assommoir, back to the Parisian slums. At a very early age she becomes the ring-leader, or the ruling "queen" of the neighbourhood children with Pauline and Victor as her "aides". At Gervaise's birthday party she acts as a hostess for the other children invited. At the end of the party the picture that is left for the reader is that of a precociously awakening adolescence in her and of commonplace troubles of a little girl:

Nana se trouvait assise sur la descente de lit, auprès de Victor, qu'elle tenait contre elle, un bras passé autour de son cou; et, ensommeillée, les yeux fermés, elle répétait d'une voix faible et continue:
- Oh! maman, j'ai bobo... oh! maman, j'ai bobo...³

In my opinion, the ripening of the mature fruit into which Nana was to develop later on was hastened by the way she was brought up in her home. In Lantier's opinion she was not well brought up at all: .

..., car lorsque le père tapait dessus, la mère soutenait la gamine, et lorsque la mère à son tour

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 475.

³Zola, L'Assommoir, pp. 592-593.

cognait, le père faisait une scène. Nana, ravie de voir ses parents se manger, se sentant excusée à l'avance, commettait les cent dix-neuf coups.¹

When she was out playing she had a string of boys running after her. Lantier was the only one that she would listen to occasionally, but she also knew how to "handle" him, by swaying and throwing glances at him. He took care of her education by teaching her dancing and slang. She also had other examples right in her home to lead her into her future career as a prostitute, an example being the time when she saw her mother disappear into Lantier's room:

Elle regarda son père roulé dans son vomissement; puis, la figure collée contre la vitre, elle resta là, à attendre que le jupon de sa mère eût disparu chez l'autre homme, en face. Elle était toute grave. Elle avait de grands yeux d'enfant vicieuse, allumés d'une curiosité sensuelle.²

After maman Coupeau's death she insisted on sleeping in her big bed, and her mother's threats were in vain, because:

... la petite était très précoce, les morts lui causaient seulement une grosse curiosité; si bien que, pour avoir la paix, on finit par lui permettre de s'allonger à la place de maman Coupeau. Elle aimait les grands lits, cette gamine; elle s'éta-
lait, elle se roulait. Cette nuit-là, elle dormit joliment bien, dans la bonne chaleur et les cha-
touilles du matelas de plume.³

At fifteen she was a big well-developed girl with very fine white skin. Then she started her apprenticeship in the

¹Ibid., p. 610.

²Ibid., p. 633.

³Ibid., p. 671.

florist's atelier where her aunt, Mme Lerat, was working, and there her "education" was completed: "Vrai! Nana complétait à l'atelier une jolie éducation! Oh! elle avait des dispositions, bien sûr. Mais ça l'achevait, la fréquentation d'un tas des filles déjà éreintées de misère et de vice."¹ Life at home was becoming more and more unbearable, and one night when she noticed both her parents drunk she ran off. Soon she was known in all the dance-halls in the quarter. But she used to come back home from time to time. Once Gervaise reproached her for the kind of life she was leading, but Nana answered her: "- En voilà assez, n'est-ce pas? maman! Ne causons nous pas des hommes, ça vaudra mieux. Tu as fait ce que tu as voulu, je fais ce que je veux."² A little later she disappeared completely: "Décidément, c'était fini, elle avait trouvé du pain blanc quelque part."³ Thus she is a product of environment, of atmosphere at home and at work, and of heredity. Robert writes of this kind of phenomenon as typical in a working class slum area: "La promiscuité entraîne la corruption des mœurs; le vice des grandes bâtisses où s'entassent les ménages ouvriers, bruyantes de querelles et de coups; le moyen que les filles y échappent au destin de Nana?"⁴

¹Ibid., p. 717.

²Ibid., p. 744.

³Ibid., p. 747.

⁴Robert, pp. 85-86.

Lydie Pierron in Germinal is a "chétive fillette" of ten, who works in the coal mine, and who runs around the countryside with two young boys, Jeanlin and Bébert. Jeanlin Maheu is their leader, and she: "... éprouvait, devant Jeanlin, une peur et une tendresse de petite femme battue."¹ He treats her as his wife, and to make sure that she obeys him:

Pour lui fermer la bouche, il l'avait empoignée en riant, il se roulait avec elle sur le terri. C'était sa petite femme, ils essayaient ensemble, dans les coins noirs, l'amour qu'ils entendaient et qu'ils voyaient chez eux, derrière les cloisons, par les fentes des portes. Ils savaient tout, mais ils ne pouvaient guère, trop jeunes, tâtonnant, jouant, pendant des heures, à des jeux de petits chiens vicieux. Lui appelait ça "faire papa et maman"; et, quand il l'emmenait, elle galopait, elle se laissait prendre avec le tremblement délicieux de l'instinct, souvent fâchée, mais cédant toujours dans l'attente de quelque chose qui ne venait point.²

Bébert is not included in this "game", and he tries to scare them by shouting that somebody sees them. During the strike the threesome, with Jeanlin as their captain, becomes the terror of the countryside by stealing food wherever they can find it. Jeanlin becomes more and more possessive and he starts beating Lydie as if she were his legal wife. She and Bébert are so afraid to disobey him that even though it is pitch black and Jeanlin could be miles away, they are afraid to touch their hands for fear of a blow in the dark. One night, however, when their captain has made them wait for him hour after hour, they finally give expression to their love:

¹Zola, Germinal, I de P, p. 121.

²Ibid., pp. 121-122.

... à la fin, celui-ci abusait trop, risquant leurs os dans des maraudes folles, refusant ensuite tout partage; et leur coeur se soulevait de révolte, ils avaient fini par s'embrasser, malgré sa défense, quitte à recevoir une gifle de l'invisible, ainsi qu'il les en menaçait. La gifle ne venant pas, ils continuaient de se baiser doucement, sans avoir l'idée d'autre chose, mettant dans cette caresse leur longue passion combattue, tout ce qu'il y avait en eux de martyrisé et d'attendri.¹

Lydie and Bébert are shot by the soldiers, and before dying he takes her again into his arms the way he had the night before. Jeanlin comes just in time to see Bébert die embracing Lydie.

Similarly, in La Terre, the motherless La Trouille, (the nickname given by her father, meaning: dirty sneaky thing), runs around the countryside with two boys, Nénesse and Delphin. Zola describes her as:

... maigre et nerveuse comme une branche de houx, aux cheveux blonds embroussaillés. Sa bouche grande se tordait à gauche, ses yeux verts avaient une fixité hardie, si bien qu'on l'aurait prise pour un garçon, vêtue, en guise de robe, d'une vieille blouse à son père, serrée autour de la taille par une ficelle.²

She is always lying on the ground behind some bushes with one of the boys, the other one keeping guard in case her father is looking for her. At other times, her geese keep watch and warn her when they see her father approaching. Her father, who allows her to steal food for their meals, is strict only

¹Ibid., p. 401.

²Zola, La Terre, p. 42.

about sexual morality. If sometimes he catches her, he runs after her with a whip and then locks her up in the house, although she manages to escape every time. Even on becoming older she remains boyish and is not much more developed than when she was twelve:

Un vrai garçon, qui n'aimait que ses bêtes, qui se moquait bien des hommes, ce qui ne l'empêchait pas, quand elle jouait à se taper avec quelque galopin, de finir le jeu sur le dos, naturellement, parce que c'était fait pour ça et que ça ne tirait point à conséquence.¹

Yet this precocious girl seems to have some sense of values, because she stops laughing and bursts into tears when Nénesse tells her of his plans to buy "la boutique aux Charles" and asks if she would like to come to work there. She disappears into the shadows: "en bégayant dans un désespoir d'enfant: - Oh! c'est cochon, c'est cochon! Je ne t'aime plus!"² The idea of becoming a prostitute revolts her primitive sense of morality.

¹Ibid., p. 309.

²Ibid., p. 446.

III INNOCENT AND PATHETIC YOUNG GIRLS

There is a striking contrast between these young girls and those described in the preceding chapter. The environment in which they live is not much different from that of Augustine, Elodie, Nana, Lydie and La Trouille. Possibly the atmosphere in which Miette, Angélique, Flore and Denise have been raised has not been so much saturated with vice and immorality. The main difference, however, lies in the fact that this second group has more courage and will-power to defend their innocence and to fight against their social surroundings. These girls are part of the milieu but not its product as is the previous group.

Miette, or Marie Chantegreil, of La Fortune des Rougon is an orphan, whose mother died when she was very little and whose father is in prison because he had killed a gendarme. Her grandfather took care of her but he died shortly afterwards from grief. Then she was sent to her aunt in Plassans, where she was treated as a servant but she did not mind it since she liked to work outside: "Miette travailla gaiement. La vie en plein air était sa joie et sa santé. Tant que sa tante vécut, elle n'eut que des rires."¹ Her aunt died when

¹Zola, La Fortune des Rougon, pp. 171-172.

she was eleven, and then everything changed for the worst. Her uncle made her work like "une bête de somme" and treated her as "valet de ferme", and her cousin, Justin, was even meaner to her than before. But she did not complain, as she felt she had a debt of gratitude to pay. At times, however, she wanted to escape, but: "elle n'en fit rien, par courage, pour ne pas s'avouer vaincue sous les persécutions qu'elle endurait."¹ When she met Silvère Mouret, tante Dide's grandson, and they became very good friends, life was more bearable for her. They used to meet at the flat tombstone in the old cemetery. One night Miette noticed what was written on that stone: "Cy gist... Marie morte..." Seeing her name there, she felt that the stone was for her and that she was going to die soon. Again on the night when Silvère was to join the rebels, Miette expressed the wish to be dead as if she had already sensed her approaching death. When she sees the band of men approaching, she feels that they are going to come between her and Silvère, separating them from each other forever, and that she is going to lose the only friend she has ever had. The marching of men and the singing of La Marseillaise animate her to the extent that when she hears some of the marchers defend her father against others who condemn him, she decides to join the band and to carry their flag. She turns her big

¹Ibid., p. 173.

"pelisse" inside out to show the red lining, the same colour as the flag. An effective and symbolic sight:

Elle prit le drapeau, en serra la hampe contre sa poitrine, et se tint droite, dans les plis de cette bannière sanglante qui flottait derrière elle. Sa tête d'enfant exaltée, avec ses cheveux crépus, ses grands yeux humides, ses lèvres entrouvertes par un sourire, eut un élan d'énergique fierté, en se levant à demi vers le ciel. A ce moment, elle fut la vierge Liberté.¹

She carries the flag courageously through Plassans and on the route to the next town all night, and she keeps refusing Silvère's arm because she wants to show that she is just as strong as the men. Finally she yields to her fatigue and lets Silvère take her to the side of the road where they can rest for few hours. In the darkness of the night they embrace each other as lovers, not in the brotherly and sisterly fashion that they had used before. Although she wishes to marry Silvère some day, Miette, however, feels a little shame:

"Ah! je suis une malheureuse. J'avais dix ans, on me jetait des pierres. Aujourd'hui, on me traite comme la dernière des créatures. Justin a eu raison de me mépriser devant le monde.² Nous venons de faire le mal, Silvère."³

But this feeling of shame goes away soon, and she senses stronger than ever her approaching death:

Le rêve d'une mort prochaine l'avait enfiévrée;
elle ne se sentait plus rougir, elle s'attachait

¹Ibid., p. 35.

²Justin had accused her, in front of the crowd in Plassans, of sleeping with Silvère and of running away with him.

³Ibid., p. 167.

à son amant, elle semblait vouloir épuiser, avant de se coucher dans la terre, ces voluptés nouvelles, dans lesquelles elle venait à peine de tremper les lèvres, et dont elle s'irritait de ne pas pénétrer sur-le-champ tout le poignant inconnu.¹

A few hours later she gets a bullet in her heart and dies weeping her virginity. She dies young (only about thirteen) and strong, just developing into the womanhood, so she has not really had a chance to live. Thus, she symbolizes the Republic, which is dying at the same time without having had a chance to develop into its full power.

Angélique of Le Rêve is Zola's most innocent and purest character. Strange as it seems, she is the illegitimate daughter of Sidonie Rougon, who abandoned her right after she was born. Running away from her foster-home she was found and welcomed by the Huberts on a cold winter morning in Beaumont, a cathedral town in Picardie. The Huberts decided to adopt her, and they taught her their trade, embroidery, at which Angélique became very skilled. Hubertine, her new foster-mother, did not want to send her to school because she was afraid of evil company. Hubertine taught her how to read and write, and thus Angélique was brought up as in a convent "loin du monde". At first Angélique's temperament caused difficulties in her upbringing, but, with patience and love the Huberts were able

¹Ibid., p. 169.

to raise her into a good, adorable young girl:

A quinze ans, Angélique fut ainsi une adorable fille. Certes, ni la vie cloîtrée et travailleuse, ni l'ombre douce de la cathédrale, ni la Légende aux belles saintes n'avaient fait d'elle un ange, une créature d'absolue perfection. Toujours des fougues l'emportaient, des fautes se déclaraient, par des échappées imprévues, dans des coins d'âme qu'on avait négligé de murer. Mais elle se montrait si honteuse alors, elle aurait tant voulu être parfaite! et elle était si humaine, si vivante, si ignorante et pure au fond!¹

She nurtures a dream that she is going to marry a rich and noble young man, and how she is going to recognize him when she sees him. She waits for him and he will come:"C'était fou, cette imagination. Mais elle s'entêtait. Cela se passerait ainsi, elle en était sûre. Rien n'ébranlait sa conviction souriante."² Her dream prince appears in the person of Félicien, the son of the Bishop and a descendant of one of the oldest noble families in France. Her dream is fulfilled: they fall in love with each other, but the obstacles to their happiness seem unsurmountable: she is poor and nameless, he is wealthy with a very noble name, and his father wants him to marry a wealthy girl from a good family. Both Félicien and Angélique try to plead their cause with the Monseigneur, but his answer is: "Jamais!" Then Angélique tries to drown her sorrow in her work, swearing never to see Félicien again,

¹Zola, Le Rêve, préface de Henri Guillemin, Société coopérative, Editions Rencontre, Lausanne, [1961], p. 71.

²Ibid., p. 95.

and she slowly becomes feebler day by day and is in danger of death. One night, however, Félicien sneaks into her room and asks her to elope with him. At first she is willing but something retains her: her dream, her guardian saints, the virgins, she cannot act against the Bishop's will. When she is dying, she asks for extreme unction, and it is the Bishop himself who comes to perform the rite. And in so doing he finally pardons and gives his consent to Angélique and Félicien. A miracle happens, according to the Hautcoeur legend the members of the family have the power to cure a person by kissing him and saying: "Si Dieu veut, je veux." When the cleric has performed this rite, Angélique is cured. And the marriage will be arranged when she is strong enough. Although she is recovering, she understands that:

le miracle continuait uniquement pour la réalisation de son rêve. N'était-elle pas morte déjà, n'existant plus parmi les apparences que grâce à un répit des choses? Cela, aux heures de solitude la berçait avec une douceur infinie, sans regret à l'idée d'être emportée dans sa joie, certaine toujours d'aller jusqu'au bout du bonheur.¹

She has strength enough to go through the wedding preparations, even pursues her charitable functions and what a joy it is for her now that she has money. But once the wedding ceremony is over, she has reached her utmost happiness:

Alors, au seuil de la grande-porte, en haut des marches qui descendaient sur la place, elle chancela. N'était-elle pas allée jusqu'au bout du bonheur?

¹Ibid., p. 276.

N'était-ce pas là que la joie d'être finissait? Elle se haussa d'un dernier effort, elle mit sa bouche sur la bouche de Félicien. Et, dans ce baiser, elle mourut.¹

Thus she remains pure and innocent right to the end. The dream, though realized remains but a dream.

In contrast to the frail and beautiful Angélique, Flore of La Bête Humaine is big and strong:

une grande fille de dix-huit ans, blonde, forte, à la bouche épaisse, aux grands yeux verdâtres, au front bas, sous de lourds cheveux. Elle n'était point jolie, elle avait des hanches solides et les bras durs d'un garçon.²

Men are attracted to her because of her strength, but she is: "vierge et guerrière, dédaigneuse du mâle, ce qui finissait par convaincre les gens qu'elle avait pour sûr la tête dérangée."³ She has fallen in love with the engine driver, Jacques Iantier, her distant cousin. But because of his mad impulse to kill a woman he is afraid to approach her for fear of not being able to control himself. Later when she realizes that Sévérine is Jacques' mistress and she sees them on the same train every Friday go by her home, Flore becomes jealous: "Jamais l'homme qu'elle aimait, ne l'aimerait:..."⁴ She tries to think means of revenge, how to get rid of Sévérine or how

¹Ibid., pp. 287-288.

²Zola, La Bête Humaine, L de P, p. 42.

³Ibid., pp. 58-59.

⁴Ibid., p. 245.

to do away with both of them. After her mother's death, Flore cannot endure it any more and plans an accident to kill the lovers. As the train approaches she pulls a horse-cart loaded with two big boulders in front of the train. The resulting crash kills many innocent persons, but Jacques is only injured and Sévérine comes out unharmed. When Flore realizes that because of her blind jealousy she has killed so many people uselessly, in her despair she walks through a narrow tunnel toward an on-coming train and dies instantly.

In Denise Baudu, the heroine of Au Bonheur des Dames, we meet Zola's most virtuous character. If Angélique is the personification of purity and innocence, Denise is that of virtue triumphant. Zola shows Denise as a young woman armed with the courage and the will-power to fight against the moral compromises that many of her fellow salesgirls seem to think necessary for economic survival in the great city.

After her parents died, she comes to Paris with her two brothers Jean and Pépé to find her uncle, a cloth merchant who had previously promised her work in his store. Unfortunately he is on the verge of bankruptcy. She is forced to look for and accept a job in the big department store, "Au Bonheur des Dames", the brutal rival of small businesses like her uncle's. Though timid and plain she has a special charm that makes her employer, Octave Mouret, tante Dide's great-grandson, to give her the job in preference to the other

applicants. When Mouret asks her if her uncle sent her, there is a complete change in her, showing her charm:

... elle ne put s'empêcher de rire, tant l'idée lui parut singulière. Ce fut une transfiguration. Elle restait rose, et le sourire, sur sa bouche un peu grande, était comme un épanouissement du visage entier. Ses yeux gris prirent une flamme tendre, ses joues se creusèrent d'adorables fossettes, ses pâles cheveux eux-mêmes semblèrent voler, dans la gaieté bonne et courageuse de tout son être.¹

During her first days in the store her fellow workers laugh at her because of her simplicity and her concern over her brothers. Denise first thinks of them before she thinks of herself. Anybody else in her situation would likely have taken a lover, because her small salary is neither sufficient to pay Pépé's board and Jean's occasional debts nor to buy for herself even the necessary clothing. Because of her courage in face of the humiliation that she receives daily and of her special charm Octave Mouret starts to favour her by promoting Denise and by making advances which she refuses. With her promotion she earns also the respect of the other employees. Mouret keeps promoting her and increasing his offers but she keeps refusing to become his mistress. Because she loves him so much she does not want to become his mistress and yet has no hopes of marrying him. Even when he finally proposes to her, she still refuses on the ground that she has already

¹Zola, Au Bonheur des Dames, v. III of Les Rougon-Macquart..., E. P., p. 441.

suffered too much on account of the rumours of the store:

"Voulait-il donc qu'elle passât aux yeux des autres et à ses propres yeux pour une gueuse? Non, non elle aurait de la force, elle l'empêcherait bien de faire une telle sottise."¹ But at the end, the voice of the heart is stronger than the voice of reason, and Denise surrenders to his helpless despair:

- Partez donc! cria-t-il dans un flot de larmes. Allez retrouver celui que vous aimez... C'est la raison, n'est-ce pas? Vous m'aviez prévenu, je devrais le savoir et ne pas vous tourmenter davantage.

Elle était restée saisie, devant la violence de ce désespoir. Son cœur éclatait. Alors, avec une impétuosité d'enfant, elle se jeta à son cou, sanglota elle aussi, en bégayant:

- Oh! monsieur Mouret, c'est vous que j'aime!²

Some critics do not seem to like the ending of this book, (especially Wilson)³ because to them it seems not to be in the Zola tradition. But I think that Denise would not really have been a woman if she had not surrendered at the end, because there was no valid reason except her pride for her to refuse Mouret again. He loved her and really wanted to marry her, and she loved him, so why should the ending have been different?

¹Ibid., p. 802.

²Ibid.

³Wilson, p. 43.

IV GENTLE MOTHER-TYPES

Hubertine of Le Rêve is a good mother and companion to her adopted daughter, Angélique. Much patience and courage is required of her in bringing up Angélique, but she seems to have what she needs for this kind of education:

Peu à peu, Hubertine prit sur elle de l'autorité. Elle était faite pour cette éducation, avec la bonhomie de son âme, son grand air fort et doux, sa raison droite, d'un parfait équilibre. Elle lui enseignait le renoncement et l'obéissance, qu'elle opposait à la passion et à l'orgueil. Obéir, c'était vivre.¹

Since she made the mistake of marrying Hubert against her own mother's will, she does not want Angélique to repeat her error by marrying Félicien against his father's will. She tries to show Angélique why it is impossible for her to marry Félicien: "Ce serait un vrai scandale, un mariage en dehors des conditions ordinaires du bonheur."² Hubertine feels that she has neglected her duty by leaving Angélique ignorant of the conventions of society:

Hubertine se désolait, tourmentée par son remords d'avoir laissé Angélique, ignorante à ce point. Elle aurait voulu lui dire les dures leçons de la réalité, l'éclairer sur les cruautés, les abominations du monde, prise d'embarras, ne trouvant pas les mots nécessaires. Quelle tristesse si, un jour, elle avait à s'accuser d'avoir fait le malheur de

¹Zola, Le Rêve, p. 55.

²Ibid., p. 200.

cette enfant, élevée ainsi en recluse, dans le mensonge continu du rêve!¹

Hubertine's years of charity and devotion are rewarded when she finally becomes pregnant after many years of barrenness, a sterility believed to be brought on by her own mother's curse. She, too, sees a dream fulfilled.

Hélène (Mouret) Granjean and her daughter Jeanne of Une Page d'Amour should be examined together: Hélène as a good mother and Jeanne as an example of child jealousy. Widowed early in a strange Paris, Hélène devotes all her time to her neurotic daughter, only occasionally visiting some poor, sick people. Her mother's intuition is very sensitive. She can awake in middle of the night with the feeling that Jeanne is ill:

Hélène n'avait pas bougé. Mais brusquement, elle se souleva. Un balbutiement confus d'enfant qui souffre venait de la réveiller. Elle portait les mains à ses tempes, encore ensommeillée, lorsqu'un cri sourd la fit sauter sur le tapis.

- Jeanne!... Jeanne!... qu'as-tu? réponds-moi! demanda-t-elle.

Et, comme l'enfant se taisait, elle murmura, tout en courant prendre la veilleuse:

- Mon Dieu! elle n'était pas bien, je n'aurais pas dû me coucher.²

She goes to look for a doctor herself, in the middle of the

¹Ibid., pp. 200-201.

²Zola, Une Page d'amour, v. II of Les Rougon-Macquart..., p. 802.

night, and is able to get a doctor Deberle. Jeanne's sickness helps to bring Hélène and the doctor together. The two families become close friends and Hélène often spends the afternoons in their garden with Jeanne who plays with the Deberles' son Lucien. Her friends l'abbé Jouve and M. Rambaud dine with her and Jeanne once a week. One night l'abbé tells her that it is not good for her to be so much alone, that she should remarry. At first she refuses coldly, but when she hears that M. Rambaud wants to marry her, she finds no objection: "M. Rambaud était le seul homme dans la main duquel elle aurait mis loyalement la sienne, sans une crainte."¹ When Jeanne is asked what she would say if M. Rambaud would always stay there with her she answers in the affirmative. However, after the men have left, Hélène asks her again, saying that M. Rambaud would be like her father, she refuses crying:

- Oh! non, non, je ne veux plus... Oh! maman, je t'en prie, dis-lui que je ne veux pas, va lui dire que je ne veux pas... ..

Pendant quelques minutes encore, l'enfant muette et passionnée la serra entre ses bras, comme ne pouvant se détacher d'elle et la défendant contre ceux qui voulaient la lui prendre. Enfin, Hélène put la coucher; mais elle dut veiller près d'elle une partie de la nuit. Des secousses l'agitaient dans son sommeil, et, toutes les demi-heures, elle ouvrait les yeux, s'assurait que sa mère était là, puis se rendormait en collant la bouche sur sa main.²

She is so jealous and possessive of her mother that she does

¹Ibid., p. 875.

²Ibid., p. 878.

not let anyone else share her with her: nobody else can love her mother and Hélène cannot love anyone else but her. Jeanne has inherited tante Dide's neurosis and she resembles her physically.

During one of her most serious attacks; Henri, doctor Deberle, saves her from death, and in gratitude Hélène throws her arms around his neck and confesses that she loves him. Also in her recovery Jeanne, unconsciously, brings the two close together, she cannot bear anyone else near her:

Le docteur lui avait repris le pouls, Hélène tenait son autre main; et, entre eux, elle les regardait l'un après l'autre, avec le léger tremblement nerveux de sa tête, d'un air attentif, comme si elle ne les avait jamais si bien vus. Puis, un malaise l'agita. Ses petites mains se crispèrent et retinrent:

- Ne vous en allez pas; j'ai peur... Défendez-moi, empêchez que tous ces gens ne s'approchent... Je ne veux que vous, je ne veux que vous deux, tout près, oh! tout près, contre moi, ensemble...¹

But when she is getting better, her jealousy is aroused again once she notices her mother and the doctor close to each other:

A partir de ce jour, la jalousie de Jeanne s'éveilla pour une parole, pour un regard. Tant qu'elle s'était trouvée en danger, un instinct lui avait fait accepter cet amour qu'elle sentait si tendre autour d'elle et qui la sauvait. Mais, à présent, elle redevenait forte, elle ne voulait plus partager sa mère.²

¹Ibid., p. 931.

²Ibid., p. 944.

Now that Jeanne is well again, H el ene gives free vent to her love, always thinking only of Henri, so she begins to neglect Jeanne little by little. This love affair brings some colour to her monotonous life, and she is experiencing something never even dreamed of. Since Jeanne notices that her mother is neglecting her, she does not show her temper anymore but suffers in silence. One day H el ene goes out to prevent the discovery by the doctor of a rendez-vous between Mme Deberle and her lover and then stays there with Henri and becomes his mistress. Jeanne feels lonely and forgotten, so she opens the window though she is forbidden to do so and catches a very bad chest cold. When H el ene returns, Jeanne senses that her mother has betrayed her because she does not smell the same: "— Je ne sais pas, tu n'es plus la m eme... Ne dis pas non... Tu ne sens plus la m eme chose. C'est fini, fini, fini. Je veux mourir."¹ The cold that she caught for having fallen asleep at that open window is more serious than just a cold, and her condition keeps worsening till she has to stay in bed. Then H el ene finally realizes that her love affair is killing her daughter, and there is no end to her remorse:

Elle savait sa fille condamn ee, elle restait comme  etourdie, dans l'horreur du d echirement qui se faisait en elle. C' etait une attente sans espoir, une cer-

¹Ibid., p. 1038.

titude que la mort ne pardonnerait pas. Elle n'avait point de larmes, elle marchait doucement dans la chambre, toujours debout, soignant la malade avec des gestes lents et précis.¹

And Jeanne dies unforgiving in her jealousy, with only her big doll being of comfort to her:

Jeanne ouvrit les yeux, mais elle ne regarda pas sa mère. Ses regards toujours, allaient là-bas, sur Paris qui s'effaçait. Elle serra davantage sa poupée, son dernier amour. ...

Jeanne regardait Paris de ses grands yeux vides. Sa figure de chèvre s'était encore allongée, avec des traits sévères, une ombre grise descendue des sourcils qu'elle fronçait; et elle avait ainsi dans la mort son visage blême de femme jalouse.²

¹Ibid., p. 1063.

²Ibid., p. 1071.

V SELFISHNESS AGAINST SELF-SACRIFICE

Madame Chanteau of La Joie de Vivre is a selfish woman who seeks only for her own and her family's happiness. Her dream or main goal in life is to become rich. She comes from a family of ruined country squires and her name is Eugénie de la Vignière. When she married Chanteau she tried to get him involved in her ambitions, but he: "reculait devant les vastes entreprises, opposait l'inertie de sa nature aux volontés dominatrices de sa femme."¹ Since he does not realize her ambitions, she hopes that her son Lazare will make for her a big fortune. But he proves to be a complete failure; no matter what he tries he does not succeed. She welcomes the orphan Pauline gladly into her home for the board money that she will bring them. And she has volunteered to go to Paris to get the young girl and to arrange her papers "avec son continuel besoin d'activité".²

She makes sure that Pauline knows where she keeps her money and papers, and does not take anything from there without her consent. After Pauline has offered to advance the capital for Lazare's sea-weed plant, Mme Chanteau starts taking the girl's money whenever she wants it, without telling Pauline.

¹Zola, La Joie de Vivre, v. III of Les Rougon-Macquart...., p. 821.

²Ibid., p. 809.

Thus Pauline's funds start to diminish little by little. When Mme Chanteau knows that Pauline does not have too much money left, she no longer wants Lazare to marry Pauline, but Louise who has a good dowry. In the middle of her scheming Mme Chanteau dies of heart disease.

On the other hand Pauline Quenu, Lisa Macquart's daughter, is completely opposite to Mme Chanteau. She is gentle and willing to sacrifice her money and herself to others, especially to those whom she loves. Thus, she cannot refuse financial help to her cousin for his various enterprises, because she loves him. Zola has intended her to be "la joie de vivre" in the otherwise sad Chanteau household, as he writes in his notes:

Dans la maison sans bonheur "je voudrais qu'elle apportât la joie de vivre". "Non. Ce ne peut être cela." La maison ignore, ignorera toujours, cette joie essentielle, apanage de Pauline. "Il faut la montrer, elle, avec la joie de vivre par-dessus toutes les catastrophes"; "Pauline est la joie de vivre... la joie de la vie toujours droite, dans sa volonté, dans sa santé, dans le bonheur de l'habitude et dans l'espoir du lendemain."¹

When she comes to live with the Chanteaus, she starts taking care of her arthritic uncle who is very irritable when he is sick, but she eases his pain with her gentle little fingers. Though she knows what her aunt has done with her money, she nurses her at her death bed out of the goodness of her heart. She also helps the poor and sick children of the village by

¹Quoted in Guillemin, Présentation des Rougon-Macquart, Gallimard, [1964], p. 222.

bandaging their wounds, and by giving them food and money. When she is questioned about her charitable works, she answers: "..., je tâche de m'oublier, de peur de devenir triste, je pense aux autres, ce qui m'occupe et me fait prendre le mal en patience."¹ After the death of Mme Chanteau, the atmosphere in the house is nothing but free and gay among Lazare, Chanteau and Pauline. To relieve the situation Pauline thinks that the only solution is to marry Lazare to Louise, and in any case he never seems to know what he wants. This is the biggest sacrifice she can make. Since there is now another woman in the house, she feels that she is no longer needed there. Doctor Cazenove, the family doctor and friend, has found her a place elsewhere, but she stays on, thanks to her charitable heart, when Louise gives birth to a son and Pauline saves the baby's life by breathing her own life into him. Naturally it is impossible for her to leave them now, and she decides to remain to take care of her invalid uncle and her sickly god-son.

To sum up these two women so completely opposite in nature, we quote Wilson:

We see the mother as a cheerful, humorous, active woman, a little too house-proud, gradually turning to a lying, cruel tyrant, as she devours little by little the capital of her ward, Pauline, to finance her son in his successive failures, and then by a brilliant turn, this pervasive, tyrannical force is cut off by a failure of her wicked energy - heart

¹Zola, La Joie de Vivre, p. 994.

failure and death. ... Greatest tragedy, we are shown the sad fate of the heroine, Pauline -...¹ condemned to sterility and fruitless good works.

Henriette of La Débâcle is similar to Pauline in that she devotes her life to serving and helping others. Since their mother died when they were born, Henriette has raised her twin brother Maurice and educated him to be a gentleman, thus denying herself many things. As they are twins the brother and sister resemble each other greatly, however they are somewhat different:

Pourtant, elle était plus petite, plus mince encore, d'apparence plus frêle, avec sa bouche un peu grande, ses traits menus, sous son admirable chevelure blonde, d'un blond clair d'avoine mûre. Et ce qui la différenciait surtout de lui, c'étaient ses yeux gris, calmes et braves où revivait toute l'âme héroïque du grand-père, le héros de la Grande Armée. Elle parlait peu, marchait sans bruit, d'une activité si adroite, d'une douceur si riante, qu'on la sentait comme une caresse dans l'air où elle passait.²

This brave young woman, during the battle of Sedan, goes through bullets and shells to look for her husband, only to find him being shot by the Prussians right in front of her eyes. Then she devotes the rest of her life to the nursing of others, first in the army or emergency hospital near her uncle, père Fouchard's, farm. Later she nurses Jean as if he were her own brother, because Maurice had entrusted him to her:

Si elle se dévouait ainsi, c'était pour l'ami, pour le frère de Maurice, le brave homme secourable en-

¹Wilson, pp. 101-102.

²Zola, La Débâcle, L de P, p. 153.

vers qui elle payait à son tour une dette de son coeur. Elle était pleine de gratitude, d'une affection qui grandissait, à mesure qu'elle le connaissait mieux, simple et sage, de cerveau solide; ... Entre eux, ce lien de tendre sympathie allait en se resserrant chaque jour, dans cette solitude profonde où ils vivaient, agités des mêmes peines.¹

After Jean is well enough to leave, he sets out for Paris to rejoin his regiment. Henriette is grieved to see him go because she will be all alone again: "ce fut pour Henriette, une grande peine, qu'elle s'efforça de cacher."² Since she has not heard anything from Maurice for a long time, she decides to go to the capital, passing through a burning Paris and arrives at Maurice's room just in time to nurse him. Her brother has been wounded by Jean, because they have been fighting on opposite sides during the Commune. Jean is not greatly surprised to see her there: "Rien n'était plus naturel, son frère mourant, elle arrivait."³ When Jean tells her that he killed Maurice, she turns pale:

Ah! ce Jean, à qui elle pensait le soir même, heureuse du vague espoir de le revoir peut-être! Et il avait fait cette chose abominable, et il venait pourtant de sauver encore Maurice, puisque c'était lui qui l'avait rapporté là, au travers de tant de dangers!... Mais elle eut un cri, où elle mit la dernière espérance de son coeur combattu.

- Oh! je le guérirai, il faut que je le guérisse maintenant!⁴

¹Ibid., p. 389.

²Ibid., p. 445.

³Ibid., p. 487.

⁴Ibid.

In spite of her efforts, Maurice dies and now she is really alone in the world: "La guerre achevait donc de lui prendre tout son coeur, elle resterait donc seule au monde, veuve et dépareillée, sans personne qui l'aimerait!"¹ At this moment Jean and Henriette realize that they love each other, but she still has one more sacrifice to make:

Et leurs regards se disaient cela, et ils ne s'aimaient ouvertement, à cette heure, que pour l'adieu éternel. Il fallait encore cet affreux sacrifice, l'arrachement dernier, leur bonheur possible la veille s'écroulant aujourd'hui avec le reste, s'en allant avec le flot de sang qui venait d'emporter leur frère.²

¹Ibid., p. 499.

²Ibid.

VI EXPLOITED WOMEN

This group of women comes from the lower end of the social scale. Some of them live in a provincial town, some in Parisian slums, some in mining district, and some in farming village.

Joséphine Gavaudan, or Fine, of La Fortune des Rougon is exploited by her husband Antoine Macquart. She is big and strong and works like a horse, her only sin being her love for anisette. Macquart marries her because he notices that she can work for the two of them, and she accepts calmly the fact that he is lazy:

Il fut comme entendu tacitement entre eux que la femme suerait sang et eau pour entretenir le mari. Fine, qui aimait le travail par instinct, ne protesta pas. Elle était d'une patience angélique, tant qu'elle n'avait pas bu, trouvant tout naturel que son homme fut paresseux, et tâchant de lui éviter même les plus petites besognes.¹

She has three children, Lisa, Gervaise and Jean, who are used to seeing their mother "l'humble servante de son mari".² Often when Macquart has used up the week's money in advance, he has nerve to accuse poor Fine, "qui se tuait de travail, d'être une pauvre tête, de ne pas savoir se tirer d'affaire."³ She dies suddenly of pneumonia, caught when washing the family

¹Zola, La Fortune des Rougon, p. 123.

²Ibid., p. 128.

³Ibid.

laundry in the river in winter. Thus she is a victim of hard work and of a lazy, despotic husband.

Her daughter Gervaise of L'Assommoir leaves for Paris with her lover, Lantier, and their two illegitimate children, Claude and Etienne, shortly after her mother's death. In Paris Lantier leaves her and runs away with another woman. She marries Coupeau, a roofer, and their future seems bright and rosy for a while till Coupeau's bad accident. His sickness and convalescence consumes the money they had saved for Gervaise's own laundry shop. She is able to get a loan from her neighbours, the Goujets, and finally her dream comes true and she has her own shop. After his accident Coupeau turns to drinking and starts to neglect his work, but Gervaise shows her good-nature: "C'était surtout pour Coupeau que Gervaise se montrait gentille. Jamais une mauvaise parole, jamais une plainte, derrière le dos de son mari."¹ Coupeau's accident seems to be the key point from which their degeneration begins. Gervaise is seemingly happy in her shop, but the dirty clothes that she handles daily poison the air in this place: "Et il semblait que ses premières paresse vinssent de là, de l'asphyxie des vieux linges empoisonnant l'air autour d'elle."²

¹Zola, L'Assommoir, p. 503.

²Ibid., p. 506.

Then Lantier appears on the scene again, and after her famous birthday dinner, he moves in to live with them. Coupeau has started to drink more and more, and one night Gervaise has no choice but to sleep in her former lover's bed. Her husband and her lover eat and drink what she earns in her shop, and little by little she neglects the cleanliness in her shop and becomes careless in her work, thus starting to lose her clientele. Soon she is forced to sell the shop, to Virginie who also gets Lantier as roomer and lover, and they move up to a small apartment in that huge building.

She gets a job at her former employer's place, but she begins to neglect her work there too. And her hunger keeps growing till one night she decides to join her husband for a drink to kill her pangs, because Coupeau did not bring her money for food. She is fired from work and cannot get anything else, and she is even forced to clean for Virginie, her former rival! And her descent of the ladder continues. Since Coupeau does not give her money for food she decides to walk the streets: "Entre voler et faire ça, elle aimait mieux faire ça, parce qu'au moins elle ne causerait du tort à personne."¹ In walking up and down the streets, she contemplates the tavern l'Assommoir: "Et, de loin, elle contemplait la machine à soûler, en sentant que son malheur venait de là, et en faisant le rêve de s'ache-

¹Ibid., p. 764.

ver avec de l'eau-de-vie, le jour où elle aurait de quoi."¹
 She is a pitiful sight limping with her floated body up and down the streets. Unhappily she meets Goujet, her former neighbour, the only really good man that has ever loved her:.

Voilà qu'elle raccrochait la Gueule-d'Or, maintenant! Mais qu'avait-elle donc fait au bon Dieu, pour être ainsi torturée jusqu'à la fin? C'était le dernier coup, se jeter dans les jambes du forgeron, être vue par lui au rang des roulures de barrière, blême et suppliante.²

Coupeau dies in the insane asylum, and Gervaise in a cubbyhole at the end of the corridor of the tenement where they lived. "She died of poverty, of the accumulation of filth and weariness in her ruined life."³

La Maheude of Germinal is a victim of the mine strikes. She is the wife of a miner and they have seven children. The conditions in which they live are very bad. Often they are short of food and money, and she has to rely on the credit of the merchant, because: "Quand les hommes et la fille revien- draient de la fosse, il faudrait pourtant manger; car on n'avait pas encore inventé de vivre sans manger, malheureusement."⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 769-770.

²Ibid., p. 774.

³Zola, L'Assommoir, trans. by Townsend, p. 486.

⁴Zola, Germinal, p. 85.

During the strike one of her daughters dies because of hunger. One of her sons, Jeanlin, is injured during an accident but he recovers quite soon. Her husband is killed during the fighting, and her eldest son dies trying to rescue his sister who has been buried in a cave-in in the mine. The daughter Catherine is dead when they finally are able to reach the survivors. So finally she is forced to descend into the mine herself, because she still has three young children and the grandfather to feed. During the strike she had said that she would strangle the first one of her family who would go down into the mine, but now she has no choice.

Her daughter Catherine is a slim young girl of fifteen, who works in the mine. She looks so young and boyish in her work clothes that she is easily taken for a boy:

Elle enfila sa culotte de mineur, passa la veste de toile, noua le béguin bleu autour de son chignon; et, dans ces vêtements propres du lundi, elle avait l'air d'un petit homme, rien ne lui restait de son sexe, que le dandinement léger des hanches.¹

She is amused that Etienne Lantier, Gervaise's son, thinks she is a boy: "Cela l'amusait, qu'il la prit pour un garçon, fluette encore, son chignon caché sous le béguin."² Catherine and Etienne are attracted to each other from the beginning, but are afraid to show their mutual interest. When Chaval, a young

¹Ibid., p. 20.

²Ibid., pp. 32-33.

man working in the same group, sees another man near her, he becomes brutal in his advances to Catherine. Since Etienne does not openly express his desire for her, Catherine finally yields to Chaval and becomes his mistress. Shortly before the strike she disappears: she has gone to live with Chaval, because: "Il lui faisait des scènes si abominables, qu'elle s'était décidée à se mettre avec lui."¹ Chaval had gone to work in another mine, where she joined him. During the strike, since she is still working, she tries to help her parents by bringing them some coffee and sugar on the pretext that it is for the children. Chaval makes scene claiming that she is giving his money to her parents and to Etienne. Although she is brutally used by her lover, only because he cannot stand the sight of another man near her, Catherine is afraid to leave him and too proud to return home. When their mine is forced to join in the strike, Chaval notices how Catherine, though unconsciously at first, sides with Etienne in the issues. In a fight between the rivals, she prevents Chaval from killing Etienne by warning him. She follows Chaval home, but he throws her out. She again wants to return home but feels too ashamed. Then she wanders around throughout the night in hopes of finding Etienne. After the battle with the soldiers, Etienne makes La Maheude take back Catherine. When the mines reopen, she wants to go

¹Ibid., p. 189.

to work in order to prevent her family from dying of hunger. Etienne accompanies her, and they are both trapped in the mine accident. Despairing of ever seeing daylight again they finally give free expression to their love:

Et ce fut enfin leur nuit de noces, au fond de cette tombe, sur ce lit de boue, le besoin de ne pas mourir avant d'avoir eu le bonheur, l'obstiné besoin de vivre, de faire de la vie une dernière fois. Ils s'aimèrent dans le désespoir de tout, dans la mort.¹

And she dies, resting on Etienne's knees, before the rescuers reach them.

Lalie Bijard of L'Assommoir is perhaps Zola's most pathetic character. After her mother was beaten to death by her drunkard father, she is in charge of her younger brother and sister, their "petite mère" at the age of seven. Gervaise talks of her: "... voilà cette gamine de Lalie chargée de deux mioches. Elle n'a pas huit ans, mais elle est sérieuse et raisonnable comme une vraie mère. Avec ça, son père la roue de coups... Ah! on rencontre des êtres qui sont nés pour souffrir."² She keeps their small apartment very clean and takes good care of her sister and brother trying to amuse them the best she can. Whenever her father is drunk he has to beat a woman, so she falls victim to his blows after her mother is dead. She

¹Ibid., p. 489.

²Zola, L'Assommoir, p. 615.

receives his beatings patiently never complaining: "Non, jamais Lalie ne se révoltait. Elle pliait un peu de cou, pour protéger son visage; elle se retenait de crier, afin de ne pas révolutionner la maison."¹ She cannot, however, endure his beatings too long, becoming feebler and feebler and is finally forced to stay in bed. But she seems to be happy in her death, as Gervaise notices: "... elle aperçut Lalie morte, l'air content d'être allongée, en train de se dorloter pour toujours. Ah bien! les enfants avaient plus de chance que les grandes personnes!"²

Just as pathetic as Lalie, is Palmyre Bouteroue of La Terre. She is exploited by her grandmother La Grande, who would not forgive her daughter's mistake in marrying against her consent and, therefore, treats her grandchildren as her slaves. Although she is only thirty years old, she looks fifty:

... une grande femme d'une trentaine d'années, qui en paraissait bien cinquante, les cheveux rares, la face plate, molle, jaune de son; et, cassée, épuisée par des travaux trop rudes, elle chancelait sous un fagot de menu bois.³

She works hard and takes care of her invalid brother as if she were his mother. She tries to do everything to please him, even becoming his mistress, but he turns to beating her whenever he gets a little to drink. She is suddenly killed by too

¹Ibid., pp. 689-690.

²Ibid., p. 779.

³Zola, La Terre, p. 56.

hard work, working in the field in the hot sun, without resting, in order to earn some extra money. When she has fallen on the ground, La Grande approaches and pokes her with her cane and pronounces her verdict: "- Bien sûr qu'elle est morte... Vaut mieux ça que d'être à la charge des autres."¹ And Hilarion, her brother, howls all night by his sister's body.

¹Ibid., p. 240.

VII PRIMITIVE PEASANT WOMEN

In this group we are mainly concerned with the two sisters, Lise and Françoise Mouche of La Terre. They are primitive in the sense that they are animalistic in their brutal love of their land and property and in their lack of concern for other human beings.

Everything having to do with the life of the common peasant is natural to them; for example, when Françoise takes their cow to the big farm for breeding, she does not see in it anything worth blushing at or being ashamed of, but talks about it as if it were the most natural thing for a girl of fourteen. After their mother died, Lise being the elder of the two, had raised Françoise and consequently a great affection had developed between the sisters:

Lise l'avait élevée, leur mère étant morte: de là venait leur grande tendresse, active et bruyante de la part de l'aînée, passionnée et contenue chez la cadette. Cette petite Françoise avait le renom d'une fameuse tête. L'injustice l'exaspérait. Quand elle avait dit: "Ça c'est à moi, ça c'est à toi", elle n'en aurait pas démordu sous le couteau; et, en dehors du reste, si elle adorait Lise, c'était dans l'idée qu'elle lui devait bien cette adoration.¹

Their affection continues after their father's death, but once Lise finally marries Buteau, her cousin by whom she had had a son already, a slight tension grows between the sisters.

¹Zola, La Terre, pp. 116-117.

Whenever there is question of land and property between Lise and Françoise, Lise becomes cruel to her sister. Since there is a man living under the same roof with them, Lise cannot tolerate Françoise, especially when she sees her husband making advances at Françoise. Françoise is treated as if she were a mere maid in the house. She wants to know definitely what is her share of lands and property, but Lise is not willing to share anything with her sister. Lise seems to be more primitive and animalistic than Françoise, because when she is giving birth to her second child, she is more concerned about their cow which is calving at the same time than her own condition. When Jean Macquart, Antoine Macquart's son, asks permission to marry Françoise, Lise is ready to give her consent because she says that she would prefer to have a servant in her place whom she could command:

C'était un cri qui lui échappait, cette désunion lente, grandie invinciblement entre elle et sa cadette, cette hostilité aggravée par les petites blessures de chaque jour, un sourd ferment de jalousie et de haine couvant depuis qu'un homme était là, avec ses volontés et ses appétits de mâle.¹

Lise is anxious to get Françoise married off so that she can get rid of her.

Françoise, however, is not so keen on getting married. She has nothing against Jean but he is much older than she;

¹Ibid., pp. 258-259.

and, besides, she does not want to leave before she will have her share of lands and the house: "J'attends ma part, je veux la terre et la maison, et je les aurai, oui, j'aurai tout!"¹ Life becomes so irritating and unbearable for Françoise and Lise, that Françoise decides to leave once she turns twenty-one. She goes to live with La Grande, but she is not much better off at her aunt's house, since the old woman makes her work like a slave in order to earn her room and board. Suddenly she decides to get married if Jean still wants her. La Grande helps them to get Françoise's share of the lands and the house. They have to get the Buteaus out of the house with force. Although Jean and Françoise are married, they are living as if they were strangers to each other. Jean is not a native of the Beauce and the peasants of that region feel that a stranger should not have nor own anything that belongs to them. This is the reason why Françoise does not sign the testament that, if she dies childless, Jean could have her property and the house. Lise and Buteau are exasperated when they notice that Françoise is pregnant. They try to think of ways to prevent the birth of the child. Finally they decide to try an old folk remedy on Françoise, but when Buteau is supposed to carry this out, he rapes her instead and she finally yields to him. On noticing this

¹Ibid., p. 294.

Lise's anger flares up and she fights with Françoise injuring her quite severely. Françoise dies within a few days and in her peasant pride she does not tell Jean the truth about her accident. The Buteaus are overjoyed on observing that Françoise did not sign the will, and they take possession of the house immediately, while Jean is still at the cemetery. When he finally realizes the truth about his wife's death, he decides to leave the Beauce region and rejoin the army.

Now Lise and Buteau plan how to get rid of old Fouan, Buteau's father, because he had informed Jean, and because they do not want any of the other relatives to have his money, since they now know where he keeps it. One night they try to suffocate Fouan and then burn him to make sure that he is dead and to make it look more like an accident. Now they have accomplished what they had wanted to do, so they start to live again. Their last anxiety disappears when they hear that Jean is going to re-enlist in the army: "C'était fini, ils allaient recommencer à vivre heureux."¹

¹Ibid., p. 499.

VIII ADULTEROUS WIVES AND AMORAL WOMEN

During the Second Empire adultery was very common among the upper classes and the bourgeoisie. Zola attacks in his novels the basic causes, generally the upbringing of the young girl and the arranged marriages, that lead later to adultery. Wilson discusses Zola's attitudes in this matter:

Adultery was the besetting sin of the upper classes and the grande bourgeoisie. Zola opposed most strongly the whole system of arranged marriages, their lovelessness, their calculation, their loneliness. . . . From very early in his career he had attacked the emptiness and sentimental emotionalism of the Catholic girls' school, to which even non-practising bourgeois sent their daughters. A rapid, romantic education and an arranged marriage led, he suspected, straight to the adultery of the bored young wife.¹

Renée of La Curée is a typical example of this kind of bored young wife, a product of the romantic education of the Catholic girls' school and of the arranged marriage. She is the second wife of Aristide Saccard (Rougon), the youngest son of Félicité and Pierre Rougon. Their marriage was arranged by Aristide's sister Sidonie, because Renée, daughter of a rich bourgeois, had to get married to somebody since she could not tell her father that the father of her child was a married man. Therefore Sidonie thought that Aristide

¹Wilson, pp. 45-46.

would be the best one, since his wife Angèle was just dying. Aristide's climb upwards in the financial world begins with his marriage to Renée. Soon she becomes the queen of Parisian social life. But she is just an attractive "showpiece" to Aristide, someone that he can display with pride. She is surrounded by luxury: she lives in a luxurious hotel, wears most extraordinary dresses and is considered one of the most beautiful women in Parisian society. She is a sought-after woman by many young men who would be delighted to be her lover. But she is bored to death with all this luxury, and finds that all men are great bores. All except her stepson Maxime who is too young, and with whom she is very good friends; and to whom she describes her boredom:

... Tu sais, nous sommes deux bons camarades, je ne me gêne pas avec toi; eh bien, vrai, il y a des jours où je suis tellement lasse de vivre ma vie de femme riche, adorée, saluée, que je voudrais être une Laure d'Aurigny, une de ces dames qui vivent en garçon.¹

She is dreaming of something different to fill the emptiness in her life, but she is not sure what it is, as she explains to Maxime: "... Je le disais bien, il faudrait autre chose; tu comprends, moi, je ne devine pas; mais autre chose, quelque chose qui n'arrivât à personne, qu'on ne rencontrât pas tous les jours; qui fût une jouissance rare, inconnue."² This

¹Zola, La Curée, L de P, p. 19.

²Ibid., p. 20.

"autre chose" will be her love affair with Maxime, her stepson! Their continual comradeship has led to this development. When Maxime first came to live in Paris, Renée taught him to be a dandy in the Parisian society. Whenever she is with Maxime, she seems to regain her youth and gets all kinds of odd ideas into her head; for example, when she insists that Maxime takes her to the masquerade party of actresses and demi-mondaines, then during the supper, after the ball, in a private cabinet of a restaurant the first seeds of their future liaison are sown. Thus: "Leur camaraderie fut ainsi la marche lente de deux amoureux, qui devait fatalement un jour les mener au cabinet du café Riche et au grand lit gris et rose de Renée."¹ When Renée becomes too possessive for Maxime, he tries to think of how to break off, but is too much afraid of her. At this same time Aristide is approaching his wife because he has a profitable business deal in mind and he needs his wife's consent to use her funds. Renée does not want by any means to let Maxime know that she is "deceiving" him with his father, that is, with her own husband. Maxime is relieved to hear the news of his approaching arranged marriage to Louise, the daughter of his father's friend, because this will provide him with the escape he needs to break off with Renée.

When Renée hears the news about Maxime's coming marriage with Louise, she is shocked and furious in her jealousy.

¹Ibid., p. 252.

She drags him into her room and tells him that she is going to lock him up in there and then they shall elope. Maxime is too much of a coward to say "NO!" to her; yet he is "saved" from his stepmother's "clutches" when his father, forewarned by Sidonie, walks in and surprises Renée embracing Maxime. Aristide does not make a scene, noticing that Renée has finally signed the long awaited transfer of funds. He simply walks away with Maxime saying that he came to look for him so that the young man could say "Good night" to Louise and her father. Renée, left alone in her room, suddenly realizes that she is almost naked in her costume. She blames her corruption on men, money and society:

Le fils tremblait comme un lâche, frissonnait à la pensée d'aller jusqu'au bout de son crime, refusait de la suivre dans sa passion. Le père, au lieu de la tuer, l'avait volée; cet homme punissait les gens en leurs poches; une signature tombait comme un rayon de soleil au milieu de la brutalité de sa colère, et, pour vengeance, il emportait la signature. Puis elle avait vu leurs épaules qui s'enfonçaient dans les ténèbres. Pas de sang sur le tapis, pas un cri, pas une plainte. C'étaient des lâches. Ils l'avaient mise nue. ... Ah! que sa pauvre tête souffrait! comme elle sentait, à cette heure, la fausseté de cette imagination, qui lui faisait croire qu'elle vivait dans une sphère bien heureuse de jouissance et d'impunités divines! Elle avait vécu au pays de la honte, et elle était châtiée par l'abandon de tout son corps, par la mort de son être qui agonisait.¹

After this calamity her boredom is greater than ever. She tries everything to fill the emptiness in her life, even

¹Ibid., p. 396.

gambling. She would have attempted drinking but could not endure alcohol:

Depuis qu'elle s'était retrouvée seule, livrée à ce flot mondain qui l'emportait, elle s'abandonnait davantage, ne sachant à quoi tuer le temps. Elle acheva de goûter à tout. Et rien ne la touchait, dans l'ennui immense qui l'écrasait. Elle vieillissait, ses yeux se cerclaient de bleu, son nez s'amincissait, la moue de ses lèvres avait des rides brusques, sans cause. C'était la fin d'une femme.¹

And the following year she dies of meningitis.

In contrast to Aristide, Renée's husband, Roubaud, the husband of Sévérine Aubry, in La Bête Humaine, is filled with jealousy and anger when he even suspects that his wife could deceive him. Sévérine is not very attractive but she seduces men with her charm:

Dans l'éclat de ses vingt-cinq ans, elle semblait grande, mince et très souple, grasse pourtant avec de petits os. Elle n'était point jolie d'abord, la face longue, la bouche forte, éclairée de dents admirables. Mais, à la regarder, elle séduisait par le charme, l'étrangeté de ses larges yeux bleus, sous son épaisse chevelure noire.²

When Roubaud hears that Sévérine has had a love affair with the judge Grandmorin, her benefactor, he is furious with jealousy, and plans with Sévérine's help to murder him on the train on their way back to Le Havre from Paris. They try to do everything to appear innocent of the killing.

¹Ibid., p. 417.

²Zola, La Bête Humaine, p. 11.

Since Jacques Lantier is the chief witness in the case because he saw the body thrown out of the train, Sévérine and Roubaud do everything to be amiable to him in order to remove his suspicions that they might be the murderers. Thus, this husband who was previously so jealous brings Jacques home with him to lunch or dinner, literally throwing Sévérine at Jacques. At first Sévérine sees in Jacques an enemy to be conquered, and tries to be charming to him. At this time, however, a gradual separation develops between wife and husband. Roubaud begins to neglect his wife, staying out in the evenings. So gradually Sévérine and Jacques become lovers. Sévérine notices that she loves somebody for the first time in her life. She feels an increasing desire to confess to Jacques the murder of Grandmorin, and finally does so when they are forced to spend the night in Paris after the train had been stuck in a snow bank. Sévérine needs absolute love, and swears to be faithful to Jacques. Since she finds Roubaud as the obstacle to the full realization of her love, she wants Jacques to kill him, but he cannot do it. While Jacques is convalescing after a train crash, Sévérine plans again how they can kill Roubaud, and this time Jacques is sure he can do it. Unfortunately he cannot control his impulse when he sees Sévérine in her nightgown on the night of the murder, so instead of murdering the husband he kills Sévérine.

Madame Hennebeau of Germinal is a typical example of adultery in the bourgeoisie. She is the wife of M. Hennebeau, the director of the mines. When she noticed that her husband did not satisfy her vain desires, dreamed of in the pension, and also her money needs, she was disdainful of him, and a separation developed between them after a few years of marriage. She had a lover even then, but her husband did not know anything about it. Then they moved to Paris from the provincial town where they had lived. And Paris completed this separation. This time the husband could not ignore his wife's public liaison, whose breaking off nearly killed her:

Cette fois, le mari n'avait pu garder son ignorance, et il se résigna, à la suite de scènes abominables, désarmé devant la tranquille inconscience de cette¹ femme, qui prenait son bonheur où elle le trouvait.

He hoped that their move to Montsou would calm and correct her. At first she seemed happy busying herself in the renovation of the director's house. But after it was finished: "... elle tomba à une langueur d'ennui, en victime que l'exil tuerait et qui se disait heureuse d'en mourir."² When Paul Négrel, M. Hennebeau's nephew, came to work there and live with him, she became a good aunt for him looking after his needs. But there was still some woman left in her; she was greatly amused by this young man, and from her maternal advice she glided into

¹Zola, Germinal, pp. 193-194.

²Ibid., p. 195.

personal confidences. So one night he found himself in her arms: "et elle parut se livrer par bonté, tout en lui disant qu'elle n'avait plus de coeur et qu'elle voulait être uniquement son amie."¹ She is not jealous of the working girls in the mine, and she even arranges the marriage between Paul and Cécile Grégoire. But Cécile's sudden death puts an end to the wedding plans. When Hennebeau had discovered that his wife was having an affair with his nephew, he was enraged. But Cécile's murder relieves him: "Ce malheur arrangeait tout, il préférerait garder son neveu, dans la crainte de son cocher."²

Virginie of L'Assommoir is an amoral and unscrupulous woman. After Lantier had left Gervaise, Virginie insults her and then fights with her in the laundry, because Lantier had run away with her sister Adèle. Then they meet again after several years, and are both married. Virginie shows great friendliness to Gervaise now, because Gervaise is a shop owner. Virginie talks to her about Lantier and her sister and tells her that he has left Adèle. When Gervaise is forced to sell her shop, Virginie buys it for a candy store and she also gets Lantier in the deal for roomer and for lover. Although her husband Poisson is a policeman, he ignores completely what

¹Ibid., p. 195.

²Ibid., p. 471.

goes on between his wife and his roomer. Whenever Gervaise is there cleaning the shop for her, she orders her around as if she were a maid and not her former friend. She carries on with Lantier as if Gervaise were not even there. Just as Lantier had helped Gervaise's downfall so he now is pushing Virginie into debt by eating freely in her candy shop.

Clémence of L'Assommoir works for Gervaise as an ironer. She is a good ironer, but she has a reputation for having many lovers:

Quant à mademoiselle Clémence, la repasseuse, elle se conduisait comme elle l'entendait, mais on ne pouvait pas dire, elle adorait les animaux, elle possédait un coeur d'or. Hein! quel dommage, une belle fille pareille aller avec tous les hommes! On la rencontrerait une nuit sur un trottoir, pour sûr.¹

Although she usually falls asleep at her work the day following a night of pleasure, she is not fired because no one else can iron a man's shirt the way she does. And while she is counting dirty linen, she tells stories of each piece of clothing in her gross talk. Even Coupeau and Lantier pinch her from time to time when they are passing through the shop.

La Mouquette of Germinal is amoral but she is also pathetic because she is a victim of the strikes. She works in

¹Zola, L'Assommoir, pp. 427-428.

the mine as a haulage girl, and is teased by the miners about her different lovers: "... au milieu des blés en été, contre un mur en hiver, elle se donnait du plaisir, en compagnie de son amoureux de la semaine. Toute la mine y passait, une vraie tournée de camarades, sans autre conséquence."¹ She likes Etienne but he does not want her. She is not a bad girl at heart but because of the atmosphere where she has lived, she finds it only natural to amuse herself the way she does. During the strike she shows herself to be charitable: she helps a woman who has fainted from hunger by giving her bread and drink, and she also gives Etienne food to take over to the Maheus who have none at all. Then in the uprisings her most effective weapon to show her disdain of the bourgeois and of the soldiers is to show them her rear-end. In her death, she shows her more amiable side:

Au même instant, la Mouquette recevait deux balles dans le ventre. Elle avait vu les soldats épauler, elle s'était jetée, d'un mouvement instinctif de bonne fille, devant Catherine, en lui criant de prendre garde; et elle poussa un grand cri, elle s'étala sur les reins, culbutée par la secousse. Etienne accourut, voulut la relever, l'emporter; mais, d'un geste, elle disait qu'elle était finie. Puis, elle hoqueta, sans cesser de leur sourire à l'un et à l'autre, comme si elle était heureuse de les voir ensemble, maintenant qu'elle s'en allait.²

¹Zola, Germinal, p. 31.

²Ibid., pp. 413-414.

IX COURTESANS, DEMI-MONDAINES, BAWDS AND LESBIANS

The female types and the professions described in this chapter are most typical of the Second Empire and also most symbolic.

Nana, the rich courtesan of Nana, is the same Nana who in L'Assommoir was running around the neighbourhood with a string of boys following her. She has become the exploiter of many different kinds of men, young and old, but mostly rich.

Matthews writes of Zola's notes for the character of Nana:

Tout ce qui contribue à faire de Nana non seulement une fille, mais la Fille, se trouve déjà esquissé dans le plan. Aux références à cette odeur, par laquelle Nana conquiert le monde, répond cette phrase manuscrite: "... finissant par considérer l'homme comme une matière à exploiter, devenant une force de la nature, un ferment de destruction, mais cela sans le vouloir, par son sexe seul et par sa puissante odeur de femme."¹

She is an actress at the Variety theatre though she can neither act nor sing, but she has something else she has sex. Her customers range from rich "playboys" to bankers to counts even to a prince. A man does not interest her unless he knows what one can give her; therefore, Count Muffat does not interest her at first, because he was a "newcomer" in the world of courtesans and demi-mondaines. When she comes back to the theatre,

¹Matthews, Les deux Zola: Science et Personnalité dans l'Expression, Librairie E. Droz, 8, rue Verdaine, Genève, Librairie Minard, 73, rue Cardinal Lamoine, Paris Ve, 1957, p. 80.

after leaving to live with the actor Fontan, she has an idée fixe that she wants to play the part of the honest woman in the new play they are rehearsing, and not the role to which she has been assigned. Since Muffat wants to get back into her favour by promising her a house in the city and everything else she desires, she uses him to get the role of the honest woman for her and then accepts his offers because he now knows what to give. However, in the role she is a complete failure because she cannot play an honest woman no matter how hard she tries, whereas in her daily life she plays the part of the charmer with no difficulty at all:

Alors, Nana devint une femme chic, rentière de la bêtise et de l'ordure des mâles, marquise des hauts trottoirs. ... Et le prodige fut que cette grosse fille, si gauche à la scène, si drôle dès qu'elle voulait faire la femme honnête, jouait à la ville des rôles de charmeuse, sans un effort.¹

Being at the top of the demi-mondaine world she begins her destruction in order to revenge the working class where she grew up. After her first success as an actress, her rival's lover compared Nana to "une mouche d'or" in an newspaper article. Zola writes of his comparison in his notes:

Nana est la mouche d'or grandie sur une charogne et qui empoisonne ensuite tous ceux qu'elle pique. Enterrez les charognes. Il faut que cela soit dit nettement et plusieurs fois, en conversations, en drame, par Nana, par les autres. C'est la haute morale du livre.²

¹Zola, Nana, v. II of Les Rougon-Macquart..., p. 1346.

²Matthews, p. 80.

She has a constant and tremendous appetite for expenditure, "un dédain naturel de l'homme qui payait un continuel caprice de mangeuse et de gâcheuse, fière de la ruine de ses amants."¹ Soon, however, she finds Muffat and his money not adequate enough, so Count de Vandevres finishes his own ruin in spending the rest of his possessions on Nana: "... trouvant beau de laisser les derniers besants d'or de son blason aux mains de cette fille, que Paris désirait."² When he is completely bankrupt by his last horse race, he burns himself with his horses in his stables. And other men pass through her hands till there is nothing left of them. Most of them feel honoured to be ruined by her. Then there is poor Georges, whose mother does not give him any money, desperately in love with Nana who does not want him anymore since he cannot bring her any money. In his jealousy of his brother Philippe he tries to kill himself with Nana's scissors, and he dies later in spite of his mother's care. His brother Philippe is in prison because he had stolen money from the army treasury. Even the banker Steiner is sucked clean. And Muffat is ruined little by little. When Nana has had enough of him she sends him back to his wife. She herself is ruined at the end, because when she takes the money in from her lovers, her servants practically throw it out of the window. When she learns of Georges' death,

¹Zola, Nana, pp. 1349-1350.

²Ibid., p. 1351.

she realizes how everybody is blaming her for all these misfortunes, but she turns the blame on to society: "La société est mal faite. On tombe sur les femmes, quand ce sont les hommes qui exigent des choses..."¹ The brilliant "star" has finally faded:

Elle demeurait seule debout, au milieu des richesses entassées de son hôtel, avec un peuple d'hommes abattus à ses pieds. Comme ces monstres antiques dont le domaine redouté était couvert d'ossements, elle posait les pieds sur des crânes; et des catastrophes l'entouraient, la flambée furieuse de Vanduvres, la mélancolie de Foucarmont perdu dans les mers de la Chine, le désastre de Steiner réduit à vivre en honnête homme, l'imbécillité satisfaite de la Faloise, et le tragique effondrement des Muffat, et le blanc cadavre de Georges, veillé par Philippe, sorti la veille de prison. Son oeuvre de ruine et de mort était faite, la mouche envolée de l'ordure des faubourgs, apportant le ferment des pourritures sociales, avait empoisonné ces hommes, rien qu'à se poser sur eux. C'était bien, c'était juste, elle avait vengé son monde, les gueux et les abandonnés. Et tandis que, dans une gloire, son sexe montait et rayonnait sur ses victimes étendues, pareil à un soleil levant qui éclaire un champ de carnage, elle gardait son inconscience de bête superbe, ignorante de sa besogne, bonne fille toujours. Elle restait grosse, elle restait grasse, d'une belle santé, d'une belle gaieté.²

Her death from small-pox caught from her little son Louis is symbolic of the Second Empire. While her rotted body lies in the hotel room the shouts "A Berlin! A Berlin!" are heard on the streets, the Franco-Prussian war has begun, the end of the Second Empire is near.

¹Ibid., p. 1469.

²Ibid., p. 1470.

Gaga, in Nana is an old courtesan with still some charms to attract men, especially young ones. It is interesting to note that if these kinds of women have children, they want them to be good, honest citizens. Therefore, Gaga does not want to sell her daughter to the old Marquis Chouard, she wants to marry her to a good husband. The daughter, however, wants to lead a life of pleasure:

"Elle s'ennuyait trop, elle voulait y passer... Alors, quand elle s'est mise à dire: 'C'est pas toi, après tout, qui as le droit de m'en empêcher', je lui ai dit: 'Tu es une misérable, tu nous dés-honores, va-t-en!' Et ça c'est fait, j'ai consenti à arranger ça... Mais voilà mon dernier espoir fichu, moi qui avais rêvé, ah! des choses si bien!"¹

Thus these courtesans are not able to prove that they are honest people just like others, because their own children follow in their foot steps.

Laure d'Aurigny of La Curée is a demi-mondaine who has her day when she receives, just like the real ladies. Aristide Saccard had saved her once when he paid her debts by buying her expensive necklace and giving it to his wife. At one time he was her chief lover, but actually she is more a business partner than a mistress for him.

Madame de Lauwerens of La Curée is a high life bawd,

¹Ibid., p. 1397.

Sidonie Rougon's chief rival in the business. She caters to high society ladies and their lovers, enabling them to meet each other in her home, and trying to find a suitable lover for a lady and vice versa. Often her visitor would have preferred her, so adorable she looked in her lace peignoirs, but:

la chronique assurait qu'elle était d'une sagesse absolue. Tout le secret de l'affaire était là. Elle conservait sa haute situation dans le monde, avait pour amis tous, les hommes, gardait son orgueil de femme honnête, goûtait une secrète joie à faire tomber les autres et à tirer profit de leurs chutes.¹

Her chief rival Sidonie Rougon, or Madame Sidonie as she is commonly called, is one of the most interesting of Zola's characters. She has many trades: she sells lace, pianos, is an entremetteuse, finds suitable husbands for young girls to be married, acts as agent in different kinds of business matters. Among several idées fixes her major concern is about the millions that England supposedly owes to France. She works for love of the art not for the fortune. She looks a lot older than she is because she neglects herself and has on an eternal black dress:

La femme se mourait en elle; elle n'était plus qu'un agent d'affaires, un placeur battant à toute heure le pavé de Paris, ayant dans son panier légendaire les marchandises les plus équivoques, vendant de tout, rêvant de milliards, et allant plaider à la justice de paix, pour une cliente favorite, une contestation de dix francs.²

¹Zola, La Curée, p. 166.

²Ibid., p. 86.

However there is one thing she does not sell:

Il n'y avait qu'une chose qu'elle ne vendait pas, c'était elle, non qu'elle eût des scrupules, mais parce que l'idée de ce marché ne pouvait lui venir. Elle était sèche comme une facture, froide comme un protêt, indifférente et brutale au fond comme un recors.¹

She is the entremetteuse in her brother's marriage to Renée, and she is also the one who reveals to Aristide the love affair between Renée and Maxime, mainly because she wants to revenge herself on Renée for her refusal to meet the lover Sidonie has in mind for her. She sets out to spy on Renée to find out who her lover is. Then she even makes a trip to London to find out about the millions, but her trip is unsuccessful, though she does not admit it. Although she earns a good deal of money, it does not seem to have any effect on her: "L'argent qu'elle gagnait ne put la décider à changer ses éternelles robes noires, et elle garda sa face jaune et dolente."²

On the role of Lesbianism in Zola's works Lapp writes:

Lesbianism, although fairly prominent, remained an incidental motif. Even in La Curée, so violently revealing of the lovers' relation, he relates the Sapphism of Renée's friends indirectly, never permitting the reader to witness their actions, but merely suggesting a sort of backdrop of vice.³

Marquise d'Españet and Suzanne Haffner are the inseparable ones. Their relationship had already started in the convent school

¹Ibid., pp. 86-87.

²Ibid., p. 416.

³Lapp, p. 143.

when Adeline, the marquise, had written letters to Suzanne signing them "Arthur d'Espagnet" and proposing to take her away. In Renée's salon they are always seen together whispering to each other, and they dance together in the parties although the men try to separate them. Since they detest men they have to push aside their many would-be-lovers drawn by their beauty. As is evident at the end of the big costume party, Mme d'Espagnet is the more dominating of the two: "... Mme d'Espagnet, ..., avait réussi à saisir Mme Haffner au passage, et valsait avec elle, sans vouloir la lâcher. L'Or et l'Argent dansaient ensemble, amoureusement."¹

In Nana we meet low-life lesbians. Laure Piédefer is the owner of a restaurant catering mostly to lesbians. She is a woman about fifty years old, "aux formes débordantes, sanglée dans des ceintures et des corsets."² As her customers arrive they kiss her on the mouth with tender familiarity, while: "ce monstre, les yeux mouillés, tâchait, en se partageant, de ne pas faire de jalouses."³ Zola describes her as a queen sitting on her throne in the middle of her customers:

Laure venait de se rasseoir, tassée de nouveau, avec la majesté d'une vieille idole du vice, à la face

¹Zola, La Curée, p. 402.

²Zola, Nana, p. 1300.

³Ibid.

usée et vernie par les baisers des fidèles; et, au-dessus des assiettes pleines, elle régnait sur sa clientèle bouffie de grosses femmes, monstrueuse auprès des plus fortes, trônant dans cette fortune de maîtresse d'hôtel qui récompensait quarante années d'exercice.¹

Satin, Nana's childhood friend, tries to "convert" Nana by introducing her to Laure Piédefer's restaurant. Nana at first is horrified when she realizes what is going on, but then she yields to Satin's "friendship" and affection but only when she is getting tired of men for a while. Satin tries to make Nana get rid of her male friends who are just a nuisance, and then she disappears. Nana furious at her ingratitude for all that she has done for Satin by taking her from the street to live with her, goes to look for the young woman in Laure's restaurant. There she finds her with her rival, Mme Robert, with whom she has a fight over Satin, who just sits there calmly watching them:

Satin pourtant, au milieu de ces histoires, gardait son calme, avec ses yeux bleus et son pur visage de vierge; mordue, battue, tirillée entre les deux femmes, elle disait simplement que c'était drôle, qu'elles auraient mieux fait de s'entendre. Ça n'avancait à rien de la gifler; elle ne pouvait se couper en deux, malgré sa bonne volonté d'être gentille pour tout le monde.²

Nana was the conquerer that time, because she drowned Satin in tenderness and in gifts. Then this street-walker lesbian dies in a hospital, and Nana feels that Satin was the only person who ever really loved her.

¹Ibid., p. 1302.

²Ibid., p. 1361.

X MISERS AND ECCENTRICS

La Grande of La Terre, an eighty year old miser, is one of Zola's harshest characters. She is the sister of old Fouan and the grandmother of Palmyre and Hilarion. In the family, "La Grande était respectée et crainte, non pour sa vieillesse, mais pour sa fortune."¹ She has absolutely no charity for others, since they have not looked after their own affairs the way she has, it is their own fault if they are in trouble. It is useless to come and beg at her door. She is very cruel to her grandchildren because their mother married a poor boy against her will and then died of misery leaving her children to her mother. She makes them work like slaves for her, and, as we have seen, Palmyre dies of too hard work in the fields. Hilarion dies from a blow on his head from La Grande's cane, when he tried to rape her, because after his sister's death: "... sa colère se tournait en une rage de mâle,..."²

She saves everywhere she can. In the winter, in order to conserve her own candles she spends the evenings either at the house of her brother or of her niece, or at the home of somebody else. When Lise and Buteau come to invite her to their wedding, because it is the custom, she offers them some

¹Zola, La Terre, p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 406.

wine, but only spoiled wine that she has had for years. Then at the wedding, she is the first one there and has not eaten anything all day so she can stuff herself at the feast. Talking very little she gorges herself making sure that nothing is left. Her idée fixe is her testament. Since she cannot take her fortune with her when she dies, she has arranged her will so that in order not to wrong any of her relatives she forces them to fight each other:

Agée de quatre-vingt-huit ans, elle ne se préoccupait de sa mort que pour laisser à ses héritiers, avec sa fortune, le tracas de procès sans fin: une complication de testament extraordinaire, embrouillée par plaisir, où, sous le prétexte de ne faire du tort à personne, elle les forçait de se dévorer tous; une idée à elle, puisqu'elle ne pouvait emporter ses biens, de s'en aller au moins avec la consolation qu'ils empoisonneraient les autres. Et elle n'avait de la sorte pas de plus gros amusement que de voir la famille se manger.¹

But it seems that she survives all others, as if she were not going to die at all:

... résolue à ne finir jamais, dans son obstination à posséder. Elle les enterrerait tous. Encore un, son frère, qu'elle voyait partir. ... Haute et maigre, sa canne sous le bras, elle restait plantée au milieu des tombes, sans aucune émotion, avec la seule curiosité de cet ennui de mourir qui arrivait aux autres.²

Similarly Madame Lorilleux of L'Assommoir besides being a miser is a cruel and very unsympathetic person. She is very

¹Ibid., p. 364.

²Ibid., p. 494.

mean to Gervaise when Coupeau brings her to meet his sister and her husband for the first time and to talk about their marriage. She lets Gervaise understand that she is not really welcome as a wife for her brother with her two children, her limp and her past. She eyes her from head to toe:

La voix ralentie sur ces derniers mots, elle hochait la tête, passant de la figure de la jeune femme à ses mains, à ses pieds, comme si elle avait voulu la déshabiller, pour lui voir les grains de la peau. Elle dut la trouver mieux qu'elle ne comptait.¹

When Nana is born, the Lorilleux are her god-parents and they seem very generous when they bring her gifts, but: "Seulement, les Lorilleux allèrent raconter leurs largesses dans tout le quartier; ils avaient dépensé près de vingt francs."² When Gervaise goes to talk to the Lorilleux about taking maman Coupeau to live with them, with each of the sisters contributing a hundred sous, Mme Lorilleux refuses coldly and shouts at her:

- Fichez le camp, ou je fais un malheur! ... Et ne comptez pas sur les cent sous, parce que je ne donnerai pas un radis! non pas un radis! ... Ah bien! oui, cent sous! Maman vous servirait de domestique, et vous vous gobergeriez avec mes cent sous! Si elle va chez vous, dites-lui ça, elle peut crever, je ne lui enverrai pas un verre d'eau. ... Allons, houp! débarrassez le plancher!³

At maman Coupeau's death, Mme Lorilleux is not willing to pay her share of the funeral costs, and she wants her mother's black dress because she does not have one and does not want

¹Zola, L'Assommoir, p. 429.

²Ibid., p. 472.

³Ibid., p. 524.

to buy one either for the funeral! Also she is asking for the bed, chairs and her other belongings, but her sister, Mme Lerat, says that they belong to Gervaise since she had taken their mother to live with her. Then she is always pretending that she does not have any money; therefore, she has no charity for Gervaise and Coupeau when they are almost dying of hunger.'

Her sister, Mme Lerat, on the other hand is an altogether different and more interesting character. She is the eldest of the Coupeaus. A widow working as a florist, she is a big masculine woman who speaks through her nose and is very fond of suggestive remarks:

Elle était sèche comme un échalas, menait une vie d'ouvrière cloîtrée dans son train-train, n'avait pas vu le nez d'un homme chez elle depuis son veuvage, tout en montrant une préoccupation continuelle de l'ordure, une manie de mots à double entente et d'allusions polissonnes, d'une telle profondeur, qu'elle seule se comprenait.¹

She often defends Gervaise against her own sister, Mme Lorilleux, and stops a quarrel between the two sisters-in-law. Besides being fond of suggestive remarks, she also loves to be involved in other people's love affairs. She is very much interested in what goes on between Gervaise and Lantier, and later what is going on between Virginie and Lantier, because: "... elle traitait Lantier d'homme irrésistible, dans les bras

¹Ibid., p. 453.

duquel les dames les plus huppées devaient tomber."¹ When Nana comes to work in the florist's shop, Mme Lerat keeps an eye on her, and since she understands youth she lies to the Coupeaus, but she also preaches to Nana on the dangers that a young girl risks in Paris. Then she offers to be chaperon in Nana's first love affair with an elderly gentleman, to make sure that their relationship stays within limits and also because of her love of intrigue.

The Countess de Boves of Au Bonheur des Dames is a kleptomaniac, who steals in the big department store, at first because she does not have any money to buy anything, later just for the sake of stealing with her pockets full of money. She is of the poor nobility, and her husband, who is a general inspector of cavalry horses, does not give her any money for shopping unless it is absolutely necessary to buy something. But she loves walking around in the big stores and touching different articles, especially lace. Little by little, she starts slipping things into her sleeves, and nobody seems to notice it. When her husband is forced to stay at home with the gout, she is able to steal his pocket money; and then she steals just for the love of stealing with enough money in her pockets to pay for the articles. However, one day she is caught by

¹Ibid., p. 612.

a store detective, and they find on her different kinds of lace worth fourteen thousand francs. So stealing has become a mania with her:

Depuis un an, Mme de Boves volait ainsi, ravagée d'un besoin furieux, irrésistible. Les crises em-
piraient, grandissaient, jusqu'à être une volupté
nécessaire à son existence, emportant tous les rai-
sonnements de prudence, se satisfaisant avec une
jouissance d'autant plus âpre, qu'elle risquait,
sous les yeux d'une foule son nom, son orgueil, la
haute situation de son mari. Maintenant que ce der-
nier lui laissait vider ses tiroirs, elle volait avec
de l'argent plein sa poche, elle volait pour voler,
comme on aime pour aimer, sous le coup de fouet du
désir, dans le détraquement de la névrose que ses
appétits de luxe inassouvis avaient développée en
elle, autrefois, à travers l'énorme et brutale ten-
tation des grands magasins.¹

On the other hand Mme Marty, of Au Bonheur des Dames,
is a spendthrift, who buys for the sake of buying although she
cannot afford to do so: "On la connaissait pour sa rage de dé-
pense, sans force devant la tentation, d'une honnêteté stricte,
incapable de céder à un amant, mais tout de suite lâche et la
chair vaincue, devant le moindre bout de chiffon."² By her
continuous and often unnecessary purchases, she ruins her teacher
husband who has two jobs to double his mediocre income. Once
the salesclerks know her and that she cannot resist a good bar-
gain, they put on their best charm and salesmanship in order
to talk her into buying often an article that she has absolutely

¹Zola, Au Bonheur des Dames, p. 793.

²Ibid., p. 447.

no need nor use for. When one of her friends advises her that she can return her purchases if she does not like them, that is the "password" that she needs to go completely wild: "Et ce fut pour elle l'excuse suprême, elle ne compta plus, elle acheta encore, avec le sourd besoin de tout garder, car elle n'était pas des femmes qui rendent."¹ And this is how Zola describes her after she has finished buying:

Maintenant, Mme Marty avait la face animée et nerveuse d'une enfant qui a bu du vin pur. Entrée les yeux clairs, la peau fraîche du froid de la rue, elle s'était lentement brûlé la vue et le teint, au spectacle de ce luxe, de ces couleurs violentes, dont le galop continu irritait sa passion. Lorsqu'elle partit enfin, après avoir dit qu'elle paierait chez elle, terrifiée par le chiffre de sa facture, elle avait les traits tirés, les yeux élargis d'une malade. ... Puis, sur le trottoir, ..., elle frissonna à l'air vif, elle demeura effarée, dans le² détraquement de cette névrose des grands bazars.

Tante Phasie of La Bête Humaine, a distant relative of Jacques Lantier, has a double idée fixe. She is haunted by her obsessions to the extent that she has become physically sick. When Jacques goes to visit her, he is surprised to notice the change that has taken place in her: "... bien qu'âgée de quarante-cinq ans à peine, la belle tante Phasie d'autrefois, si grande, si forte, en paraissait soixante, amaigrie et jaunie, secouée de continuels frissons."³ She thinks that her husband, Misard,

¹Ibid., p. 638.

²Ibid., p. 644.

³Zola, La Bête Humaine, p. 44.

is trying to poison her and that he is after the thousand francs that she had inherited from her father. She has hidden her money in a place where nobody can find it. Her condition is getting worse, and she does not eat nor drink anything that Misard touches. Then she thinks that he puts poison in the salt that she uses a great deal. She is so sensitive that she senses when her husband is approaching the house, even though she cannot see him through the window: "Elle était devenue livide, en proie à cette terreur involontaire des colosses devant l'insecte qui les ronge; car, dans son obstination à se défendre seule, elle avait de lui une épouvante croissante, qu'elle n'avouait pas."¹ When she dies she keeps her eyes open as if she were mocking Misard while he is searching for her money:

... vainement, Misard, ..., avait essayé de lui fermer les paupières: les yeux obstinés restaient ouverts, la tête s'était raidie, penchée un peu sur l'épaule, comme pour regarder dans la chambre, tandis qu'un retrait des lèvres semblait les retrousser, d'un rire goguenard.²

¹Ibid., p. 242.

²Ibid., p. 323.

XI MAIDS AND FAMILY SERVANTS

Among the great variety of different types of maids in Zola's novels, I have chosen those that are most interesting and most peculiar.

Céleste of La Curée is cold and impersonal: "Céleste allait et venait, dans la chambre, avec sa figure calme de servante au sang glacé."¹ Yet she serves her mistress, Renée, very well. Nothing seems to bother and upset her and she does not reveal Renée's love affair with Maxime, after all her job is to be a maid not a detective:

Elle était devenue leur complice, naturellement. Un matin qu'ils s'étaient oubliés au lit, elle les y trouva, et garda son flegme de servante au sang glacé. Ils ne se gênaient plus, elle entra à toute heure, sans que le bruit de leurs baisers lui fit tourner la tête. Ils comptaient sur elle pour les prévenir en cas d'alerte. Ils n'achetaient pas son silence. C'était une fille très économe, très honnête, et à laquelle on ne connaissait pas d'amant.²

When Renée, who likes her very much, questions her as to her lovers, Céleste answers her:

- Moi, madame! s'écria la chambrière, de l'air stupéfait d'une personne qui vient d'entendre une chose prodigieuse, oh! j'ai bien d'autres idées en tête. Je ne veux pas d'un homme. J'ai mon plan, vous verrez plus tard. Je ne suis pas une bête, allez.³

After Maxime has left her, Renée has maternal affection for

¹Zola, La Curée, p. 236.

²Ibid., p. 272.

³Ibid., pp. 298-299.

this faithful servant: "... touchée par la fidélité de cette servante, de ce brave coeur dont rien ne semblait ébranler la tranquille sollicitude."¹ Then, one morning, Céleste announces her plan: she is leaving because she has saved enough money to buy a house and establish a small store in her home province. There is nothing Renée can do to retain her, she has made up her mind, and she leaves.

Zoé of Nana is very skilled in her profession as a maid in the world of courtesans. Before becoming Nana's servant, she had served many other ladies: "... Zoé parlait de ces dames en personne qui avait tenu leur fortune dans sa main. Bien sûr que plus d'une, sans elle, aurait eu de drôles d'histoires."² Since she knows all the tricks of her trade, she tries to prevent Nana from making foolish mistakes, by advising her mistress indirectly: "Elle ne se serait pas permis de donner ouvertement des conseils à madame; seulement, elle s'arrangeait pour faire profiter madame de son expérience, quand madame paraissait s'emballer avec sa mauvaise tête."³ At times she has to be very patient with Nana and has to put up with her caprices, but she remains faithful. During Nana's escapade with Fontan, Zoé keeps in touch with her through Mme Lerat and

¹Ibid., p. 418.

²Zola, Nana, p. 1129.

³Ibid., p. 1140.

saves Nana from her creditors. When Nana is beginning her new luxurious life, Zoé is back in her service:

Nana avait bien Zoé, cette fille dévouée à sa fortune, qui depuis des mois attendait tranquillement ce brusque lançage, certaine de son flair. Maintenant, Zoé triomphait, maîtresse de l'hôtel, faisant sa pelote, tout en servant madame le plus honnêtement possible.¹

Whenever they quarrel, peace is achieved always with gifts, so Zoé finds their quarrels very profitable for her. When the ruin is completely achieved and the other servants have left, Zoé stays on to maintain order: "Zoé restait, avec son air propre et son unique souci d'organiser ce désordre, tant qu'elle n'aurait pas de quoi s'établir pour son compte, un plan dont elle mûrissait l'idée depuis longtemps."² Then, when she has finally accumulated enough money, she is able to realize her plan: to buy la Tricon's establishment. She refuses all the job offers because she wants to be a "madame" in her turn; as she answers Mignon when he tries to talk of the risks in the business:

- Oh! les choses de luxe marchent toujours... Voyez-vous, il y a assez longtemps que je suis chez les autres, je veux que les autres soient chez moi.

Et une férocité lui retroussait les lèvres, elle serait enfin "madame", elle tiendrait à ses pieds, pour quelque louis, ces femmes dont elle rinçait les cuvettes depuis quinze ans.³

¹Ibid., p. 1349.

²Ibid., pp. 1451-1452.

³Ibid., p. 1466.

Jacqueline, or la Cognette, of La Terre is a scheming, immoral maid. She had entered la Borderie, the farm, as a charity girl; and had risen from a dish-washer to become her master's mistress. But she was not satisfied with M. Hourdequin alone, but slept with almost every men working at the farm. She knows that she is not a real mistress until she has slept in the conjugal bed. She threatens to leave the farm since she cannot get what she wants, so from that night on she sleeps in the bed of the late Mme Hourdequin, thus becoming the mistress of the whole farm. She is scheming that Hourdequin would marry her so that she would inherit the farm from him. But before he has time to marry her or make a will in her favour, he falls through a trap door and is crushed to death. And Jacqueline is desperate:

Elle s'affaissa sur une chaise, accablée, comme si les murs croulaient autour d'elle. Le maître qu'elle comptait épouser enfin! le maître qui avait juré de lui tout laisser par testament! Et il était mort, sans avoir le temps de rien signer.¹

The peasants in the village hate her for her immoral conduct without realizing that she is their revenge at the big farm:

Et les paysans ne comprenaient même pas que cette catin était leur vengeance, la revanche du village contre la ferme, du misérable ouvrier de la glèbe contre le bourgeois enrichi, devenu gros propriétaire.²

¹Zola, La Terre, p. 466.

²Ibid., p. 91.

Véronique of La Joie de Vivre is a faithful family servant, who has become almost a member of the family. She has been serving the Chanteaus since she was fifteen. Now she is: "une grande fille de trente-cinq ans, avec des mains d'homme et une face de gendarme".¹ She is somewhat peculiar and easily made jealous. When Pauline arrives, Véronique is unsympathetic toward the girl, thinking that Pauline is getting the attention she had got before. But soon, however, the injustices that Pauline receives from the Chanteaus are able to win Véronique's sympathy for the orphan. Then she even defends Pauline against her mistress, even reproaching her for the way she has been using Pauline's money. Nevertheless, after Mme Chanteau's death, Véronique seems to be changing:

La bonne, cependant, restait revêche et comme hébété, depuis la mort de Mme Chanteau. Il semblait se produire en elle un nouveau travail, un retour d'affection vers la morte, tandis qu'elle redevenait d'une maussaderie méfiante devant Pauline.²

The idea that she might have hastened her mistress' death haunts her. If she had known that madame was going to die she would have never said what she said about Pauline:

Bien sûr, elle n'aurait jamais dit ce qu'elle avait dit. La justice avant tout, on ne devait pas tuer les gens, même quand les gens avaient des défauts. Du reste, elle s'en lavait les mains, tant pis pour la personne qui était la vraie cause du malheur! Mais cette assurance

¹Zola, La Joie de Vivre, p. 807.

²Ibid., p. 994.

ne la calmait pas, elle continuait à grogner, en se débattant contre sa faute imaginaire.¹

Then one day she hangs herself: "Est-ce qu'on pouvait savoir, avec ces têtes de vieilles bonnes maniaques! Jamais elle ne s'était consolée de la mort de sa maîtresse."²

¹Ibid., p. 995.

²Ibid., p. 1130.

XII THE SYMBOL OF THE FUTURE

In the last volume, Le Docteur Pascal, Clotilde and her child are symbols of the future generations. Clotilde is the daughter of Aristide Saccard (Rougon) and after her mother's death she came to live with her uncle Pascal in Plassans. The child, born after his father's, Pascal's, death represents a new and perhaps saner branch of the Rougon-Macquart family tree. The corrupt family continues in this new branch, better and stronger and purified. Thus Zola ends his series with one of the most beautiful pictures of Womanhood: a mother feeding her child whose upright hand is like a flag of appeal to life. Clotilde, like all mothers, dreams already of her child's future:

L'enfant était venu, le rédempteur peut-être. ... Elle, la mère, pendant qu'il buvait sa vie, rêvait déjà d'avenir. Que serait-il, quand elle l'aurait fait grand et fort, en se donnant toute? Un savant qui enseignerait au monde un peu de la vérité éternelle, un capitaine qui apporterait de la gloire à son pays, ou mieux encore un de ces pasteurs de peuple qui apaisent les passions et font régner la justice? ... Et c'était le rêve de toutes les mères, la certitude d'être accouchée du messie attendu; et il y avait là, dans cet espoir, dans cette croyance obstinée de chaque mère au triomphe certain de son enfant, l'espoir même qui fait la vie, la croyance qui donne à l'humanité la force sans cesse renaissante de vivre encore.¹

Since Le Docteur Pascal takes place after the Franco-Prussian

¹Zola, Le Docteur Pascal, I de P, pp. 497-498.

war, Clotilde and her child are also symbolic of a new France reborn after the war. As for his reasons for ending the series with this kind of a picture, Zola writes about it to Van Santen Kolff:

"Il m'a semblé brave, en terminant cette histoire de la terrible famille des Rougon-Macquart, de faire naître d'elle un dernier enfant, l'enfant inconnu, le messie de demain, peut-être. Une mère allaitant son enfant, n'est-ce pas l'image du monde continué, et sauvé?"¹

In the same way that Zola began La Fortune des Rougon using the character of slaughtered Miette as a symbol of the betrayed and assassinated Second Republic, it can be noted that Zola ends the twentieth and final volume of the Rougon-Macquart series with a double symbol. The long chronicle of this family terminates with another young woman Clotilde, who along with her new-born son, represents the birth and flowering, after some two decades of corrupt Empire, of the Third Republic.

¹As quoted in Guillemin, p. 411.

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